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COORDINATION OF ON-GOING STATISTICAL PROGRAMMES\*

	<u>Pages</u>
12(b) — GENERAL PRICE STATISTICS AND THE ICP	2-4
12(e) — POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUSES	5-8
12(f) — CIVIL REGISTRATION AND VITAL STATISTICS	9

Progress reports of the United Nations Statistical Office

\* The other sub-items of agenda item 12 are covered by other documents.

Agenda item 12(b) - GENERAL PRICE STATISTICS AND THE ICP

1. Work on phase V of the ICP regional comparisons (with 1985 as reference year) has been completed. The results for the EEC, for the OECD and the European Comparison Programme and for the African comparison have already been published. A study on the Europe-Africa links based on two alternative pairs of core comparisons (U.K.-Kenya versus France-Senegal) is expected to be finished mid-year 1990. These experimental exercises will permit to evaluate the degree of reliability of the price comparisons between countries of different regions owing to a small number of core comparisons. EUROSTAT has been requested by UNSO to complete the processing of world results covering 64 countries and we are hopeful for a positive response. Assuming that these results will be available by the end of 1990, a final report is expected to be published as a joint publication in 1991.

2. As for phase VI of the ICP, the preparatory work for regional comparisons has already started. For the progress in the EUROSTAT, OECD and ECE comparisons, please refer to documents nos. SA/1990/17,18 and 19. The most significant developments in those regions were the entry of the USSR and Czechoslovakia into the

Programme, and the rolling base comparison of EUROSTAT and OECD. Fourteen countries in addition to Japan agreed to participate in the phase VI ESCAP regional comparison which will begin with the Asia-Pacific Seminar on the Use of Purchasing Power Parities to be held in Niigata, Japan, 26-30 November 1990. Sixteen countries in the ECLAC region expressed interest to join the phase VI comparison. The Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) has approved a project proposal to provide financial assistance to the participating countries and the World Bank has agreed to sponsor a preparatory meeting to be held in Latin America in September 1990 to launch the phase VI ECLAC comparison. The African comparison will be assisted by EUROSTAT. No indication of interest has been expressed yet by ESCWA to conduct an ICP regional comparison.

3. Pursuant to the request made by the 25th session of the Statistical Commission, a meeting of the Intersecretariat Working Group (ISWG) on the International Comparison Programme was convened in New York on 10-11 July 1989 to discuss current problems of the ICP with special attention to the problems of the phase VI comparison. The meeting was attended by representatives of the EUROSTAT, OECD, World Bank, IMF, IADB, ECE, ESCAP and UNSO. The ISWG discussed the conditions and prospects of having a world comparison in phase VI. Deep reservation was expressed about the kind of global comparison that can be derived by simply linking the regional comparisons as in the case of the phase V world results. The core product approach was mentioned as a viable alternative.

4. To provide guidance to staff working in national statistical offices on how to carry out ICP work, a handbook on ICP is being prepared. The United Nations has contracted Mr. Drechsler as a consultant for this assignment. He will prepare the draft jointly with Mr. Hugo Krijnse-Locker who has been contracted by EUROSTAT. The handbook is expected to be finalized by the end of 1990. It is hoped that this will contribute to the quality of the phase VI and future rounds of the ICP.

5. Since the July 1989 meeting of the ISWG on ICP, considerable efforts have been undertaken between member organizations to define a strategy for the implementation of ~~of~~ Phase VI. A series of informal consultations was held recently between UNSO and the World Bank as well as other organizations involved or expected to be involved in work on Phase VI. Many aspects of the ICP have been discussed, among which, core country versus core product method, specifications and other methodological issues, analytical needs, software development and related processing issues, postponement of the reference year, timetable, financial resources and division of work among international organizations. The activities of ICP such as meetings, travel, co-ordination, etc., have been identified and their costs estimated. Planning is now going forward to convene a meeting of the ISWG on ICP in the middle of this year to discuss these and related issues so that clear conclusions on the scope and nature of Phase VI can be reached. It is hoped that these discussions will yield tangible results of benefits to all regional comparisons as well as global comparisons for the phase VI of the ICP.

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Agenda item 12(e) Population and housing censuses

6. With the completion of the report on Supplementary Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, work of the Statistical Office focused on preparation of census training materials and technical co-operation activities to assist countries in carrying out quality censuses. The focus was specially on improving statistics concerning the economically active population, special population groups and small areas. A series of workshops on economic topics were therefore carried out jointly with ILO and the regional commissions to exchange information on new ILO standards for the measurement of the economically active population and revised industrial and occupational classifications as well as consider ways of implementing them in future censuses and surveys.

7. As part of the above-mentioned series, an Interrregional Workshop on Planning, Organization and Administration of Large-scale Demographic and Social Data Collection Activities for Small Areas (Bangkok, 20-24 November 1989) was organized with the support of the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development (DTCD) and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) to consider new advances and innovative aspects relating to various phases of census taking that would improve the quality, timeliness and utilization of data at all levels. It is also planned to hold a workshop on Economic Statistics in Population and Housing Censuses (Moscow, 21-30 November 1990) supported by the rouble contributions to the technical co-operation budget of the United Nations and hosted by the USSR State Committee on Statistics.

8. Sixty-seven countries or areas have already taken a census during 1985-1989. Nineteen of them were in Africa, 15 in Asia, 13 in Europe and USSR, 16 in Oceania and two in North and South America. However, the majority of population and housing censuses are anticipated to take place during the two years 1990 - 1991, and indications are that roughly 65 countries or areas will hold censuses in 1990 and another 42 in 1991.

9. The 1990 census round would witness the introduction of many developments and new technology including microcomputers for data processing and dissemination. To assist countries in this regard, the Statistical Office plans to publish a series of technical reports and manuals on this subject. It has recently submitted for publication a Manual on Population Census Data Processing using Microcomputers that deals with issues involved in selecting appropriate methods and techniques in light of specific needs of countries regarding data processing.

10. Further, an Interregional Workshop on Population Databases and Related Topics (Voorburg, 6-10 November 1989) was convened with the support of DDCD, UNFPA and the Central Bureau of Statistics of Netherlands. The Workshop underscored that publishing a series of reports presenting many tabulations is no longer sufficient. Users expect that the data will continue to be readily available for analysis and investigation of new phenomena as they arise. Therefore, the possibility of establishing census databases aimed at efficient dissemination of unpublished data as well as published data assumes importance for consideration in the context of 1990 censuses and emerging new

technology. The Statistical Office plans to conduct another workshop on population census database sometime late 1990, focusing again on the methodology of developing population census databases in the developing countries for improving data dissemination and utilization.

#### Demographic Yearbook Database System

11. The Statistical Office has begun work on a three-year project entitled "Strengthening the United Nations Demographic Yearbook Database System". This project, funded by UNFPA, is designed to increase the availability and effective use of a major source of demographic and social statistics. The long-range objective of the project is to develop an integrated and streamlined international database system for rapid retrieval and efficient use of the 40 years of data for international population programmes and studies in a timely way.

12. The first output proposed from the revised and expanded version of the database will be the Demographic Yearbook Special Supplement on Aging published in conjunction with the 42nd edition of the Yearbook in 1992. In addition to the 40 years of data already available in the database, additional information on disability and mortality will be combined to prepare statistics of particular relevance to population aging and the elderly. The data on aging and other topics will be available to major international and regional data users on magnetic tapes and microcomputer diskettes in a topical form.

13. Upon completion of the project, it is anticipated that the redesigned database will be resident on both mainframe and microcomputers for processing and dissemination resulting in the following activities: (1) simplification and improvement of the access and presentation of statistics for publication, research and programme planning purposes through the use of a flexible data management system using both mainframe and microcomputers; (2) the compilation and integration of currently disparate national statistics and selected international database on special issues not yet linked in the present Demographic Yearbook database system; (3) development of technical documentation for use by UNSO and other United Nations offices to produce population statistics covering a wide range of pertinent topics, i.e., size and growth, fertility, nuptiality, migration, mortality, disability, household structure, aging, youth, urbanization for programme planning and international policy-making and (4) the production of national demographic profiles for specific population groups.

14. As part of the project, selected potential users will be requested to provide suggestions in the design of statistical outputs to ensure that data will be relevant to their needs. The users, inter alia, include various offices/divisions of DIESA, DTCO, UNFPA, WHO and regional commissions.

Agenda item 12 (f) Civil Registration and Vital Statistics

15. The United Nations Statistical Office (UNSO), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Institute for Vital Registration and Statistics (IIVRS) have been consulting together in the past several years to find new strategies to accelerate the development of civil registration and vital statistics systems. This consultation has led to the formulation of an International Programme for Accelerating the Improvement of the Vital Statistics and Civil Registration Systems.

16. The ACC Sub-Committee, at its last meeting, was informed in detail about the objectives and scope of this Programme. Taking into account the objectives of the Programme, a project document has been prepared and submitted to, among others, UNFPA and UNICEF for possible financial support.