

Statement by Afghan Delegation for 46th Session of the United Nations Statistical Commission

Respectable Chairman,

Dear Colleagues,

Central Statistics Organization was established in 1971 as an Autonomous organization, bringing together statistical cells of different Ministries and departments. Since then, CSO has been operating as the statistical arm of the Afghanistan government and is responsible for the conduct of censuses, Surveys and collection of administrative data.

The Statistical Law of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan has given the following mandate to CSO: "Article 2 : The Central Statistics Organization shall function, as an independent governmental administration, for the purpose of creating an integrated scientific system for statistics, ensuring harmonization and coordination of all statistical activities in the nation." The Act also gives CSO powers to authorize or not any other public body to conduct surveys.

Population information is one basic requirement for effective governance. Government needs some bases for a good decision making, sound planning and the proper design and execution of programs geared towards the welfare of its constituents

The preparatory activities for the first ever population census of Afghanistan including: planning, mapping, household listing, questionnaire design etc started in 1975. After the completion of preparatory activities census enumeration in the country began according to schedule from June 15th to July 4th 1979 and lasted for 20 days.

In the Bonn agreement conduct of a population and housing census in Afghanistan was included. At that time, the only available population details dated to the first Afghanistan Population and Housing Census, which was conducted in 1979. But even then, it covered only two thirds of the country as some areas had security problems.

In the absence of population census in the country to meet some urgent needs of population data users CSO, based the data collected during 2003-05 household listing and previous information produce population estimate of Afghanistan by province annually for the benefit data users.

With the establishment of a new government working side by side with the international community mandated to deliver to its people the hopes and expectation of a better way of life, the need for up-to-date accurate population information was more evident and imperative.

An attempt was made to conduct a national census in August 2008, with funding support from Government of Japan, European Commission, Italy, Norway, Estonia and UNFPA. The worsening security situation in about a third of the country's 398 districts (across 34 provinces) unfortunately compelled the Government to postpone the exercise.

With the growing demand for data, a group of census experts met in Istanbul in August 2010 to discuss the possibilities for a thorough census in Afghanistan. The experts agreed that the only feasible option, given the current situation, was to conduct a province-by-province census.

CSO presented such a proposal to the National Census Committee, a government body created to address major issues affecting the population census, but was advised to defer, again for security reasons.

To resolve the confusion and address the vacuum of vital data, CSO conceptualized the Socio-Demographic and Economic Survey (SDES) in 2011, with the intent of conducting it province by province, as the Expert Group had recommended, with an emphasis on collecting the socio-demographic and economic data at the district level, with the objectives to provide data for: evidence-based decision making, policy making, planning and administration, data for businesses and industries ,housing policy and programs, data on vulnerable population, humanitarian assistance and research.

The survey consisted of two related activities: a) the extensive listing and mapping) and b) the household survey.

The extensive listing and mapping covers all houses, businesses and institutions in every village and urban area in the province includes the preparation of sketch maps on which the physical location of each entity was marked during the canvassing. Additionally, the location of important public services, establishments

and institutions such as schools, hospitals, banks, etc., were further pinpointed through the use of global positioning system (GPS) devices. Likewise information such as means of transportation in going to and from the village, the presence of electricity, water sources, potential relocation sites, etc. are collected.

Unlike other CSO surveys, which are designed to provide data only at the provincial level, the Socio-Demographic and Economic Survey focuses on the district and lower levels, such as urban subdivisions, major villages and clusters of smaller villages, which will prove valuable for local development planning and the monitoring of public service delivery.

The survey first involved a listing of every household in all the villages. Half of these listed households(i.e. every other household) were taken as samples for the survey and were asked questions on education, literacy, employment, migration, functional difficulty, fertility, mortality, parent's living status, birth registration and housing characteristics

Responsive and appropriate policymaking is underpinned by reliable data. In Afghanistan, however, there has been a longstanding lack of data which extends to the district level and gives a current and accurate understanding of the needs of the population. In a context where the development needs are substantial, but no up-to-date data exists, policymaking bodies are severely hindered in designing and implementing comprehensive development plans and then monitoring their success.

For this reason the SDES represents the start of a new era in data-based decision-making extended down the district large village and clusters of small village's level. It provides the first compilation of data disaggregated by sex, age group, district and other social –economic and demographic characteristics.

In light of its secure environment, Bamiyan became the first province to conduct the survey in 2011. SDES was conducted in Ghor& Daikundi provinces in 2012 .SDES was conducted in Kabul, province in 2013 SDES was be conducted in Parwan and Kapisa provinces in 2014.Currently preparatory work for SDES is ongoing in Samangan province. SDES in the remaining provinces will be conducted in 2015-2017.

The result of SDES provides a detailed analysis of the age and sex composition of the population of the province and its districts. It presents data on educational, employment and housing characteristics, as well as on infant mortality and migration. Although it does not include population counts per district, this data is available from the CSO on request. In collaboration with local governments and the concerned ministries, the CSO will also undertake further analysis of this data to ensure that it fits user's needs and is fully utilized by all sectors.

The SDES provides the first modern district-level profile in the province, and will be an invaluable basis for policymaking in the province..

It has to be mentioned that conduct of SDES in the above mentioned provinces was not an easy job and was accompanied by a number of challenges such as: Security Situation in some districts, limited transportation facilities, rugged terrain, weather condition, unavailability of qualified surveyors in some enumeration areas, cash transfer and delivery etc.

Lessons learned in Bamiyan, Ghor and Daikundi, Kabul, Parwan and Kapisa provinces, will serve as inputs in planning for the roll out survey in which will be implemented this year, and for the rest of the provinces in Afghanistan.

In order to address the information needs of the government of Afghanistan and other parties to inform and priorities development policies and programs, CSO conducts the national risk and vulnerability assessment (NRVA) which has developed into a full- multipurpose survey under the sole responsibility of CSO. It now captures a wide variety of development indicators in such areas as: poverty, food security, labor markets performance, demography, education, health, gender equality, housing and agriculture. This survey provides estimates at the provincial level.

As such, the NRVA is the major source of socio- economic statistic of the country. The survey is unique in the sense that – with inclusion of nomads– represents the entire population of Afghanistan, and that – since the NRVA 2007-08 survey –year – round data are collected in order to capture the seasonality of indicators like employment , food security and poverty . In order to underline the comprehensiveness of the NRVA, from the next (2013-14) survey round onwards the survey will be labeled Afghanistan living condition survey (ALCS).

Keeping in view the need of up to date population data for evidence based planning and policy make, CSO is committed to make every efforts to meet the data needs of afghan government and its development partners.