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1950 Censuses of Population

Excerpts from Report of the Statistical Commission
to the Economic and Social Council

Secretariat's note:

The draft recommendations (document E/CN.9/W.9) referred to in paragraphs 52 and 56, prepared by the Secretariat, are superseded by the recommendations of general character adopted by the Statistical Commission and the Population Commission at their last sessions, and by the specific recommendations of the latter in regard to subjects to be covered by the censuses to be taken in or around 1950. These draft recommendations were not circulated to Member Governments, but the list of subjects is essentially similar to the list of topics suggested by the Population Commission at its second session and previously submitted to the Governments for their comments.

In regard to paragraph 55, steps have been taken to consult and co-ordinate the views of interested specialized agencies and other inter-governmental organizations prior to the issuing of the list of recommended subjects and definitions.

1950 CENSUSES OF POPULATION

52. The Statistical Commission has studied the proposed recommendations regarding the subjects to be included in the 1950 censuses of population which are being planned by a number of Governments (document E/CN.9/W.9). The recommended definitions were prepared for submission to the Population Commission and to the Statistical Commission and refer to the tentative list of items previously approved by the Population Commission, given general endorsement by the Statistical Commission, and noted by the Economic and Social Council. The Statistical Commission having given detailed consideration to this matter wishes to record its views respecting these items, the proposed definitions and related matters.

53. The Commission considers that the objectives sought by the proposed recommendations concerning subjects and definitions are in general desirable, believing that for the most part their adoption would further international comparability and that the definitions together with other available materials on these subjects may be of technical assistance to Governments in planning population censuses.

54. Subject to qualifications set forth below or elsewhere stated the Commission therefore believes that the list of subjects and the accompanying definitions should be issued by the Secretary-General for the information of Governments and for such use in the national censuses as may be practicable in the light of national conditions, needs and objectives.

55. The Commission considers that it is very important further to take account of and co-ordinate the views of all interested specialized agencies and other inter-governmental organizations before the list of subjects and the accompanying definitions are issued. Accordingly Secretary-General to assume responsibility for further consultations upon these technical matters with a view to incorporating any revisions in the definitions or technical information that may in his judgment appear suitable to accomplish the objectives mentioned above. The Commission in particular mentions that the concepts of de facto and de jure population should be clarified. In this connexion it is pointed out that necessary further consultations should proceed expeditiously so that Governments may obtain the materials to be provided early enough to be of service to them in planning their next population censuses.

56. In reviewing the list of topics suggested and the recommended definitions the Statistical Commission considers it not practicable to regard the list of subjects as a recommended minimum to be used by all Governments or to regard the definitions as equally applicable to all

/countries

countries in view of the wide differences in national needs and in statistical facilities. It does, however, consider that all countries taking censuses should try to provide comparable data on the following items: total population, age, sex, marital status, and types of economic activities. It is recognized that for various reasons the other items on the list contained in the Secretariat draft (document E/CN.9/W.9) would be applicable in various combinations to the purposes of smaller groups of countries, although the importance of these items is such that the attainment of comparability even among a limited number of countries would be a significant advance. This is not to imply that there are not other subjects on which it may be important to obtain international comparisons.

57. The Statistical Commission points out the desirability of using statistical sampling methods in population censuses and notes that these methods could effectively be applied in some countries and under certain conditions even with respect to the five items listed in paragraph 56.

58. The Statistical Commission has recorded certain observations which appear in the summary records of its third session on the technical aspects of the recommended definitions and refers these to the Secretary-General for consideration in the additional consultations recommended in paragraph 55.

59. The Commission notes that according to information available to the Secretariat many countries have already indicated their intentions to conduct population censuses in or about 1950. It also notes that several countries have already taken population censuses since 1940. The Commission believes that it is highly desirable to encourage the practice of having as many national censuses as possible, with maximum provision for international comparability, conducted with approximately the same time reference.

Recognizing that national resources may not in each case permit it, the Commission urges that as many countries as possible plan to take national censuses in or about 1950. In view of the fact that many Governments have not as yet developed modern census techniques, the Commission requests the Secretary-General to make adequate provision for rendering expert advice and assistance in this regard to those countries which may request it. This is in keeping with the resolution on this matter previously approved by the Economic and Social Council (resolution 41 (IV), 29 March 1947).
