1990 WORLD POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUS PROGRAMME

Report prepared by the United Nations Statistical Office

INTRODUCTION

1. The Economic and Social Council, on the recommendation of the Statistical Commission, adopted in May 1985, resolution 1985/8 entitled "1990 World Population and Housing Census Programme". The resolution, inter alia, requested the Secretary General to make the necessary preparations with a view to proceed with the development of 1990 World Population and Housing Census Programme to be carried out during the period 1985-1994, and to make the necessary preparations with a view to assisting Member States to plan and carry out improved censuses in the 1990 census decade.

2. The present document sets forth the preparations so far made or tentatively planned by the Statistical Office. Similar preparations are also being made by regional commissions and other organizations interested in population, housing and/or related censuses to take into account regional aspects and needs in light of their economic and social development.
I. DEVELOPMENT OF THE 1990 WORLD CENSUS PROGRAMME

3. As part of its work on development of the 1990 census programme, the Statistical Office convened an Expert Group on the 1990 World Population and Housing Census Programme in New York from 11-15 November 1985. The Expert Group had in all fourteen documents before it, with particular focus on possible supplementary recommendations for the forthcoming population and housing censuses. The meeting unanimously affirmed that the existing global recommendations published in Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses (Series M, No.67) remain largely valid and examined in detail the topics that require supplementary recommendations for application in national censuses (see also paras 6-7).

4. In addition, United Nations Statistical Office work continued on the analysis of national census questions and practices concerning the economically active population and other topics to complete Part II of the Handbook of Population and Housing Census Methods for publication in 1987 or earlier to assist countries in planning their 1990 censuses. The analysis of concepts and definitions concerning the economically active population will be published in the 1984 Demographic Yearbook which features this subject as the special topic and will present comprehensive economic statistics collected in the 1980 national censuses.

5. Also, a questionnaire on population and housing census methodology has been completed. It is proposed to send it to all or selected countries in order to obtain specific information on the planning, organization and administration of population and housing censuses, and on the methods used to collect data on specific topics. The national responses will fill the existing gaps in United Nations Statistical Office census files for a number of countries and thereby significantly contribute to the completion of the remaining parts of the Handbook, particularly Part I: Planning, Organization and Administration of Population and Housing Censuses.

II. DRAFT SUPPLEMENTARY PRINCIPLES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUSES

6. The Expert Group recommended that a separate publication entitled "Supplementary Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses" be issued by the United Nations. Accordingly, the Statistical Office has prepared a first draft of this document which is being circulated to the International Labour Office (ILO), regional commissions and other interested organizations for comments. After comments are received and the draft revised, the document will be submitted to the Statistical Commission for consideration at its twenty-fourth session in 1987.

7. As now drafted, this document consists of three chapters in addition to an introduction that briefly describes the important developments that necessitated supplementary principles and recommendations. Chapter I is concerned with the topic of economic characteristics in order to incorporate
the new international standards adopted by the International Labour Organization in 1982 concerning the statistics of the economically active population, and Chapter II deals with the topic of migration to implement as much as possible United Nations recommendations on international migration statistics published in 1979. Chapter II is devoted to the topic of special population groups and data requirements for them in order to analyze their current situation and formulate development programmes. Each chapter also includes a set of tabulations to be prepared in population censuses in line with the draft supplementary principles and recommendations. In addition, a report entitled "Preparation for the 1990 World Population and Housing Census Programme" (E/CN.3/1987/15) will be submitted to the Statistical Commission for consideration at its twenty-fourth session in 1987. The draft of this report is being sent to ILO, FAO, UNESCO, WHO, regional commissions and other interested organizations for their comments and inputs before finalizing it.

III. ADDITIONAL TECHNICAL DOCUMENTATION

8. In addition to the document on supplementary principles and recommendations, the Expert Group identified a number of other technical documents of one kind or another that would be of great assistance to either national census authorities or census data users. Among the technical documents mentioned are:

(a) A technical report to provide guidance to countries on the use of the population and housing census to provide a frame for the census of agriculture. Such a report should include examples of actual experiences. It might be prepared by the FAO Statistics Division in collaboration with the United Nations Statistical Office.

(b) A technical report or manual providing detailed guidance on possible questions and questionnaires that could be used to measure economic activity in accordance with new ILO recommendations in population censuses;

(c) A technical report on national work and experience with classifications of socio-economic groups;

(d) A technical report providing guidance to census officials on the editing, coding and tabulating census data in specific subject-matter fields;

(e) A technical report on the construction and use of a census data base;

(f) A revision of the part of United Nations Population and Housing Census Handbook dealing with the use of sampling in the census to incorporate recent technical developments;

(g) A technical report on the methods of training;

(h) Technical guidelines on census data processing;

(i) Technical reports on the coverage of various special population groups in the census; and
(j) Technical reports on the evaluation and analysis of census results.

9. Further, the Expert Group noted that various agencies and organizations might be involved in the preparation of one or another of the documents suggested above. It welcomed the plans of ILO to complete its Manual of Surveys of Economic Activities by the end of 1986 and also to prepare a manual on the construction and use of national occupational classifications.

IV. TRAINING AND OTHER TECHNICAL CO-OPERATION ACTIVITIES

10. Technical co-operation activities in the field of population and housing census had significantly contributed to the success of the 1980 World Census Programme particularly in many developing countries. The primary support for technical co-operation activities of the United Nations has been provided by the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA). It is considered that technical co-operation activities are equally essential to the success of the 1990 World Population and Housing Census Programme in many developing countries although the nature of such activities may be somewhat different as indicated in Sections A and B below.

A. Training requirements for the 1990 censuses

11. In connection with the 1980 round of censuses, census training workshops/seminars were organized at the regional levels for training nationals of developing countries in each region. Most of them did not have much or any prior experience in census-taking. Therefore, the topics discussed and taught in these workshops were very general in nature. They included basic areas such as the organization of the census office, fundamental concepts and definitions, census topics and questionnaire design, field organization, enumerator training, supervisory controls, etc. They also covered elementary aspects of census cartography, use of sampling in censuses, data processing, etc., that are normally considered as somewhat specialized fields.

12. Further as computer technologies became more and more accessible, countries became increasingly interested in carrying out processing of census data through computers. It became essential for these countries to acquire expertise in computer processing of data. The organizers of census training programmes realized this trend in the demand for training and accordingly, tried to cater for it within the available resources.

13. The substantial gain in knowledge acquired through direct training and other technical co-operation activities described below in section B have enabled the nationals of almost all developing countries to develop a basic technical capability in taking appropriate decisions on the general issues related to population censuses. Against this backdrop, for the 1990 censuses, it may be considered that only a very few countries will still need training in general census topics. For the few countries that still need it, an interregional workshop may be organized. On the other hand, many developing countries may need training workshops/seminars in specific fields of
specialization. Thus, there will be continued and perhaps expanded need for training in the specialized areas as user sophistication increases over time. Computer processing including programming and various software applications should be considered as one important field.

14. For a number of reasons related particularly to the developing countries, concepts, definitions, classification, and coding of economic characteristics always present a complex problem to the census-takers. It will be desirable to organize regional workshops to train nationals of developing countries in this specific area. Organizing workshops in sampling to train nationals of countries will also be useful, inter alia, for conducting post-enumeration surveys and other household surveys.

15. In discussing the above training requirements, the Expert Group on the 1990 World Population and Housing Census Programme placed emphasis on the need for continuing training in all areas of population and housing census activities. Although it recognized that there would be greater need for training in census data processing including the use of computer software for demographic analysis and in specialized areas, the Expert Group stressed that training in planning and organizational aspects of census-taking should not be de-emphasized.

B. Other technical co-operation needs for the 1990 censuses

16. During the 1980 census decade, technical co-operation activities were carried out in the following major areas: the provision of technical advisory services through country, regional or interregional advisers; the provision of training through workshops, fellowships and study tours; the provision of funds for the purchase of equipment, and the provision of funds for selected local costs. The substantive support from the Statistical Office has in recent years been carried out on a shared basis by its technical and interregional advisers and the regular programme staff. In addition, the regional commissions there have usually had one or more regional advisors posts in general demographic statistics, population censuses and surveys and statistical data processing, and in the case of Economic Commission for Africa there was also a post of a Regional Adviser on Census /Survey Cartography.

17. The above-mentioned advisory services can be drawn by countries in the respective region with no cost to the country's project. During the past few years, however, it was observed that the nature of country requests had somewhat changed. Because of past technical assistance projects that have developed the capability of the nationals, some developing countries now possess sufficient census expertise so that they require only short-term consultancies.

18. In connection with the 1990 World Population and Housing Census Programme, the Expert Group considered that short-term consultancy missions, whether carried out by specially recruited consultants, regional advisers or technical or inter-regional advisers, are an important component of technical advisory services. Nevertheless, it was stressed that there would still be a pressing need for long-term resident experts in a number of countries. Further, the Expert Group underscored the importance of close co-ordination
of multilateral and bilateral technical co-operation activities related to the 1990 round of population and housing censuses. 7/

V. ACTION BY THE SUB-COMMITTEE

19. The Sub-Committee may wish to:

(a) Comment on the Secretariat's preparations for the 1990 World Population and Housing Census Programme and consider inter-agency collaboration and work in census field,

(b) Suggest other preparatory activities that may be needed for the success of the Programme.

NOTES


6/ Ibid, para. 58.

7/ Ibid, para. 63.