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**United Nations Expert Group Meeting on  
Measuring international migration: Concepts and methods  
4–7 December 2006  
United Nations Statistics Division, New York**

**Report of the Expert Group Meeting on  
Measuring International Migration: Concepts and Methods\***

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## **I. Introduction**

### **A. Background and objective of the meeting**

1. The United Nations Expert Group Meeting on Measuring International Migration: Concepts and Methods was convened in New York, 4-7 December 2006. The meeting was organized by the Social and Housing Statistics Section of the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), in response to the call of various international fora for improved availability and comparability of statistics on international migration. (See Annex 1 for information note on the meeting.)

2. The main objectives of the meeting were to (i) assess the policy requirements for international migration statistics and the challenges faced by national statistical systems in meeting them; (ii) review national practices in the compilation of migration statistics; (iii) identify difficulties associated with the recommended concepts and definitions; and (iv) on the basis of these assessments, develop a plan to improve statistics on international migration. The meeting also sought to understand reasons for the lack of implementation of the 1998 *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration, Revision 1*.

3. The meeting brought together experts on international migration statistics—representatives of national statistical offices, national immigration offices, and academic/research institutions, as well as international and regional organizations. Participants included experts from 12 countries—Argentina, Belgium, Dominican Republic, Italy, Mexico, Norway, Philippines, Russian Federation, South Africa, Sri Lanka, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and United States of America—two of whom were from national academic/research institutions—Groupe d'étude de démographie appliqué (Belgium) and Moscow State University (Russian Federation). It also included experts from international and regional organizations—the United Nations regional commissions for Africa (ECA), Europe (ECE), Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and Western Asia (ESCWA), the Statistical Office of the European Communities (Eurostat), the International Labour Office (ILO), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and the World Bank. Several offices within the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs were also represented—the Population Division, the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Division for Social Policy and Development. (See Annex 2 for the list of participants.)

### **B. Opening session**

4. The meeting was opened by Mr. Paul Cheung, Director of UNSD. In his opening statement, Mr. Cheung underlined that tracking migration effectively had always been difficult and migration statistics were not always comparable across and within countries due to differences in the concepts and definitions used in their collection. He invited the experts to identify the concepts and definitions that needed further specification and refining; determine effective methods for exploiting different sources of data; and suggest ways to extend successes and lessons learned to other countries and regions, and to improve data exchange between receiving and sending countries.

5. Mr. Jeremiah Banda, Chief of the Demographic and Social Statistics Branch, United Nations Statistics Division, reiterated the objectives of the meeting, welcomed the participants and invited the delegates to introduce themselves.

### **C. Organization of the meeting**

6. As laid out in the Organization of work (Annex 3), the meeting was structured along the following main topics:

- The need for and uses of statistics on international migration
- Concepts and definitions
- Measurement of international migration flows
- Measurement of migrant stock
- Special efforts to estimate emigration
- Data sharing arrangements

7. For each topic, a number of presentations were made (see Annex 3). Presentations were followed by open discussion. All papers and presentations are available at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/meetings/egm/migrationegm06/default.htm>. The concluding sessions focused on next steps and recommendations, drawing on highlights from the discussions presented by the Rapporteur.

8. The meeting was co-chaired by Ms. Lina Castro (Philippines), Mr. Nicholas O'Rourke (United Kingdom), Mr. Heston Phillips (South Africa), and Ms. Maria Pia Sorvillo (Italy). The Rapporteur for the meeting was Mr. Michael Hoefler (United States).

## **II. Summary of presentations and discussions**

9. The salient issues that emerged from the presentations and discussions are summarized in the paragraphs that follow. The summary is organized by topic, and reflects both the presentations and subsequent discussions.

### **A. The need for and uses of statistics on international migration**

10. The presentation “Emerging issues in migration policies: implications for data requirements” by the United Nations Population Division (UNPD) stressed the importance of international migration statistics from the point of view of development and raised five key “emerging issues” of international migration for which data were required: (i) transnational communities, (ii) return and circular migration, (iii) migration of highly skilled persons, (iv) irregular migration and (v) remittances.

11. The presenter noted that there was a lack of migration statistics at the global level: not only were statistics on those “emerging issues” insufficient, but even data on basic migration trends and characteristics of migrants were lacking.

12. In order to improve the availability of migration statistics at the international level, it was essential to use various sources—administrative records, censuses and sample surveys—and to combine them to provide a comprehensive view of international migration. The presentation also emphasized the importance of taking advantage of the 2010 census round to improve the collection

of international migration data. Furthermore, the collection and dissemination of migration statistics at the international level needed to be strengthened.

13. The presentation from UNECA described the need for and availability of migration statistics in Africa. It reported that migration information collected at the border was often administered by the Department of Home Affairs of the country concerned. However such information was rarely disseminated. The main sources of migration statistics in African countries were therefore censuses and, to a limited extent, surveys. The presentation stressed the need for the international community to support African countries to produce timely and consistent official migration statistics. Efforts to improve migration statistics should engage all stakeholders and aim at improving statistical capacity of the institutions involved.

14. The presentation “Availability of statistics on international migration” by UNSD illustrated, based on international migration statistics collected through the Demographic Yearbook system, the gaps and deficiencies in the available migration data. It showed that data availability at the international level was limited on both migrant stock and flows. Most countries that provided statistics on migrant stock disaggregated data by sex and age, but data on occupation of the migrant stock or their duration of stay in the country were only available for a small number of countries. For countries that provided data on migration flows, information on the sources and coverage of data provided was often lacking.

15. Following the presentations, experts stressed the need for data on international migration to support both national and international policies on migration and development. They noted that basic data on migration trends and characteristics of migrants were still lacking, and it was therefore difficult for many countries to fulfill policy needs. In addition, data on emigration were rarely available.

16. The meeting identified several reasons for the data gaps: (i) there was a lack of coordination between administrative data collection institutions (e.g., Ministry of Interior or Department of Home Affairs) and national statistical offices (NSOs); (ii) data collected from administrative sources were often not compiled and published on a regular basis; (iii) when data were available from various sources, it was difficult to combine them to provide a coherent picture of international migration due to variations in concepts and definitions; and (iv) mechanisms to collect emigration data did not always exist.

17. For the improvement of basic international migration statistics, the experts reiterated that the 2010 census round was an essential benchmark and the opportunity that it provided for improving the collection of international migration data should be exploited. To accomplish this, countries would need to implement the international census recommendations on international migration for the 2010 round of censuses, and some countries would require further guidance in the form of technical materials and advice. It was also suggested that an advocacy note on the importance of censuses in measuring international migration be prepared by UNSD, UNFPA, the United Nations regional commissions and other relevant entities.

18. Noting that the population census could only provide data at five or ten-year intervals, depending on the frequency of the national censuses, the experts stressed that other sources, such as registers, other administrative sources and sample surveys, should also be exploited in order to produce complete and accurate migration statistics. However, it was pointed out that complementary use of the variety of sources was hampered by the lack of data sharing between

administrative data collection institutions and national statistical offices, and inconsistencies in the concepts and definitions among different sources. The need to support the presentation of these data with comprehensive metadata was also underscored.

19. The experts recognized the need to provide technical support to countries that did not have the capacity to produce consistent and timely official international migration statistics. The technical support would need to be extended to all institutions involved in the collection, processing and dissemination of migration data.

20. The experts took note of the gaps and deficiencies in statistics on international migration collected through the Demographic Yearbook system. Two contrary views on improving the availability and quality of migration statistics at the international level were discussed. Some experts were of the opinion that the priority for the United Nations should be on obtaining and disseminating whatever data were available from countries and in whatever format countries were able to provide them. Others placed greater emphasis on the United Nations developing guidelines to improve the consistency and conformity of national migration statistics to international concepts and framework, so as to ensure comparability of the statistics. It was agreed that while there was a need to make as much migration statistics as possible available to users, presenting un-harmonized migration statistics could lead to misinterpretation or misuse of these statistics by users, who did not always make judicious use of the metadata. The experts therefore suggested that making existing statistics available at the international level should be balanced with the development of guidelines for harmonized statistics.

21. In order to make existing migration statistics more available at the international level, the experts urged UNSD to be more proactive and to communicate more actively with data providers in countries by, inter alia, providing information and feedback on what had been received and, where necessary, sending out reminders to countries that had not responded within the agreed time frame. Moreover, clear guidance should be provided on the level of detail required for the metadata. Finally, UNSD was requested to review the current questionnaire on international migration statistics to make it more feasible and realistic for countries to complete.

22. Some experts proposed that the UNSD data collection on international migration be conducted at the regional level so that the questionnaire could be customized for the region where there was greater homogeneity among countries, and where translation of questionnaires into official language(s) of the region would help countries better understand and respond to the data request. While endorsing the benefits of sending out translated questionnaires, it was pointed out that customizing the questionnaires to the specificities of the regions could limit data comparability at the global level.

## **B. Concepts and definitions**

23. The presentation “A review of United Nations recommendations for statistics on international migration” examined the concepts and definitions relevant to international migration statistics, including those used in measuring flows (international migrant, country/place of usual residence, long-term/short-term migrant) and stock (international migrant stock, foreign or foreign-born population in the country).

24. It also identified difficulties in implementing the concept of “migrant” in countries; notably, that the term “migrant” might not be readily accepted by some countries. In addition,

various elements of the “migrant” definition might need further refinement; and the distinction between long-term and short-term migrants might need further clarification. Moreover, there might be additional categories of migrants (undocumented migrants, people with foreign-background) or special population groups (second-generation immigrants) that needed to be defined.

25. The presentation “United Nations recommendations: the European perspective” outlined the advantages and disadvantages of using population registers in the collection of migration statistics. It also reviewed the applicability of the United Nations recommendations in the European context. It was pointed out that European countries were increasingly using population registers in the compilation of migration statistics. Countries were able to compile consistent stock and flow statistics with the same concepts and definitions from these registers. In a centralized population registration system it was also possible to reflect the actual duration of stay/absence in the immigration/emigration statistics.

26. There were drawbacks, however, when the population register was used for migration statistics, the main problems being incomplete coverage and incomparability of data at the international level. Registration and de-registration were usually based on some legal rules, rather than strictly on changes in the usual place of residence. Those rules might differ within a country (e.g., between citizens and foreigners) and between countries. In addition, the registration system was essentially based on self-reporting and coverage varied significantly. In most countries, emigration was much less covered than immigration.

27. The presentation “Improving the quality and availability of migration statistics in Europe: reviewing concepts and definitions to develop EU legislation for migration statistics” provided an overview of the European Union (EU) legislation on migration statistics and its implications for future data collection in EU countries. The presentation also demonstrated the potential difficulties posed by the use of the “12-month duration of stay” in the measurement of migration, and the variety of outcomes that were possible. The “12-month” requirement might be difficult to apply in countries where other durations were known to have been in use. In addition, the use of actual or legal duration of stay by some countries could introduce incomparability as it is different from intended duration of stay. It was also pointed out that some countries that did not consider their own citizens as migrants would be unwilling to use duration of stay in their definition of a migrant.

28. The definition of international migrant, which sets the period of stay in the country of current residence at a minimum of 12 months, was accepted by the experts in principle. However, it was pointed out that the United Nations recommendations on migration statistics were not currently being widely applied, due to their lack of relevance to many national data collection systems and the difficulty in making them operational. Experts called for clear instructions on the application of the “12-month” rule, and particularly guidance on the use and measurement of intended versus actual stay.

29. Reacting to the difficulty of implementing the concept of “migrant” following the United Nations recommendations, the experts agreed that this concept needed further refinement, taking into account national definitions and sensitivities. Experts also suggested that additional categories of migrant stock and migration flows needed to be considered, for example temporary migrants, undocumented migrants, circular migrants and return migrants, as well as population with “foreign or immigrant background” or second-generation migrants. Experts agreed that it was essential to develop supplementary recommendations and practical guidelines addressing these conceptual and definitional issues, possibly in the form of a handbook.

## C. Measurement of international migration flows

### (a) From administrative registers

30. The presentation “Sources of statistics of international migration in CIS countries” noted that progress had been made since the dissolution of the former USSR, with regard to both the availability and quality of migration statistics. However, these countries had adopted different definitions and methodologies for their data collection, and, as a result, there was now little comparability between members of the CIS.

31. In addition, data from many sources were either not reliable or not available. The coverage and reliability of administrative registers, especially those that involve de-registration, was low in the CIS countries. Border statistics were used to estimate illegal net migration, considered as the difference in the numbers of entries and exits. Data from other administrative sources were difficult to obtain and therefore could not be used as alternatives.

32. The presentation “Using register data to monitor the immigration and emigration of immigrants in Norway” described the use of Central Population Register (CPR) as the main source for migration statistics in Norway. In general, the quality of data collected through the CPR was high and quality checking was done through its general and frequent use. The presentation underscored the essential role of the “pin-code” in migration data collection and analysis. The data collected through this system would make it possible for Norway to follow the United Nations recommendations in its data presentation, in particular on long-term immigrants. However, the system of CPR as a source of migration statistics had its pitfalls—a sizable portion of emigration was not properly registered. In addition, the coverage of asylum seekers and refugees was not complete because only those with a residence permit were included in the system. It did not, for example, include asylum seekers whose applications were rejected. Moreover, short-term immigrants were not included in the CPR but in another parallel system.

33. The presentation highlighted the fact that the success of this model derived from (i) cooperation of governmental agencies and data exchange between the CPR and the immigration authorities; and (ii) the use of a definition of migrant that took into account not only the information recorded at the port of entry but also information collected in the CPR after entering the country.

34. The presentation “Measuring immigration and foreign population in Italy” described the role of administrative sources in migration data collection under a decentralized system. The population registers in Italy, which included the registers of vital events and covered the resident population and Italians living abroad, were managed by 8100 Italian municipalities. The population register was based on compulsory registration and a large amount of information on migrants such as the characteristics of the migrants and origin and destination of moves within the country were collected through the register.

35. There were, however, drawbacks with regard to its coverage and the quality of migration statistics generated. First, the compulsory registration was not always followed because of the complexity of the registration and deregistration processes. The total population size tended to be over-estimated due to the low level of deregistration. Second, the quality of statistics often varied among municipalities depending on the size of their population, the level of migration in the municipality, and the awareness of registration officials regarding the relevance of migration statistics. Third, illegal immigrants were not covered because registration was available only to

foreigners with legal status. Fourth, the data available to the national statistical office of Italy (ISTAT) were limited to aggregate statistics on selected characteristics of resident population (age, sex, citizenship, etc.) and on demographic flows (births, deaths and migration). ISTAT did not have direct access to the population registers.

36. The discussions brought out many similarities among the administrative register systems in countries. Almost all population registers were based on self-reporting and therefore the coverage depended on the complexity of the registration/deregistration process, the incentives and disincentives to register or deregister, and national/local political regulations and policies governing registration. It was underlined that statisticians would need to know the rules of the registration system and how they were being applied, as well as understand individuals' incentives and disincentives to register, in order to deduce the completeness and potential weaknesses of the systems and to more fully appreciate the quality and coverage of the data. In addition, knowledge of politically-driven national/local policies on population and migration was deemed useful (e.g., some municipalities might prefer not to deregister people to avoid showing a decreased population).

37. The experts thus reiterated the importance of checking the coverage of registers. It was proposed that census data could be used to check the coverage of and update data in registers, although the confidentiality laws that governed their use might be a hindrance to implementing this. Clear guidance was needed on how to evaluate and augment registration data with data from other sources, such as sample surveys.

38. In most countries that used the population register as a source of migration statistics, the registration system was operated by an agency other than the NSO (an exception was Iceland where the Statistics Office ran the registration system). As a result it was not likely that statisticians could effect changes in the rules of registration to facilitate compliance with the United Nations recommendations. Therefore, it was felt that UNSD would need to provide guidelines on how existing administrative registers could be used to produce estimates that would comply with the United Nations recommendations.

39. In general, the registration system, regardless of how good the coverage was, could not provide certain types of data, such as those on illegal or undocumented immigrants. For this type of information, the census and various other administrative records and registers, including records on apprehensions and asylum seekers, were better sources of data. For example, in Belgium, there was a register (a waiting list) for immigrants already in the country but not yet granted legal residence. Awareness of the potential as well as the aim of the various data sources in the country was considered essential to their being used judiciously. For example, registers were mainly designed for registering vital events of the regular population and not for capturing illegal migration.

40. There were notable differences between registration systems in the reporting countries: Norway had a centralized system (national level) while Italy had a decentralized system (municipality level). In a centralized system, the level of coverage of the registration was uniform and quality checking was easy to accomplish because of the system's widespread and frequent use. In a decentralized system (as in the case of Italy), the quality of the data generated depended to a large extent on the work carried out at the local level and on whether, and how, information from registers affected the distribution of resources. The level of coverage of a decentralized register system varied greatly from one municipality to another. In addition, quality checking was not as

straightforward in this as it was in a centralized system. Therefore, in general, a centralized system was preferable to a decentralized system.

(b) From other administrative sources

41. The presentation “Measuring international migration flows through administrative registers: the Mexican experience” focused on two main sources of administrative data on migration in Mexico, namely, the registration of arrivals and departures at airports and major ports, and residence and work permit applications. In Mexico, border collection statistics was not complete, and no information was available on arrivals and departures by land. In addition, the system could not provide data on categories of immigrants/emigrants as defined in the United Nations recommendations because information was not available on any of the elements pertinent to the “migrant” definition, i.e., purpose of stay, duration of stay and change of usual place of residence. Residence and work permit applications could provide information, although fragmented, on some categories of migrant flows. The residence permit applications generated data on the total number of people who applied for immigrant status in Mexico; and the work permit applications on the number of people who were authorized to work on a temporary basis at the southern border of the country.

42. The presentation “Measuring forced displacement in industrialized countries: data sources, methods, and challenges in estimating refugee and asylum-seeker numbers” reported that refugees were a special category of migrants and that UNHCR compiled data from a range of sources, including Government statistics; UNHCR country operations; and NGOs/implementing partners. These data could be drawn from either the registration system or surveys; and in some cases were from estimation. While it was necessary to distinguish between asylum seekers and irregular migration, in reality it was difficult to separate forced from economically motivated migrants; and receiving countries did not often make such distinctions.

43. Some of the main challenges in the measurement of refugees and asylum seekers related to (a) the scope and definitions (i.e., asylum migration nexus, terminology, who was a refugee?); (b) data sources and triangulations—coverage, register updating, sources for triangulation; (c) data quality—timeliness, comparability, compliance with recommendations; (d) human resources issues on skills and training, uses of data for planning, and data protection and confidentiality. The presentation stressed that refugees and asylum seekers were a key category of international migration; and that there was need to classify the data by age, sex, and location whenever possible. Moreover, stateless persons should be considered a specific category to be distinguished from others.

44. During the general discussion a question was raised as to how data on arrivals/departures could be combined with those on applications for work permits or residence permits. It was felt that combining these data was generally difficult because not only did sources not have a common unit, but also that they reported on the number of inflows/outflows (in the case of arrival/departure records) and the number of applications (in the case of the permits system) rather than on persons, which was the unit required for migration statistics.

45. There was a suggestion that a unique identification (ID) system be used in all administrative sources to help link these sources. It was stressed that this would be an ideal component of a system to facilitate the combination of different datasets. The experience of many countries that already have ID-based systems was that it could not easily be used for this purpose

for various reasons; in particular, in view of privacy and confidentiality concerns. In addition, accuracy of the existing IDs was sometimes questionable. It was possible in some systems for some people to register for an ID for the sole purpose of claiming certain benefits even though they were not physically present in the country. There was a suggestion that a feasibility study be conducted on the use of a unique ID system to generate integrated statistics on international migration.

46. On refugees and asylum seekers it was noted that statelessness was becoming a big issue, possibly related to increased sensitivity of national governments, and this was leading to better coverage and availability of these data. There was a need to present data on asylum seekers by cohort and also to take into account the time it had taken before a decision was made on cases.

47. Experts noted the importance of considering refugees and asylum seekers as an integral part of international migrants. Some adjustments in the concepts used in the refugee/asylum seeker framework would however be required in order to fit this category into the overall framework for international migration statistics.

#### (c) From border data collection system

48. The presentation “Use of border data collection to measure international migration flows” described Sri Lanka’s border collection system. In Sri Lanka, passports were scanned at the point of arrival/departure and the information stored in a database. While the system was accurate, the information collected was limited to the flight number, passport number, name, nationality, and sex, due to the nature of the system, and therefore international migrants could not be identified among the travelers. Additional information on the travelers, such as date and place of birth, profession and purpose of visit, were collected through the embarkation/disembarkation cards, and could be used to identify international migrants. However, this information was not being processed.

49. The presentation “Estimating migration flows in South Africa” described the system used in South Africa to collect data on international migration flows. There was no form to be completed at the border and the data on migration flows could only be obtained from permits issued before travelers entered the country. As a result, not all types of flows were recorded, and it was not possible to distinguish short-term and long-term migrants. Moreover, there was no mechanism to track changes in the migration status of people after they have entered the country.

50. The information on the outflow of long-term migrants in South Africa was obtained through immigration data of other countries and was limited. It was stressed in the presentation that a stronger collaboration between the Department of Home Affairs and the national statistical office was necessary to ensure better access to the administrative data.

51. The presentation “Migration flows—a summary of the United Kingdom’s recent experience and the challenges ahead” examined the system of measuring international migration based on administrative sources and surveys in the UK, with a focus on the International Passenger Survey (IPS). Multiple sources (IPS, data on asylum seekers and their dependents from the Home Office, as well as data on border crossings between the UK and Ireland from the Irish Central Statistical Office) were used in the UK to estimate the total international migration.

52. The only source in the UK that covered both inflow and outflow of migration was the International Passenger Survey (IPS), which was conducted at the ports of the principal air, sea and

tunnel routes into and out of the UK. Estimates of migration were made based on passengers' intended length of stay. However, adjustments were made to take into account two groups of people: those who intended to stay for more than one year but actually stayed for less than one year and those who intended to stay for less than one year but actually stayed for more than one year. In general, the IPS was considered to be a reliable source of migration flow statistics in the UK, with some pitfalls: the sample size was relatively small, and the number of migrants yielded by this sample even smaller (around 3500 migrants in 2005); and the survey only captured information on intended duration of stay, requiring adjustments to reflect actual duration of stay. As for compliance with the United Nations recommendations, the UK was able to produce data on long-term migrants. Challenges remained in compiling statistics on short-term migrants as defined by the United Nations due to methodological difficulties in making adjustments from intended to actual duration of stay, as well as the potential for multiple counting of short-term migrants within a given period of data collection.

53. During the discussion the experts noted the advantages and disadvantages of border data collection, as illustrated in the presentations. While border collection of data could sometimes provide complete and accurate coverage of migration flows, much remained to be done to develop this source to its full potential. Currently, in some countries, the information was either limited to only a few characteristics or not processed (as in the case of Sri Lanka). In some others, only a portion of migrants were captured and the coverage of outflows was very poor. In Argentina, for example, while flow statistics was available from border collection, this source was generally not used due to the deficiencies in the data: inflow data were reliable at certain borders (where data collection was computerized) but not at others (where only simple paper forms were filled but not necessarily processed). Border surveys used in some countries (for example, the United Kingdom) have proven to be effective in collecting a rich set of data, with the potential of being compatible with the United Nations recommendations. Detailed breakdown of such data, however, was limited due to the small number of migrants captured by the survey.

#### (d) The role of population census and other household-based field enquiries

54. The presentation "New alternatives for estimating migration to the United States using the American Community Survey (ACS)" illustrated the possibilities offered by the ACS to estimate net international migration (NIM) across US borders. Three methods of estimating NIM were explored: the first one estimated net flows for each year based on data covering a multi-year interval (2000-2004); the second one was based on estimates from the variable "residence a year ago"; and the third one from the variable "year of entry".

55. Levels of net migration derived from the three methods differed, but a similar trend over time was observed in all three. It was noted that data obtained from surveys were often limited, for several reasons: imputations were usually required; interpretation of the results could be difficult; and there was generally under-coverage of certain groups of people.

56. The presentation "International migration statistics in the ESCWA region" underlined the lack of migration statistics in this region. Administrative registers were underdeveloped in the region, and therefore the main source of information was the population census. Data from population censuses were, however, not widely available although most of the countries in the region collected information on international migration in their censuses. There were a number of reasons for the lack of migration statistics, among which was the issue of terminology. Most of the countries in the ESCWA region defined a migrant as someone who had moved into the country and

would stay in the country permanently. In general, foreign workers were not considered as migrants even if they intended to stay or had stayed in the country for one year or more.

57. The discussion focused on the use of existing data in the country for the purpose of international reporting. Some experts believed that countries should be encouraged to adjust their definitions to conform more closely to the international recommendations, while others suggested that international agencies should work with the available data in any form, and produce the desired tables or estimates at the international level. However, considering the concerns expressed by countries to the Statistical Commission on the practice of international agencies' publishing figures that deviated from official national statistics, the group felt that the first option was preferable. It was reiterated that international organizations should give priority to assisting countries with the adoption of international standards by, among other means, developing guidelines on how this could be done and, as necessary, providing capacity-building training.

58. Experts agreed that any estimates produced by international organizations should undergo a validation process with the country concerned before such estimates were published. In addition, it was deemed necessary for international organizations to work closely with countries to standardize methodologies in order to avoid discrepancies between national and international data sets.

59. The experts recognized the value of the sample survey as a vehicle for the collection of migration data and stressed the importance of providing users with explanations on methodologies used. The experts indicated that documentation on survey methodology was essential for accurate use of survey data by policy makers and other users.

#### **D. Measurement of migrant stock**

60. The presentation "Use of censuses in the measurement of international migrant stock" by UNSD reported the results of a review of questions relating to international migration in the 2000 census round questionnaires of 153 countries. It found that only one country would be able to identify an "international migrant" as defined in the United Nations recommendations, based on the questions it included in the census. Most countries asked either country of birth or country of citizenship, and sometimes both, in their censuses. A number of countries asked place of previous residence or place of residence at some specified point in the past. The presenter posed a number of questions to the experts, such as: why countries were not following the United Nations recommended definition of international migrant stock; and how important the elements (i) change of country of residence and (ii) one year of stay in the previous country of residence were, for the definition of stock of migrants.

61. The presentation "The Argentinean experience in the collection and compilation of statistics on international migration" described the main sources for statistics on migrant stock (censuses and surveys) in Argentina. Population censuses had been used extensively in Argentina to estimate the stock of migrants as well as to track changes in population composition using the variable "period of arrival". A number of questions were used in the census to identify migrant stock: country of birth, residence abroad five years prior to the census and year of arrival in the country.

62. The sample survey was another important source for migration statistics in Argentina. The two surveys used for the collection of migration statistics were the Permanent Household Survey and the Complementary International Migration Survey. The former included a limited set of

questions on migration and provided basic tabulations on migrants, while the latter, which was newly introduced in Argentina, supplemented the 2001 census by providing more detailed data on characteristics of migrants, such as socioeconomic profile of the immigrants, migration networks, itineraries of migrants, economic exchanges and remittances.

63. The paper “Estimating the immigrant stock in the United States by legal status using administrative and census data” illustrated the method of combining different data sources to estimate legally resident and “unauthorized resident” immigrant stock. The “unauthorized resident” referred to was defined as a foreign-born person living in the United States who had entered without inspection or who, having been admitted temporarily, had stayed past the date he/she was required to leave. The estimate of the stock of unauthorized residents was constructed using a residual method, i.e., it was the difference of total foreign-born population and those who were legal residents.

64. The estimation procedure involved combining two sources of data. The foreign-born population was estimated from the American Community Survey (ACS), while the legally resident population was estimated from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) administrative data, which provided information on legal permanent residents, refugees, asylees, and non-immigrants. The year of entry was the variable providing a bridge between the ACS survey data and the DHS administrative data. Adjustments to data were necessary to produce the estimates. The presentation made it clear that the accuracy of the data produced using this method was dependent on the accurate reporting of year of entry and the magnitude of sampling errors in the ACS.

65. The presentation “Main data sources of international migration in the Russian Federation” provided an overview of the migration data collection system in the country. In the Russian Federation, the population census was the main source of data for migrant stock. The following questions in the 2002 Russian census were relevant to migration: place of birth, citizenship, Russian and other language abilities, ethnicity and period of uninterrupted residence in the settlement. The micro-census conducted in 1994 collected information on international migrants and for the first time included questions on reason for move. There were also other sources of migration statistics such as the visa system, border control and the system of foreigners’ registration. However, data from those sources were either not published or not always available to the Russian Statistical Office (Rosstat). Even when data were processed and disseminated by the administrative institutions, the coverage was often very low.

66. During the discussion, the experts emphasized that the purpose of producing international migration statistics was to support decision making and therefore United Nations guidelines should focus on how to collect data that would be of the interest to policy makers. In terms of the stock data, policy makers in some countries were generally more interested in the stock of population “with foreign or immigration background” rather than in “migrant stock” as defined by the United Nations recommendations. An expert suggested the following variables for identifying the stock of population “with foreign or immigration background”: country of birth; country of previous residence; country of current citizenship; year of naturalization; country of citizenship at birth; country of birth of parents; country of current citizenship of parents; year of first arrival; duration of residence in the country; reason for entering the country; and legal status to enter and stay in the country.

67. With regard to the population “with foreign or immigration background”, it was pointed out that policy makers needed to know the size, composition, past trends and prospective numbers of

this category of migrants. Some tabulations suggested as useful for policy were: Population by country of current citizenship cross-tabulated by country of birth; Population by legal status in the country (considering legal residence and naturalization policies); and Population recently arrived in the country (as this group had specific needs in terms of social support, training, etc.).

68. Another area of interest mentioned by experts was the integration of immigrants into the receiving country. In this regard, longitudinal data on migrants tabulated by characteristics such as skills (including language skills) and occupation would be needed, for both legal and illegal migrants. In addition, information on skills, occupation and main source of livelihood of migrants would be needed to assess the economic and social impact of migrants on the receiving countries.

69. To address the demographic aging of some countries, information on the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of migrants, including return migrants, was considered useful.

70. Policy makers were also interested in migration flows because it formed the main component of trends in stock figures. Flows might also be indicative of future changes in stock, especially as far as the stock of recent immigrants was concerned. It was noted that policy makers dealing with border control were very interested in monitoring flows of legal immigrants and new asylum seekers, and in estimating undocumented migrants.

71. It was reported that UNECE was interested in the topic of remittances and hoped that this group of experts would assist with further developing this subject.

## **E. Special efforts to estimate emigration**

72. The presentation “Measuring international migration in the Philippines” described the main sources of data on emigration and on Filipinos abroad and the institutional arrangements in the Philippines to track their numbers. The main focus of the presentation was on how information on Filipinos living abroad was obtained. A combination of the following sources was used to generate information on Filipinos living abroad: emigration registration (Commission on Filipinos Overseas), departing overseas Filipino workers (Philippines Overseas Employment Administration), information from Philippine embassies and consulates (passports issued, head count, registration of marriage to foreigners, etc.), embarkation/disembarkation cards (Department of Tourism), reports from Filipino overseas associations and organizations, reports from foreign embassies and consulates as well as census reports of foreign countries on immigrants.

73. Some limitations and constraints were experienced in obtaining data on overseas Filipinos. Double counting was a potential problem with the system. In addition, no complete picture was available on return migrants, second- or third-generation overseas Filipinos, or Filipinos who had acquired foreign citizenship. Proposals had been introduced to improve embarkation and disembarkation cards for departing and returning Filipinos and to use the population census to collect information on families of overseas Filipinos.

74. The presentation “Estimation of emigration from the United States using international data sources” noted that most countries, including the US, did not collect data on emigration although this information was needed for the compilation of net international migration. However, it was possible to obtain data on US citizens living abroad from the immigration data of receiving countries. A number of challenges were noted, however. The first related to variations in the definitions, which resulted in differences in the numbers from sending and receiving countries. It

was pointed out that for the US, for example, the inclusion or exclusion of military personnel from data sources added to these difficulties. Another source of deviation related to how persons with multiple citizenships were treated in countries where they lived as this would impact on whether or not they were reported as US citizens. Another challenge raised was how data from different receiving countries could be combined in light of their varying degrees of quality.

75. The presentation “Measuring emigrants: various options for a difficult challenge” reported on the measurement of emigration from data in receiving countries based on a pilot project involving 16 European countries, Australia, Canada and the United States. The project’s aims were to assess the feasibility of using other countries’ data to estimate emigration in sending countries and to develop guidelines for measuring emigration through data on migrant stock and migration flows in receiving countries. The project concluded that:

- (i) Data on inflows in receiving countries were not necessarily more complete than those on outflows in sending countries;
- (ii) There was no evidence that any one source of data produced more accurate results than others;
- (iii) Immigration statistics in receiving countries was nonetheless a relatively good source for countries lacking emigration statistics and could provide benchmark data to countries with some emigration statistics.

76. It was pointed out that emigration data from a sending country were often different from immigration data in a corresponding receiving country due to differences in the concepts and definitions used, as well as in the methods and coverage of the data collection. For the same reasons, the accuracy and comparability of emigration data derived from different receiving countries could vary widely.

77. The possibility of using the population census to capture emigration was raised by some experts. However, it was pointed out that if entire households emigrated, they would likely not be captured in the census.

## **F. Data sharing arrangements**

78. The presentation “United Nations *Demographic Yearbook* data collection and dissemination—focus on migration data” described the joint migration data collection effort of UNSD and Eurostat, which aimed at reducing the reporting burden of countries. The UNSD electronic dissemination of migration data and census-related metadata were also demonstrated.

79. The presentation “Programme on international migration in Latin America (IMILA)” recounted that project, which was led by the Latin American and Caribbean Demographic Centre (CELADE) in ECLAC, was launched in the 1970s and was still ongoing. The objective of the project was to provide a picture of immigration and emigration in the region and to provide a regional platform for the exchange of data between countries. The project involved the collection of micro-data as well as the compilation and dissemination of tables on immigration and emigration estimates and profiles of migrants, on selected participating countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.

80. The meeting recognized the importance of coordination among international and regional organizations and agencies in the collection of data on international migration as a way of

significantly reducing the reporting burden of countries. Participants expressed their appreciation for the joint data collection activities now in place in European region, and urged the United Nations Statistics Division to develop similar arrangements in other regions as well. In that context, special mention was made of Africa, where the newly established African Statistical Centre was seen to provide a good avenue to enhance the regional statistical capacities, including data collection.

81. The participants recommended that more detailed and comprehensive guidelines be prepared with regard to the exchange of micro-data. The experience of ECLAC illustrated the advantages of such exchange of micro-data from censuses regarding the country of birth of non-native born population. However, the experts noted that the portability of such a project was limited by the concerns about the confidentiality and privacy of census records. Thus, the experts welcomed the fact that the next meeting of the United Nations Statistical Commission would discuss the treatment of micro-data and compliance with the principles of official statistics, and provide guidelines to that effect.

82. Participants agreed that the dissemination of data was a crucial component of the work in the field of migration statistics. The importance of disseminating the meta-data together with the data was reiterated. Participants noted with appreciation the proposal of the United Nations Statistics Division to provide access to the census questions on international migration, together with the scanned image of the actual census questionnaire, in addition to disseminating statistics on stock of international migrants.

### **III. CONCLUSIONS: NEXT STEPS**

83. The meeting noted that not much progress had been made in terms of availability and comparability of international migration statistics at the national and international levels, since the *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration, Revision 1*, was issued in 1998. From the interventions of various experts during the sessions it was clear that the recommendations were not being widely applied, nor were the countries providing data and descriptions of data sources on the annual data requests of UNSD. Generally, the development of migration statistics had lagged behind most other fields of social statistics. It was therefore necessary to outline some key actions that would help build up the field, at international, regional and national levels.

84. In the concluding session of the meeting, the experts discussed the steps needed to move migration statistics forward. These are synthesized in the paragraphs that follow.

#### **A. Conceptual work**

85. There was a general agreement that there were no serious problems with the United Nations recommended concepts and definitions, although the experts pointed out that some definitions required further elaboration to better respond to policy needs. Place of usual residence remained a key variable; while the use of “intended duration of stay” was questioned (some alternatives were actual or legal). The criteria for distinguishing long-term versus short-term migration varied from one country to another; however, such a distinction was necessary as temporary migrant work and short-term migration were growing in importance. Experts pointed out that the 12-month period of stay might be an arbitrary cut-off but it was important as a basis for producing internationally comparable data.

86. The treatment of certain migrant categories such as students, armed forces, refugees and asylum seekers, was not yet clear. It was noted that refugees and asylum seekers were considered as international migrants if they met the criteria set out in relevant definitions. While refugees and asylum seekers already formed part of the framework proposed in the 1998 recommendations, the United Nations principles and recommendations for population and housing censuses would need to be revised to incorporate these categories. Also, in view of the increased attention to prevent and reduce statelessness, participants agreed that countries should increase their efforts to count stateless persons and to provide such data to UNHCR.

87. It was concluded that at this stage only a limited revision of the United Nations *Recommendations on International Migration Statistics* would be needed. Efforts should therefore be directed to clarifying the “philosophy” of the concepts and providing a handbook with a methodological orientation and specific examples from national practices, in order to improve the implementation by countries of the recommendations.

## **B. Data sources**

88. Statistics on international migration were derived from censuses, surveys and administrative records, and no single source would be able to provide a comprehensive picture. Experts emphasized that it was crucial to maximize the use of all possible sources.

89. Experts recognized the excellent opportunity offered by the 2010 population census round for improving basic international migration statistics. They pointed out that it was important for countries to collect data on both country of birth and country of citizenship and to present them by sex and age. The inclusion of additional topics to identify foreign background should be considered by countries, wherever there was a need to produce more detailed information on migrant stock.

90. The group underlined the need for guidelines on how to use population censuses to collect international migration statistics, including methods for measuring immigration and emigration, at both the planning and processing stages. The experts acknowledged the fact that for some countries it was already too late to implement new guidelines for the 2010 census round. However, they indicated that it was now a good time to plan for the processing and analysis of data.

91. The experts noted the growing importance of administrative data in measuring international migration. Population censuses were slowly being replaced by register-based population censuses in countries with population registers. Countries interested in embarking on population registers were therefore encouraged to consider the potential for using them in combination with other sources to measure international migration, and to design their systems accordingly. In this regard, the experiences of countries that have well developed population registers would be useful and should be made available to others.

92. Countries should also consider using sample surveys to produce migration data, to complement data from administrative sources and/or population census. The experience of several countries showed that data collected from large sample household surveys or other surveys (e.g., border surveys) could provide reliable migration data. Sample surveys were usually carried out by national statistical authorities, and this would help ensure the use of harmonized concepts and definitions in the data collection.

## **C. Improving data collection at national level**

#### (a) Cooperation among government agencies

93. The experts agreed on the importance of cooperation and coordination between the national statistical office and other services/ministries responsible for collecting specific administrative data, and for more dialogue and technical cooperation, in each country. A good practice discussed was the use of an intergovernmental task force on international migration data comprising the national statistical office, immigration services or Home Affairs offices, and other relevant government agencies.

94. Accordingly, the United Nations and other international and regional organizations should support such collaborative meetings. It was suggested that the next meeting and discussions should include not only representatives from the national statistical offices but also suppliers of administrative data.

#### (b) Technical improvement

95. The experts agreed that, to improve data reporting and international comparability, national statisticians would need to align their data with the United Nations framework, sometimes by combining various sources of data. Statisticians from NSOs would therefore need to have knowledge in harmonizing different data sources and preparing estimates in the absence of reliable sources of data.

96. The experts agreed on the need for a practical methodological handbook that would cover such topics as:

- Construction of an “operational definition” catalogue (how various aspects of migration were measured using different sources);
- Methods for combining information to measure international migration (including relative merits of the various sources—censuses, surveys, administrative records and border measurement);
- Methods of estimation when data at national level need to be transformed to comply with international concepts and definitions;
- How to provide metadata;
- Methodology for estimating different types of migration such as short-term migration, temporary migration, irregular migration, emigration;
- How to address coverage differentials among population groups;
- Methodology for distinguishing refugees and asylum seekers from other immigrants;
- Case studies (country examples) of methods that have worked well.

97. The handbook would need to identify the core and secondary variables required for the measurement of international migration, and its focus should be on the core variables, recognizing the fact that core for some countries might not be core for others and that not all the countries were at the same technological level. In addition, the handbook should be more balanced in its coverage of flows and stock.

98. The experts pointed out the need for workshops and training at the regional and sub-regional levels, following the release of the practical handbook.

#### **D. Improving data collection and dissemination at the international level**

99. It was noted that some countries that did not provide international migration data to the United Nations might in fact have data on certain categories of migrants. The experts suggested that UNSD and its partners review the existing *Demographic Yearbook* questionnaire in the light of policy demands, and that the United Nations should be more proactive in its data collection exercise, following up with feedback on country responses.

100. While there was an agreement on the need to maximize the use of existing data, the experts argued that this should not be done at the expense of comparability of data. In any case, it was considered essential to document the sources and definitions used for any data provided. The experts reiterated the importance of disseminating the data with metadata, and they suggested that strict guidelines be issued for this purpose.

101. Electronic publication of data on the internet allowed speeding up the process of dissemination and increasing the level of detail of data, therefore more effort should be made in this direction.

#### **E. Data sharing and exchange for emigration statistics**

102. To address the lack of data on emigration, sending countries should develop strategies to collect this information through surveys or departure record systems, as well as by using the data from receiving countries. The United Nations should develop data exchange protocols that countries can use to begin sharing data.

103. Some experts proposed “joint measurement/enumeration projects” in countries with joint border areas (e.g., U.S./Mexico, Argentina/Paraguay, South Europe/North Africa) to facilitate comparability and sharing of data. Such projects could be implemented through the United Nations regional commissions such as ECLAC or ESCWA. Data exchange protocols and methods for using such data should be developed.

### **IV. RECOMMENDATIONS**

104. As indicated during the High Level Dialogue on International Migration, which was convened by the United Nations General Assembly from 14 to 15 September 2006, demand for policy-relevant statistics on international migration is increasing. However, because the sources of these data are not sufficiently developed, national governments and international bodies are unable to provide the comprehensive assessment needed. Meanwhile, the *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration, Revision 1*, which was issued by the United Nations in 1998, is not being widely applied. The meeting considered that a concerted effort was needed to improve international migration statistics, and identified the following priority actions:

- Provide guidance and technical support on the use of censuses and sample surveys to measure aspects of international migration.
- Develop a handbook focusing on core variables and using case studies to clarify how various sources can be used and/or combined to measure international migration.
- Conduct training to develop national capacity to produce international migration statistics.

- Promote data sharing and the use of other countries' immigration data for the estimation of emigration, drawing on experiences from regional exchange of data
- Set up a technical group consisting of national statistical offices, immigration authorities, United Nations agencies and other international organizations to support this work.

#### **A. Elaboration of the 1998 United Nations recommendations**

105. To improve the implementation of the 1998 United Nations *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration*, the definition of international migrant and related concepts should be made more operational. Practical guidance should be provided on how to measure migrant flows and migrant stocks using different sources of data. It is recommended that the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) produce a handbook with a methodological orientation that will:

- (i) Identify core variables;
- (ii) Clarify the “philosophy” and concepts used and review definitions where necessary;
- (iii) Provide examples from countries; and
- (iv) Provide guidelines on the required tabulations.

#### **B. Sources of data**

106. Statistics on international migration come from different sources including registers and other administrative sources, censuses and sample surveys. It is often necessary to combine different data sources to produce them.

##### (a) Administrative sources

107. To enhance the availability of administrative data in measuring international migrant stock and international migration flows, several actions are required at the national and international levels.

108. National statistical offices should:

- (i) Establish/maintain a dialogue and work closely with the producers of administrative data, i.e., Department of Home (Internal) Affairs, Ministry of Interior, Immigration Service, etc.
- (ii) To the extent possible, urge the suppliers of administrative data to publish and disseminate relevant data, including meta-data.
- (iii) Be familiar with the rules and regulations governing the control and management of international migration, and their enforcement.

109. UNSD and the United Nations regional commissions should support collaborative meetings at the regional level between suppliers of administrative data and national statistics offices, to facilitate communication. Moreover, suppliers of administrative data should be included in future deliberations at the regional and interregional levels.

##### (b) Population censuses

110. Data collected from the population census is an essential benchmark for the improvement of basic international migration statistics. The 2010 round offers an opportunity to collect more harmonized international migration data, specifically on the migrant stock. To ensure that the 2010 round of censuses will produce the expected outcome, the following actions are recommended.

111. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and UNSD, in collaboration with the United Nations regional commissions and other relevant organizations, should prepare advocacy material for use by countries to promote the use of the population census for measuring migration.

112. UNSD and the United Nations regional commissions should provide technical guidance on how to collect international migration data in the 2010 census round. Such guidance would include methodological materials, training workshops and technical assistance to countries.

113. Countries should collect data on both country of birth and country of citizenship and present them cross-tabulated with sex and age. Data collection on additional topics to identify foreign background may be considered by countries that require a more comprehensive picture of migration stock.

114. Population censuses should also attempt to systematically enumerate refugees and asylum-seekers in their total count.

#### (c) Sample surveys

115. Countries should explore the possibility of using sample surveys to collect data on international migration, especially for those aspects for which no other sources are available.

### **C. Data compilation and dissemination**

116. The analysis and dissemination of data is an effective advocacy tool, and should be employed to encourage policy makers to support the collection and use of the data.

117. While there was progress in the availability of administrative data and in including migration related questions in the census questionnaires, many countries do not publish the collected data or publish them in a timely fashion. Countries should be encouraged to tabulate and disseminate key migration data from the census and other sources in a timely fashion. Electronic processing of data allows speeding up the process and increasing the level of detail of the disseminated data.

118. International organizations collecting international migration data should make such data available, together with the relevant metadata, in a comprehensive and timely fashion. For this to be possible, countries should provide this metadata (e.g., specific source, definition, method of collection, criteria used to identify migrant, etc.). The United Nations should give clear guidance to countries on the level of detail required for the metadata.

119. The meeting took note of the low response rate in the United Nations collection of international migration statistics. Although it was felt that this was primarily due to non-availability of data in accordance with the definition and form required by the United Nations, the United Nations should be more proactive in its interactions with countries, by providing feedback and information on what has been received, and seeking clarifications when required.

120. The United Nations Statistics Division would also need to:

- (i) Review and simplify its existing data request in the light of policy demands, and design its international migration questionnaires with due regard to existing sources of data and information needs on both immigration and emigration.
- (ii) Publish migration data as soon as possible and develop an interactive database on the website to allow extraction of data on international migration in a user-friendly manner by external users.

#### **D. Data sharing and exchange**

121. There is a lack of information on emigration in many countries. This information is important for sending countries; therefore, special efforts should be made by countries to develop strategies to collect this information. Data may be collected through censuses, sample surveys or administrative sources.

122. There is a need to have comparable statistics to facilitate the sharing of information. In this regard, the national statistical offices should make an effort to bring nationally available administrative migration data in conformity with the United Nations recommendations.

123. The meeting noted the potential value of other countries' immigration data for estimating emigration, but considered that viable data sharing and exchange was still a way off. It is necessary to document experiences and outcomes of current data exchange initiatives, and build on them.

124. Possibilities for data exchange (such as was done on the foreign-born population or foreign nationals in some regions) should be explored. In this regard, relevant requirements for the adoption of protocols/memoranda of understanding should be assessed, particularly at the regional level, with the involvement of the United Nations regional commissions.

#### **E. Capacity building**

125. The United Nations Statistics Division, United Nations regional commissions, funds and programmes, as well as other regional organizations, should continue supporting workshops in relevant regions to develop national capacity.

126. The United Nations Statistics Division, United Nations regional commissions, funds and programmes, as well as other regional organizations, should consider supporting joint measurement/enumeration projects in countries that share a permeable border.

#### **F. Working mechanism**

127. UNSD should set up a technical group consisting of national statistical offices, immigration authorities, United Nations agencies and other international organizations to advance the measurement of international migration. The technical group will provide inputs to the preparation of the handbook, study the feasibility of data exchange, facilitate training activities, and recommend approaches to estimating certain segments or categories of international migration, using a specific source or a combination of sources.

## Annex 1. Information note

### United Nations Expert Group Meeting on Measuring international migration: Concepts and methods

Date: **4-7 December 2006** Place: **New York**  
Host: **United Nations Statistics Division**  
Contact: **Erlinda Go, Social and Housing Statistics Section ([go@un.org](mailto:go@un.org) and [migstat@un.org](mailto:migstat@un.org))**  
Website: **<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/meetings/egm/migrationegm06>**

In this era of globalization, with ever expanding communication possibilities and enhanced mobility of individuals and economic entities between countries, the number of migrants has increased markedly. Concomitantly, national governments of sending, receiving and transit countries are showing keen interest in international migration, aware of its potential benefits as well as possible negative consequences. However, efforts to deal effectively with issues of migration are impeded by the dearth of statistics on these and related emerging issues.

The statistics needed to characterize migration flows and monitor changes, as well as effectiveness of policies, over time, are very often fragmented and available from incongruent sources. Aiming to improve availability and comparability of immigration statistics, and provide a coherent framework for the collection and compilation of migrant flow and stock, the United Nations released a set of guidelines *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration, Revision 1* (1998). An initial assessment conducted by the United Nations, and a review of its Demographic Yearbook system data, suggests not only that the reporting of migration data has not improved, but also that the international recommendations have not been widely adopted by countries.

#### Objectives of the meeting:

The United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) seeks through this expert group to assess requirements for international migration statistics in response to policy interest and the challenges faced by national statistical systems in measuring international migration flows and stock. The meeting will review national practices in the compilation of migration statistics and identify difficulties associated with the recommended concepts and definitions. The meeting will further explore ways to foster cooperation between policy machineries of governments and their data collection agencies, and to develop a plan for the improvement of migration statistics. The outcome will help determine the scope and content of a handbook on statistics of international migration to be prepared by UNSD.

#### Key issues:

##### 1. The need for statistics on international migration

Perceptions about the net effect of international migration and consequently decisions about the appropriate policy interventions differ significantly, depending on whether the country is -- on balance -- one that is sending, receiving or serving as a transit point for migrants. To bring some clarity to the determination of the data requirements of policy makers, it is important to know:

- a. What are countries' major concerns about international migration, and what are regarded as being potential benefits and costs from either immigration or emigration?
- b. What categories of international migrants are countries interested in measuring?
- c. To what extent are the data needs being met and what are the gaps and deficiencies in the available statistics, with respect to categories, characteristics, push and pull factors, impact, etc.?

##### 2. Concepts and definitions

The use of the concept "usual resident" and "migrant" in statistics is not readily accepted by immigration authorities of some countries, especially those in which the same terms are used in legislative instruments

governing migration. While statistical provisions have brought the concept in conformity with what obtains in other economic frameworks, few countries have adopted the recommended definition for data collection.

- a. What criteria do countries use for identifying a migrant? How do elements such as residence, time or duration of stay, and purpose of stay, feature in the definitions?
- b. What parallel terms do countries use to represent the categories of policy interest and how are these defined?
- c. Is there a need to agree on definitions of still other categories of international migrants; e.g., circular migrants, temporary migrants (less than three months), undocumented migrants?
- d. How can other conceptual/analytical frameworks inform the definition of the stock of international migrants?

### **3. Measurement**

Adoption of the recommended definition of migrants requires that several questions be used to categorize them. The questions and parameters used to measure migration vary, however, with the type of instrument employed, resulting in inconsistencies and incomparable estimates between sources and countries.

- a. How are the various criteria related to place of usual residence, duration of stay, and purpose of stay made operational during the data collection process?
- b. What are the experiences and ongoing initiatives to standardize instruments for collecting migration data?
- c. How relevant are administrative statistics, such as school enrollment, foreign investment and remittances, etc., to measuring specific segments of international migration?
- d. What are the criteria applied by each country to identify migrant stock? Some criteria used are place of birth (to identify foreign-born), citizenship (to identify foreigners), and background (to identify persons with foreign background).

### **4. Sources of data**

Most of the data collection systems on international migration (flows and stocks) are directly or indirectly related to the control of international migration, with each system serving a specific need and specific categories of migrants. Moreover, the populations covered by the different sources are not mutually exclusive, nor are they exhaustive, thereby complicating the process of arriving at a national aggregate of migrant flows.

- a. What are the ideal sources of data for international migrant stock and flows? What are the advantages and disadvantages of each?
- b. How are the different sources used to complement each other? How comparable are they, and how can they be combined?
- c. How can coordination be done among different sources within country to produce aggregate statistics? Is it possible to establish linkages across datasets, across borders?

### **5. Data exchange among countries**

Interest is growing on the possibility of measuring emigration through statistical data on immigrants in receiving countries.

- a. Can reliable information on emigrants be obtained through the sharing of immigration data available in receiving countries? What is the experience of the countries on this exercise (in Latin America, Europe and any others)?
- b. What issues should be considered in developing data exchange protocols to facilitate sharing of information on international migration?
- c. What other collaboration among countries and international/ regional organizations can be done to improve the availability and quality of statistics on international migration?

## Annex 2. List of participants

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Title and Affiliation</b>
1.	Mr. Vebjørn Aalandslid	National Statistics Office Oslo, Norway
2.	Mr. Enrico Bisogno	Statistician Statistical Division Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Geneva, Switzerland
3.	Mr. Gero Carletto	Development Economics Research Group Senior Economist The World Bank Washington DC, USA
4.	Ms. Lina Castro	Director Social Statistics Office National Statistical Coordination Board Makati City, Philippines
5.	Ms. Olga Chudinovskikh	Center for Population Studies Faculty of Economics Moscow State Lomonosov University Moscow, Russian Federation
6.	Mr. Khassoum Diallo	Senior Statistician United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Geneva, Switzerland
7.	Mr. David Dixon	Immigration Statistics Staff Population Division US Census Bureau Washington DC, USA
8.	Mr. Salvatore Favazza	Italian National Statistical Institute Rome, Italy
9.	Mr. H.R. Gunasekera	Director Department of Census and Statistics Colombo, Sri Lanka
10.	Ms. Amy Heyman	Development Economics Data Group The World Bank Washington DC, USA
11.	Mr. Michael Hoefler	Director Office of Immigration Statistics U.S. Department of Homeland Security Washington DC, USA
12.	Ms. Sylvia Hordosch	Division for Advancement of Women United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs New York, USA
13.	Mr. Bela Hovy	Population Division United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs New York, USA

14.	Ms. Neda Jafar	Statistician Statistics Coordination Unit Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) Beirut, Lebanon
15.	Mr. Dirk Jaspers	Director CELADE Population Division CEPAL Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) Santiago, Chile
16.	Mr. Francisco Javier Gutierrez	Director General of Statistics National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Informatics (INEGI) Mexico
17.	Mr. Dean Judson	Chief Immigration Statistics Staff Population Division US Census Bureau Washington DC, USA
18.	Ms. Alexa Kennedy-Puthoff	Immigration Statistics US Census Bureau Washington DC, USA
19.	Mr. Giampaolo Lanzieri	Head Demography, Census and Projections Section European Commission Eurostat Luxembourg
20.	Mr. Dario Lopez	National Statistics Office Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic
21.	Ms. Alicia Maguid	Director Social Statistics Division Buenos Aires, Argentina
22.	Ms. Kourtoum Nacro	Technical Adviser Technical Support Division United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) New York, USA
23.	Mr. Nicholas O'Rourke	Head of Migration Statistics Unit ONS Center for Demography Office for National Statistics Fareham, United Kingdom
24.	Mr. Heston Phillips	Chief Director Demographic and Social Analysis Statistics South Africa Pretoria, South Africa
25.	Mr. Michel Poulain	Senior Researcher Groupe d'étude de démographie appliqué (GéDAP) Brussels, Belgium
26.	Mr. Oumar Sarr	Statistician African Centre for Statistics Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

27.	Mr. Jason Schachter	Senior Statistician International Labour Office (ILO) Geneva, Switzerland
28.	Ms. Sonia Smallacombe	Division for Social Policy and Development United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs New York, USA
29.	Ms. Maria Pia Sorvillo	Italian National Statistical Institute Rome, Italy
30.	Ms. Sharon Taylor	Division for Advancement of Women United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs New York, USA
31.	Mr. David Thorogood	Head Migration and Asylum Statistics Section Statistical Office of the European Communities European Commission Eurostat Luxembourg
32.	Mr. Robert Venne	Division for Social Policy and Development United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs New York, USA

**United Nations Statistics Division  
Demographic and Social Statistics Branch**

<p>Mr. Jeremiah Banda, Chief Demographic and Social Statistics Branch</p> <p>Mr. Martin Butterfield Inter-regional Adviser Demographic and Social Statistics Branch</p>	
<p><u>Demographic Statistics Section</u> Mr. Srdjan Mrkic, Acting Chief Ms. Haoyi Chen Mr. Amor Laaribi Ms. Margaret Mbogoni Ms. Sabine Warschburger</p>	<p><u>Social and Housing Statistics Section</u> Ms. Grace Bediako, Chief Ms. Ionica Berevoescu Ms. Erlinda Go Mr. Diego Rumiany</p>

### Annex 3. Organization of work

Monday, 4 December 2006	
<b>8:30–10:00</b>	<b>Registration of participants</b>
<b>10:00–10:15</b>	<p><b>1. Opening</b> Introductory remarks <i>Paul Cheung, Director, United Nations Statistics Division</i> <i>Jeremiah Banda, Chief, Demographic and Social Statistics Branch, UNSD</i> Selection of Chair and Rapporteur</p>
<b>10:15–12:15</b>	<p><b>2. The need for and uses of statistics on international migration</b> This session will address the demand for statistics on international migration in response to government policy. It will examine emerging issues in migration policies and their implications for data collection, identifying priority areas and needs. The discussion will identify categories of ‘migrant’ population that countries are interested in measuring based on their migration policies; review the purposes that flow and stock data serve in different countries; present gaps and deficiencies in the available statistics; and identify weaknesses that need to be addressed by national, regional and international stakeholders.</p>
<b>10:15–10:45</b>	<p><b>Presentations</b> (Documents: ESA/STAT/AC.119/1, 119/2, and 119/23)</p> <p>Emerging issues in migration policies: Implications for data requirements (/1) <i>Bela Hovy, United Nations Population Division</i> International migration statistics in Africa (/23) <i>Oumar Sarr, African Center for Statistics</i> Gaps in statistics on international migration (/2) <i>Haoyi Chen, United Nations Statistics Division</i></p>
<b>10:45–12:15</b>	<b>General discussion</b>
<b>12:15–13:00</b>	<p><b>3. Concepts and definitions</b> There is a need to critically review the United Nations recommended concepts and definitions for statistics on international migration and their applicability to various contexts, given the difficulties encountered by countries in adopting them, from both conceptual and operational points of view. The session seeks ideas to improve the current concepts and definitions with a view to broadening their relevance, applicability and acceptance. It will also deliberate on the need for defining categories of international migrants not currently included in the United Nations recommendations.</p>

<p><b>13:00–14:30</b></p>	<p><b>Presentations</b> (Documents: ESA/STAT/AC.119/3 to 5)</p> <p>A review of the United Nations recommendations for statistics on international migration (/3) <i>Erlinda Go, United Nations Statistics Division</i></p> <p>Key issues for European countries regarding the implementation of the United Nations recommendations on international migration statistics (/4) <i>Michel Poulain, Universite Catholique de Louvain</i></p> <p>Improving the quality and availability of Migration Statistics in Europe (/5) <i>David Thorogood, Statistical Office of the European Communities (Eurostat)</i></p>
<p><b>13:00-14:30</b></p>	<p><b>Lunch break</b></p>
<p><b>14:30–16:00</b></p>	<p><b>General discussion</b></p> <p><b>4. Measuring international migration flows</b></p>
<p><b>16:00–17:30</b></p>	<p><b>(a) From administrative registers</b> Some countries have long experience in the use of administrative registers to identify various segments of international migrants. Registers were effective statistical tools when well-monitored and maintained (e.g., population registers in Nordic countries) but can be fraught with problems of coverage, definitions, etc. In all cases, the problem of under-deregistration exists. This session will cover the challenges encountered by countries in the use of register data to estimate immigration and emigration flows.</p>
<p><b>16:00–16:45</b></p>	<p><b>Presentations</b> (Documents: ESA/STAT/AC.119/6 to 8 )</p> <p>Sources of statistics of international migration in CIS countries (/6) <i>Olga Chudinovskikh, Moscow State University</i></p> <p>Using register data to monitor the immigration and emigration of immigrants (/7) <i>Vebjørn Aalandslid, Norway</i></p> <p>Measuring immigration and foreign population in Italy (/8) <i>Maria Pia Sorvillo, Italy</i></p>
<p><b>16:45–17:30</b></p>	<p><b>General discussion</b></p>
<p><b>17:45–18:30</b></p>	<p><b>Reception</b></p>

<p><b>9:30–10:30</b></p>	<p><b>4. Measuring international migration flows</b></p> <p><b>(a) From administrative registers (continued)</b></p> <p><b>General discussion (continued)</b></p>
<p><b>10:30–13:00</b></p>	<p><b>(b) From other administrative sources</b></p> <p>This session will consider the use of residence permits, work permits, applications for asylum, exit permits and other administrative sources in the measurement of migration inflow and outflow, and deliberate on their utility in the production of aggregate statistics on international migration flows.</p>
<p><b>10:30–10:45</b></p>	<p><b>Presentations</b> (Documents: ESA/STAT/AC.119/9 and 119/24)</p> <p>Mexico: Practices in measuring stocks and flows of international migration (/9) <i>Francisco Javier Gutierrez, Mexico</i></p> <p>Measuring forced displacements in industrialized countries: data sources, methods and challenges in estimating refugees and asylum-seeker numbers (/24) <i>Khassoum Diallo, UNHCR</i></p>
<p><b>10:45–13:00</b></p>	<p><b>General discussion</b></p>
<p><b>13:00–15:00</b></p>	<p><b>Lunch break</b></p>
<p><b>15:00–17:30</b></p>	<p><b>(c) From border data collection systems</b></p> <p>The experience of countries in using border data collection systems will be presented and discussed. In this regard, the use of duration and purpose of stay questions to identify international migrants will be considered, in particular those pertaining to intentions. The session will also look at how countries use border statistics with other administrative data to estimate migration flows.</p>
<p><b>15:00–15:45</b></p>	<p><b>Presentations</b> (Documents: ESA/STAT/AC.119/11 to 13 )</p> <p>Development of international migration statistics in Sri Lanka (/11) <i>H. R. Gunasekara, Sri Lanka</i></p> <p>Measurement, concepts and definitions of international migration: the case of South Africa (/12) <i>Heston Phillips, South Africa</i></p> <p>Migration flows – A summary of the UK’s recent experience and the immediate challenges ahead (/13) <i>Michael O’Rourke, United Kingdom</i></p>
<p><b>15:45–17:30</b></p>	<p><b>General discussion</b></p>

<p><b>9:30–11:00</b></p>	<p><b>4. Measuring international migration flows (continued)</b></p>
<p><b>9:30–11:00</b></p>	<p><b>(d) The role of population census and other household-based field enquiries</b>  The session will review country experiences in the use of population censuses and household sample surveys to measure migration flows as well as to validate and complement administrative data used for measuring flows.</p>
<p><b>9:30–9:45</b></p>	<p><b>Presentations</b>  (Document: ESA/STAT/AC.119/14 and 119/25)</p> <p>New alternatives for estimating migration to the United States using the American Community Survey (/14)  <i>Dean Judson, United States</i></p> <p>International migration statistics in ESCWA region (/25)  <i>Neda Jafar, ESCWA</i></p>
<p><b>9:45–11:00</b></p>	<p><b>General discussion</b></p>
<p><b>11:00–13:00</b></p>	<p><b>5. Measuring migrant stock</b>  This session will present country experiences in measuring migrant stock. It will examine the criteria, definitions and policy considerations that countries use as a basis for measuring “international migrant stock”. Some criteria used by countries to identify such “stock” are place of birth (to identify foreign-born), citizenship (to identify foreigners), and having a foreign/immigrant background. The session will also deliberate on the relevance of the United Nations concept of “international migrant” to the measurement of migrant stock.</p>
<p><b>11:00–12:00</b></p>	<p><b>Presentations</b>  (Document: ESA/STAT/AC.119/10;15 to 17)</p> <p>The population census as a vehicle for measuring migrant stock (/15)  <i>Haoyi Chen, United Nations Statistics Division</i></p> <p>The Argentinean experience in the collection and compilation of statistics on international migration (/10)  <i>Alicia Maguid, Argentina</i></p> <p>Estimating the immigrant stock in the United States by legal status using administrative and census data (/16)  <i>Michael Hoefer, United States</i></p> <p>Data sources on international migration: Case of the Russian Federation (/17)  <i>Olga Antonova, Russian Federation</i></p>
<p><b>12:00–13:00</b></p>	<p><b>General discussion</b></p>

<b>13:00–14:30</b>	<b>Lunch break</b>
<b>14:30–15:00</b>	<b>General discussion (continued)</b>
<b>15:00–17:30</b>	<p><b>6. Special efforts to estimate emigration</b>  Whether derived from population censuses, surveys or administrative records, emigration statistics has proved to be more problematic than immigration statistics, for various reasons. In this session, some country practices will be presented. The feasibility of using other-country data to estimate emigration will be discussed.</p>
<b>15:00–15:45</b>	<p><b>Presentations</b>  (Document: ESA/STAT/AC.119/18 to 20)</p> <p>Measuring international migration in the Philippines (/18)  <i>Lina V. Castro, Philippines</i></p> <p>Estimation of emigration from the United States using international data sources (/19)  <i>Jason Schachter, International Labour Office</i></p> <p>Measuring emigrants: Different options for a difficult challenge (/20)  <i>Enrico Bisogno, UNECE</i></p>
<b>15:45–17:30</b>	<b>General discussion</b>

<b>9:30–11:00</b>	<b>7. Data sharing arrangements</b> The session will review existing arrangements for data sharing and the challenges encountered. It will identify issues that need to be considered in developing data sharing protocols to facilitate the sharing and use of information by countries and organizations.
<b>9:30–10:00</b>	<b>Presentations</b> (Documents: ESA/STAT/AC.119/21 to 22)  The joint UNSD-Eurostat-ECE-Council of Europe-ILO questionnaire on international migration statistics (/21) <i>Sabine Warschburger, United Nations Statistics Division</i> The IMILA project: International migration statistics database for Latin America (provisional title) (/22) <i>Dirk Jaspers, ECLAC</i>
<b>10:00–11:00</b>	<b>General discussion</b>
<b>11:00–13:00</b>	<b>8. Next steps</b>
<b>13:00–14:30</b>	<b>Lunch break</b>
<b>14:30–16:00</b>	<b>Adoption of the recommendations</b>