

**Meeting of the Working Subgroup to the Coordination Meeting on  
International Migration, on International Migration Statistics  
29 October 2004**

**I. PURPOSE OF THE MEETING**

1. Following the United Nations Third Coordination Meeting on International Migration, the Statistics Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs invited statisticians present at that meeting for an ad-hoc meeting to consider the statistical implications of the Coordination Meeting. The Working Subgroup meeting offered an opportunity for representatives of national, regional and international statistical offices to consider ways to: (a) enhance the exchange of information on activities and projects in participating agencies in the area of international migration statistics; (b) enable coordination of different programmes, including joint activities; (c) discuss technical aspects and issues regarding standards and methods, data collection, processing and dissemination of international migration statistics and (d) perform other tasks as per terms of reference, attached in the Annex.

**II. PARTICIPATION**

2. Participants included representatives from: the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Statistical Office of the European Union (Eurostat), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Population Division (UNPD), United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) and United States Census Bureau. A summary of the first meeting is shown below.

**III. CURRENT ACTIVITIES**

3. **ECLAC** consolidates available information on international migration from member countries, particularly those collected through population and housing censuses. The regional commission aims at (1) building a comparable/common system for data collection and (2) data sharing among countries in the ECLAC region and at the international level.

4. The data collected at ECLAC cover censuses from the 1970 round to the 2000 round, although data for the 1990 round are the most complete compared to other rounds. So far data are available for half of the ECLAC member states on international migration from censuses conducted in the 2000 round.

5. As far as data exchange with other regions is concerned, information that is currently available to ECLAC is of the Latin American population in Spain. ECLAC is looking to build bridges with other regions such as North America (US and Canada) and Europe for data exchange.

6. **Eurostat** works with UNSD, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), International Labour Organisation (ILO) and Council of Europe (CoE) on the joint data collection of demographic statistics including international migration statistics. Data are collected from National Statistical Officers (NSOs) within the European Union, the EU candidate countries, other European countries, as

well as from US and Canada. Eurostat also undertakes collections of statistics on asylum and measures against illegal migration in the EU. A Working Group on Demographic/Migration Statistics is held every year and the theme alternates between general demographic statistics and international migration statistics. A day before the regular annual meeting with NSOs, a Meeting of the Inter-Secretariat Working Group on Social and Demographic Statistics takes place, with representatives of all parties. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss relevant technical and data collection issues and to address topics pertinent to all participants.

7. The last Working Group on Migration Statistics was conducted in February 2004 and the next one will be held in 2006. However, the Inter-Secretariat Working Group will meet in February 2005, immediately prior to Eurostat's Working Group on Demographic and Census Statistics, and will discuss methodological issues related to data collection on international migration, such as the definition of the place of usual residence. In addition, it will also focus specifically on the harmonization of data collection instruments used by UNSD for the *Demographic Yearbook* with the joint International Migration Statistics Questionnaire used in Europe.

8. **UNHCR** collects refugee numbers and their living conditions from governments. These figures have both statistical and political connotations. As UNHCR works with host countries on the size of the refugee population and their characteristics on a daily basis in the field, it currently presents data for more than 160 countries and responds to numerous ad-hoc data requests. As refugees represent sometimes a significant proportion of the overall population of the country or area, and in an effort to present as complete overview of world's population as possible, UNSD might consider incorporating refugee statistics from UNHCR in its *Demographic Yearbook*.

9. **The United Nations Population Division (UNPD)**, being a major user of international migration statistics, is concerned in regard to the availability and quality of those statistics. In its work, UNPD's finding indicates that many countries are not processing or compiling stock data for various reasons even when such data are collected. As for the flow data, they are even less available than stock data. Hence, UNPD's major interest is that data on international migration are as complete and comparable as possible.

10. **The United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD)** provides standards and methods<sup>1</sup> for internationally comparable national statistics on international migration. UNSD also is responsible for the collection of international migration statistics from national statistical offices (NSOs), and with the intention to disseminate them widely through the United Nations Demographic Yearbook System (<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/dyb/default.htm>). As part of this process, UNSD and Eurostat collaborate in the collection of demographic statistics for the European Region, including data on international migration. UNSD is now

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<sup>1</sup> *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, Revision 1*, United Nations publication, ST/ESA/STAT/SER.M/67/Rev.1, Sales No. E.98.XVII.8 and *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration, Revision 1*, United Nations publication, ST/ESA/STAT/SER.M58/Rev.1, Sales No. E.98. XVII.14

looking into the possibility of collaboration with other regional commissions, including the Economic Commission of Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

11. UNSD also works to strengthen national capacity through the conducting of workshops. The goals of these workshops are to: review and assess national implementation of international recommendations<sup>1</sup> on international migration statistics; test the questionnaires for the *Demographic Yearbook* data collection; and review and highlight best practices in the collection of migrant stock and flow statistics. Most recently, UNSD, in collaboration with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), conducted a United Nations workshop on international migration statistics in Geneva for selected countries from Africa, North and South America, Asia and Europe. It is now planning a seminar on international migration statistics to take place in New York, in May, that will define an essential core data set of national outputs for obtaining international migration statistics. The seminar will contribute to the revision of the *Principles and Recommendations of Population and Housing Censuses, Rev. 1*<sup>1</sup> and report to the United Nations Expert Group Meeting to Review Critical Issues Relevant to the Planning of the 2010 Round of Population and Housing Censuses. The seminar will also work to finalise the Draft United Nations Questionnaire on International Travel and Migration Statistics and to enhance the coordination of data collection.

12. Another area of further development with relevance to the statistical measurement of international migration is related to the newly prepared *United Nations Manual on Statistics of International Trade in Services*<sup>2</sup>. The Manual states the need for statistics on Mode 4 of the Global Agreements on Trade in Services (GATS), or the movement of individuals into the territory of the consumer to provide a service, whether on his or her own behalf or on behalf of his or her employer.<sup>3</sup> As part of the Task Force, a Technical Sub-group on the Movement of Natural Persons has been formed with the objective of developing a statistical framework to measure the impact of Mode 4. The newly formed Working Subgroup on International Migration Statistics to the Coordination Meeting sees the need to consult with the Technical Subgroup to ensure coordination of concepts such as that of “usual residence” in order to ensure the harmonization of standards and methods of international migration statistics.

13. In addition, UNSD is in the process of setting up a system to collect statistics on international trade in services.

14. **The US Census Bureau**, in the area of migration statistics, is currently revisiting the American Community Survey questionnaire. The Bureau is undergoing cognitive testing of several questions on international migration; recommendations based on the results of this test will be used in the subsequent field test in 2006, and will lead to recommendations for inclusion in the 2008 American Community Survey. Several items are proposed for revision: year of US entry, place of birth, citizenship and parental nativity. The Census Bureau is also involved in the North American

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<sup>2</sup> Sales No. E.02.XVII.11, 2002

<sup>3</sup> For more details please see *Manual on Statistics of International Trade in Services*, United Nations publication, Sales No. E.02.XVII.11, 2002 and the web-site of the Technical Sub-group on the Movement of Natural Persons (<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/tradeserv/subgroup.htm>).

Migration Working Group (NAMWG), which is a central forum for experts from North American Statistical Agencies to formally exchange experiences and coordinate instruments to measure international migration. The Bureau welcomes the input of members of this Working Subgroup in its NAMWG activities, and anticipates hosting the next general meeting of the North American Migration Working Group in 2005.

#### **IV. CONCLUSIONS**

The following conclusions were reached:

15. The working subgroup of statisticians decided that it is useful to set up a meeting every year a day after the United Nations Coordination Meeting on International Migration. These meetings will consider the implications for further development of international migration statistics in light of the policy purposes that are discussed at the Coordination Meeting. The summary of the meeting will be submitted annually to the Coordination Meeting as a short report in the following year.

16. The working subgroup of statisticians recognizes that all efforts should be made in order to lessen the burden of reply on the national statistics authorities, by increasing cooperation, data and experience sharing between data collectors at the international and regional level. In the context, the working subgroup emphasizes the need for consistent and coherent statistics on international migration with a goal of minimizing discrepancies.

17. Emphasizing the importance of regional and sub-regional data collection, the working subgroup will focus on further establishing and strengthening coordination mechanisms for exchange of experiences, information and statistics among all participating institutions.

## **Annex. Terms of Reference for the Working Subgroup on International Migration Statistics**

**Purpose:** The Working Subgroup on International Migration Statistics to the Coordination Meeting will consider the implications to further development of international migration statistics based on the policy discussions of the Coordination Meeting and will discuss technical components, concepts and standards for international migration statistics and coordination among different collectors of those statistics at international level.

**Time:** The day after the United Nations Coordination Meeting on International Migration, conducted by the United Nations Population Division.

**Length:** Half a day

**Initial participants:** United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), United Nations Population Division (UNPD), Statistical Office of the European Union (Eurostat), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and United States Census Bureau. The list of participants is open-ended, based on the interest of agencies and countries or areas that attend the Coordination Meeting. All United Nations regional commissions will be invited to participate.

The group will

1. Discuss activities by participating agencies in the area of international migration statistics on data collection, processing and dissemination. Specifically, the following could be discussed:
  - Strengthening the current data collection collaboration between Eurostat and UNSD.
  - Discussing possible collaboration between UNSD and ECLAC, especially in census data collection.
  - Collection and use of refugee data from UNHCR.
2. Define an essential core data set of outputs for obtaining international migration statistics that a statistical system, including population and housing censuses, should deliver. The core set will also be reported to the United Nations Expert Group Meeting to Review Critical Issues Relevant to the Planning of the 2010 Round of Population and Housing Censuses.
3. Ensure the exchange of information and experiences with responsible institutions at global, regional and national level, as necessary for the harmonization and coordination of international migration statistics.

In the interests of maximising the effectiveness of the group's activities, relevant information shall be shared between the group members on a regular basis throughout the year.

The summary report of the Working Group be circulated to participants of the United Nations Coordination Meeting on International Migration, and posted on the UNSD website at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/sconcerns/migration/default.htm>.

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