

Statistical Commission
Forty-fifth session
4 – 7 March 2014
Item 3(j) of the provisional agenda
Items for discussion and decision: refugee statistics

Background document
Available in English only

Report of the International Conference on Refugee Statistics

7 – 9 October 2015, Antalya, Turkey



Statistics Norway
Statistisk sentralbyrå

Report of the
International Conference on Refugee Statistics
7- 9 October 2015, Antalya, Turkey¹

¹ Prepared by Alphonse MacDonald, independent consultant, on behalf of UNHCR.

I. Introduction

At the 46th session of the UN Statistical Commission (New York, 3-6 March, 2015), Statistics Norway and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) presented a joint report on statistics on refugees and internally displaced persons (E/CN.3/2015/9)² which included a number of concrete suggestions. One was the organisation of an international conference on refugee statistics, bringing together international organizations and experts from national statistical offices. Its purpose would be to explore how best to incorporate statistics on refugees and displaced persons into national statistical systems and to develop a set of recommendations for improving these statistics. These could be incorporated into a handbook on statistics on refugees and internally displaced persons as a practical guide for the collection, analysis and dissemination of these statistics, taking into consideration existing methods and initiatives. The Statistical Commission endorsed the suggestions.

Recognizing the importance of the topic, the Government of the Republic of Turkey, through its Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat), offered to host such a conference, in collaboration with Statistics Norway, Eurostat, the Statistical Office of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and UNHCR. The Statistical Commission requested the organizers to report back to its 47th session (March 2016) on the outcome of the conference and on the next steps to improve statistics on refugees and internally displaced persons.

Given the complexities of dealing with internally displaced persons, it was decided that the international conference should focus on refugee statistics, and that the handbook would deal exclusively with refugee statistics. UNHCR, in collaboration with the other four organizing agencies developed a draft proposal for an outline of the envisaged handbook, which participants were invited to study before the conference.

UNHCR requested a number of countries to provide information on how statistics of refugees were produced in their countries. Briefing notes were received from Azerbaijan, Denmark, Egypt, Ghana, Jordan, Kenya, Kosovo,³ the Netherlands, Niger, Norway, Serbia, Turkey, and the USA. These briefing notes are available on the EFTA website.⁴

II. The Conference

The conference was held from 7 to 9 October in Antalya, Turkey. It was attended by representatives of national statistical offices, offices dealing with the admission of foreigners and refugees, research institutions, United Nations agencies, the World Bank, and the European Asylum Support Office. Due to logistical constraints, invitation to the conference was by and large limited to countries which had expressed their formal support for the topic at the 46th session of the UN Statistical Commission. The agenda of the conference and details of the participants are presented in annexes I and II, respectively.

The conference consisted of several parts. The first day discussed the use of administrative data and population registers to measure the refugee phenomenon, while the second day examined the use of censuses and sample surveys to measure the magnitude and characteristics of refugee populations. The third day touched upon existing regional coordination mechanisms to improve refugee and asylum

² See: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/doc15/2015-9-RefugeeStats-E.pdf>

³ Reference to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

⁴ See: <http://www.efta.int/seminars/refugee>

statistics. The conference included presentations by experts from participating countries and international organizations, group exercises and discussions. Presentations made at the conference are available at the EFTA website: <http://www.efta.int/seminars/refugee>.

Day 1: Wednesday, 7 October 2015

Session 1: Inaugural session, Chair Mr Enver Taştı, Vice President, Turkish Statistical Institute

1. Opening statements

Mr Enver Taştı, Vice President, Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat) welcomed the participants on behalf of the Government of Turkey.⁵ Mr Taştı expressed his satisfaction with the excellent collaboration between Statistics Norway, Eurostat, EFTA, UNHCR and TurkStat in the organisation of the conference. He stressed the political and administrative importance, the scientific relevance and actuality of the theme of the conference. TurkStat strives to produce high quality statistics in support of policy development, especially in the light of the current crisis situation caused by the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic and other neighbouring countries. He indicated that Turkey is the country hosting the highest number of refugees under UNHCR's mandate and reiterated its willingness to alleviate the suffering of those displaced by the war. He provided some statistical information on the current situation of refugees in Turkey and neighbouring countries and stressed the high social, economic and financial cost to the hosting countries. He indicated that he was confident that this conference will serve as a platform for sharing and exchanging experiences, to discuss the challenges and opportunities both in collecting information and converting them into statistics, providing politicians and decision makers with the appropriate and accurate figures as well as prospective facets. He pledged the continued support of the Government of Turkey and of TurkStat in particular for this initiative.

Ms Mariana Kotzeva, Deputy Director-General of Eurostat made a statement also on behalf of Norway, EFTA, and UNHCR. She expressed the gratitude of the organizing agencies to the Government of Turkey for its generous support in hosting the conference. She referred to the global ongoing and increasing refugee crises and commended the Turkish Government for providing refuge to a large number of Syrian refugees, thus making it the world's largest refugee-hosting country under the UNHCR mandate. Recognizing the limited availability of timely and reliable statistical information on refugees and their characteristics, both Eurostat and EFTA are fully supportive of the proposed initiative to enhance the technical and methodological capabilities of national statistical offices to provide the urgently needed statistical information for the development of adequate programmes to deal with refugee crises worldwide. Ms Kotzeva welcomed participants and urged them to fully cooperate and share experiences to come to a common understanding on how to improve refugee statistics. She was confident that this first international, but not global conference on refugee statistics will provide an impetus for the development of techniques and methodologies to provide high quality data on refugees and their characteristics. The timing of the conference is crucial, and there is some urgency in reaching a consensus of the way forward as its results need to be reported to the 47th session of the United Nations Statistical Commission in March 2016.

⁵ http://www.efta.int/sites/default/files/documents/statistics/ESCoP/Opening%20speech_Enver_TASTI.pdf

Mr Stefan Schweinfest, Director of the United Nations Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, through a video message expressed his organisation's gratitude to the Government of Turkey for hosting this important event and to Eurostat and EFTA for supporting the initiative of Statistics Norway and UNHCR and for making it possible for participants from developing countries to attend the conference. At the initiative of Statistics Norway and UNHCR, the United Nations Statistical Commission discussed refugee statistics for the first time in 2015, endorsing the proposals put forward for an international conference and the preparation of a handbook, and inviting the organisers of the conference to report back to the Commission in 2016. Mr Schweinfest acknowledged this new endeavour to develop standards for refugee statistics and pledged the full support of his Division.

Mr Tarek Abou Chabake, UNHCR's Senior Statistician thanked the Government of Turkey for their hospitality and especially the colleagues at TurkStat for their support and welcomed participants. He indicated that the organizing agencies expected a free and candid exchange of experience; a review of current data collection and analysis practises in refugee statistics; a review of the proposed outline of the handbook; discussions about the role of national statistical offices in the development of refugee statistics; and the establishment of a network of practitioners in refugee statistics.

2. General and European principals of official statistics

In this part of the session, participants heard statements by Mr Olav Ljones, Deputy Director, Statistics Norway ("Refugee statistics as international official statistics"⁶) and Ms Mariana Kotzeva, Deputy Director-General of Eurostat ("Institutional and organisational set up for refugee statistics: EU experience"⁷).

Mr Ljones explained the importance of refugee statistics. While quality improvements were important, he described the benefit of improving the quality of refugee statistics within the framework of official statistics. The different user groups were described and for all users it will be beneficial if the principles of official statistics are followed. A key topic is to find a relevant and operational definition of 'refugee' for the purpose of statistics taking into account the availability of data. It is not only fundamental to establish solid systems for data collection but also beneficial if links between administrative routines and data collection can be established for statistical purposes. Mr Ljones emphasized that censuses are relevant but bear important limitations insofar as data collected every tenth year is not sufficient. Follow-up refugee studies together with data on resources and activities assisting refugee populations are relevant. He also recommended the creation of a professional meeting place for refugee statisticians; the provision of international recommendations and the preparation of a handbook on refugee statistics which will lead to improved data collection, processing and cooperation; and the promotion of research. He also emphasized the need to give due consideration for the increased requirement for resources and funding.

Ms Kotzeva discussed the general principals of European statistics, the way of operation of official statistics and its characteristics, the status of refugee statistics and the consequences of being part of official statistics. She also stressed the institutional, administrative and organizational arrangement of

⁶ See:

http://www.efta.int/sites/default/files/documents/statistics/training/Refugee%20statistics%20as%20%20international%20official%20statistics_Ljones_v2.pdf

⁷ See: http://www.efta.int/sites/default/files/documents/statistics/training/Eurostat_Presentation_Role%20of%20NSOs_Day1.pdf

the European Union (EU) to deal with refugee statistics through the European Statistical System (ESS). In addition, the role of Eurostat, the National Statistical Offices and other statistical authorities within the ESS, the statistical output harmonisation, and recent legal amendments⁸ enhancing access of NSOs to national administrative records and strengthening the position and role of NSOs within the national statistical system were highlighted.

Session 2: Use of administrative data and population registers; Chair: Mr Lars Svennebye, Deputy Head, EFTA Statistical Office

1. Refugee statistics: practices of participating countries, registration standards, linking of multiple sources and the use of administrative data.

In this part of the session, presentations were made that deal with different aspects of the use of administrative procedures, the use of these data to create statistical instruments and their linkages. In her presentation "Overview of survey questionnaire among participating countries",⁹ Ms Dilek Yilmaz of the Demographic Statistics Department of TurkStat, reported on the findings of a survey among participating countries on their practices of compilation and dissemination of statistics on refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons (IDPs) which TurkStat had carried out in preparation of the conference.

In her presentation on "Registration in UNHCR",¹⁰ Ms Kimberly Roberson, Chief of UNHCR's Field Information and Coordination Support Section described the categories of persons of concern for UNHCR and the nature of the registration process as the first step in establishing an individual's identity after displacement. She also highlighted the functions of the information collected and emphasized the adherence to the principles of data protection based on informed consent, proportionality, and purposiveness. She identified a number of challenges during the registration process, including defining objectives, establishing a unique identity, family composition, mass influxes or arrivals, highly mobile populations and the application of data protection principles.

Ms. Minja Tea Dzamarija, Senior Advisor and Team leader, Division for Population Statistics in Statistics Norway presented a study on "Statistics on population with refugee background in Norway"¹¹ detailing the procedures and characteristics of the Norwegian system of dealing with refugees and persons with refugee backgrounds. It combines information from multiple sources: the Central Population Register (CPR) situated in the Directorate of Taxes, where a copy based on daily transactions is maintained by Statistics Norway and linked to data from the Aliens register from the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (DI) to create a unique population database. DI is responsible for the official statistics on asylum and refugees and provides Statistics Norway with micro data of relevance. Each Norwegian citizen and foreign national resident in Norway, including asylum seekers and persons admitted on humanitarian grounds, are issued with a unique Personal Identification Number (PIN). This PIN allows linkage of data sets. There are five main reasons for immigration: labour, family, refuge, education and

⁸ Regulation (EU) 2015/759 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2015 amending Regulation (EC) No 223/2009 on European statistics; See: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1446131764778&uri=CELEX:32015R0759>

⁹ See: http://www.efta.int/sites/default/files/documents/statistics/training/5_S2_Presentation_TurkStat-1.pdf

¹⁰ See: http://www.efta.int/sites/default/files/documents/statistics/training/UNHCR_Registration%20of%20refugees.pdf

¹¹ See: <http://www.efta.int/sites/default/files/documents/statistics/training/Flyktningekonferanse-1.pdf>

other reasons for immigration. The category “refugee” includes: asylum (granted asylum + humanitarian grounds), resettled refugees and collective protection. Statistics on persons with a refugee background are published annually and the system opens up for linkage to other administrative registers, such as employment registers, which makes it possible to show how refugees fare in the labour market compared to other migrants as well as the general population.

In her presentation “Using administrative data to compile and disseminate refugee statistics”,¹² Ms. Ima Okonny, Acting Director, Data Management & Reporting Division, Research and Evaluation Branch of Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) presented an overview of the refugee statistical system of Canada. CIC is the main source of information on migration including asylum and refugees. Process data, demographic and geographic variables are collected. The CIC system is connected to other government departments and has access to the data maintained in those systems. CIC publishes an annual report on the intake of permanent and temporary residents in “Facts and Figures: Immigration Overview–Permanent and Temporary Residents”. This publication provides statistics for admission of permanent residents for family class, economic immigrants, refugees and other immigrants who do not fall into any other categories. Information is available for several levels of geographical areas of the country. CIC has been an active partner of the Open Data Portal since 2011, its Quarterly Administrative Data Release (QADR) datasets are online since 2011 and all data tables from the Facts and Figures publication are now on the Open Data Portal. CIC shares its data with Statistics Canada, which combined with other data sets (employment, tax) are available as a dataset on its website and the public can construct its own statistical tables. Canada does not use a PIN, because of privacy concerns, and linkage is done through a number of socio-economic variables.

2. Turkey’s migration system and Outline of the proposed Handbook on refugee statistics.

In this session a presentation on the migration system of Turkey was made, and a presentation given on the main characteristics of the proposed handbook.

Ms Fatma Feyza Gül, Assistant expert, General Directorate of Population and Citizenship Affairs, Directorate of Migration Management, presented an overview of Turkey’s migration management.¹³ The Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM) is the agency responsible for the implementation of migration policies and strategies and the coordination among relevant agencies and organizations. It is in charge of activities related to entry, stay and exit from Turkey; removal of foreigners, granting of international and temporary protection and the protection of victims of human trafficking. The law on foreigners and international protection provides the legal basis for DGMM. Turkey’s refugee definitions are based on the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol. Persons who satisfy the Convention criteria of European origin are considered “refugees”, whereas persons from non-European countries are considered “Conditional refugees”. Persons who do not satisfy the Convention criteria but who face the death penalty, torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, or face serious threats of indiscriminate violence because of international or nationwide armed conflict are granted “subsidiary protection”. Applicants for asylum undergo a time efficient process and in case of rejection have the possibilities of administrative or judicial appeal. The DGMM collaborates with TurkStat in the production of statistics on refugees and related categories.

¹² See: http://www.efta.int/sites/default/files/documents/statistics/training/Canada_ImaOkony-CIC.pdf

¹³ See: http://www.efta.int/sites/default/files/documents/statistics/training/Turkey_Directorate%20for%20Migration.pdf

Mr Alphonse L. MacDonald, UNHCR consultant, presented the “Outline of a handbook on refugee statistics”.¹⁴ Participants had been invited to study a background document (see footnote 4) which provided information on the rationale and objective of the handbook. This handbook was sanctioned and mandated by the UN Statistical Commission at its 46th session in March 2015. In his presentation he concentrated on the structure and justification of the elements of the outline.

The main objective of the handbook is to contribute to the enhancement of statistical data collection on refugees by presenting in one publication guidelines and minimum standards applicable to the collection of refugee-relevant data. It shall provide a collection of experiences on the production of refugee statistics by individual experts, countries, international agencies, civil society, and academic institutions that comply with international standards of statistical data collection and that could serve as guidelines for further research. The proposed handbook will consist of seven chapters: 1. Introduction & objectives; 2. Legal framework; 3. Need for standardisation; 4. Measuring numbers of refugees; 5. Measuring characteristics and integration of refugees; 6. Coordination & cooperation; and 7. Constraints & future. Chapters 3 – 5 could be considered as dealing with “operational issues” and their structure will be as follows: a) An introduction to the themes to be dealt with; b) Articles or studies reporting with the subject matter under consideration that comply with international standards; c) Articles or studies that propose new methodologies and techniques; and d) Review articles that assess studies (the experience) in countries, specific groups of countries or regions.

Following the presentation on the outline of the handbook, participants were divided into four discussion groups (see annex III) to review a number of issues related to the proposed handbook and possible activities to enhance the collection of refugee statistics. The issues to be dealt with in this session were:

- A1. General opinion on the proposed handbook.
- A2. Need for and advantages of standardisation of concepts and techniques at the national, regional and international level; role of national statistical offices.
- A3. Need to be able to “reformulate” national refugee definitions and measurements to standard international definitions;
- A4. National experience in the use of administrative records for statistics, access to data, compatibility of concepts;
- A5. Advantages of integrated national population registers; legal, administrative, resources, constraints in creation;
- A6. Potential to create refugee or integrated migrant refugee registers; role of national statistical office;
- A7. Existing national coordination mechanisms producing refugee statistics; which agencies are involved; role of the national statistical office.

¹⁴ See: http://www.efta.int/sites/default/files/documents/statistics/training/MacDonald_outline%20of%20handbook.pdf. In Annex IV a revised version of this outline based on the results of the Conference is presented.

All groups were requested to deal with item A1 while groups 1 and 2 were requested to concentrate on items A2 to A4, and groups 3 and 4 on items A5 to A7. Each group reported back to the plenary session and the results of the deliberation were used to prepare the conclusions of the conference.

The main conclusions of this group session can be summarized as follows.

- It is essential to make a clear distinction between statistical information on the “stock” of refugees and the “flow” of refugees.
- Cooperation between national statistical offices and agencies responsible for admission of foreigners or establishing refugee status was considered essential for the development of valid and reliable statistics.
- Ways of linking different data sets; in Europe the PIN is used, whereas in Canada a number of socio-economic and demographic variables are used.
- In the European Statistical System access to administrative records by NSOs is a fundamental characteristic which is included in the legal basis of the system. It was established in May 2015 only and needs to be incorporated into national legislation. Such access does not exist in most of the developing countries, but would greatly facilitate the production of refugee statistics.
- The desirability of a handbook was unanimously recognized, and suggestions were made to use the term “Recommendations” and to include clear instructions and standards were applicable.
- The use of new data sources such as “Big Data” in the development of refugee statistics is an option, but there are a number of methodological, data access and confidentiality issues that need to be resolved.
- The structure of the proposed outline of the handbook is flexible and could accommodate new sources of information and tools provided these comply with internationally accepted standards.
- The need for standardized concepts and techniques and the use of internationally established norms and standards was stressed.
- Comprehensive integrated population registers should be advocated for as the way forward in the Recommendations even if this remains challenging in a large number of countries.
- The use of national definitions requires a transposition into international concepts to enable international comparability. This is in particular the case for the question of when refugee status ends for the purpose of official statistics.

Day 2: Thursday, 8 October 2015

Session 3: Census and surveys in the displacement context; Chair: Mr David Thorogood, Senior Statistician / Team Leader, Eurostat

1. Population censuses

In this session presentations were made on international recommendations for refugee statistics, the use of censuses in the 2010 census round to collect statistics on refugees and IDPs and the experience of Azerbaijan in the collection of data on refugees and IDPs through its census.

In his presentation “International recommendations for 2020 census: measuring refugee and related status”,¹⁵ Mr David Thorogood, Senior Statistician / Team Leader, Eurostat, presented the international (UN Statistics Division) and European (Conference of European Statisticians (CES) and EU statistical legislation) recommendations for the 2020 round of population censuses and their usefulness for counting refugees and related categories. In principle, the definition of what constitutes a census is not generally accepted. In addition to the “traditional census”, there are alternatives that do not conduct field work but prepare data bases or tabulations on the basis of administrative registers sometimes in combination with large scale surveys. In the current recommendations everybody who is a usual resident of a country should be counted. The definition of the “usual resident population” is “those persons who have their place of usual residence in the country at the census reference time and have lived, or intend to live, there for a continuous period of time of at least 12 months.” Persons who may be illegal, irregular or undocumented migrants, asylum seekers and persons who have applied for, or been granted, refugee status or similar types of international protections shall be included, provided they meet the criteria for the usual residence in the country. Information that may allow refugees and related populations to be defined and counted are general migration-related core topics such as country of birth, country of citizenship (including ‘stateless’), and ever resided abroad / year of arrival, and the non-core topics such as country of birth of parents, citizenship acquisition, country of previous residence and duration of residence. A second set of questions may be derived from refugee-related topics such as reason for migration –including admittance for humanitarian or political reasons, persons with reason for migration ‘family’ of a person in the group mentioned before, and native born children of persons of the groups mentioned previously.

Mr. Vebjørn Aalandslid, Senior Advisor in the Division for Development Cooperation in Statistics Norway reported in his presentation “The population census as a tool to count forcibly displaced populations” on the finding of analysis carried out by Statistics Norway on the use of the 2010 round of population census in capturing refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). The census questionnaires of some 150 countries obtained from the UN Statistics Division website were analysed. The UN Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses only indicate that “Refugees or internally displaced persons in camps should be counted and their numbers distinguished as a separate group.” This however covers only a portion of the total number of concerned persons. The regional census recommendations for Africa, Western Asia, Asia or Latin America make no reference to these groups. The recommendations of the UNECE region mentions “migration for forced/humanitarian reasons” and “population with a refugee background” and “internally displaced persons.” A number of questions could be used to identify “refugees or IDPs”. Out of the 150 countries, 123 countries asked for country/place of birth, 93 for citizenship/nationality, 59 for year of arrival in country of residence, and 48 for previous place of residence. A set of secondary questions could also be of use: 80 countries asked about religion, 66 about languages while 64 about ethnicity. With regard to reasons for migration, 26 countries asked for reason of international migration, 22 about reason for internal migration and 11 posed a question on forced displacement. There is considerable variation among the regions. Only a small number of countries (15) have specific questions on internal displacement while only a few have published results for refugees and IDPs in their census report.

¹⁵ See: http://www.efta.int/sites/default/files/documents/statistics/training/1_Presentation_Eurostat_08-10-15%20international%20census%20recommendations.pdf

In her presentation "Organisation of statistics on refugees and internally displaced persons in the Republic of Azerbaijan",¹⁶ Ms Zabiha Asgarm, Chief Advisor of Population and gender statistics department of the State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan reported on the experiences of measuring refugees and IDPs. Azerbaijan follows the international definition of refugee, and defines an IDP as a person who has been moved from the usual place of residence by reason of military aggression, natural or technological disaster. Information on refugees and IDPs is obtained from administrative records, the population census and household surveys. In the 2009 census, a direct question was included: "Are you a refugee or internally displaced person"? In the household budget survey, refugees and IDPs are included in the survey population.

2. On the use of administrative records and surveys

In this session the experiences of countries with data collection of refugees were presented as well as a review of a number of sample surveys on refugees and their characteristics. It also included a presentation on the experience of a sub-regional data collection programme on refugees.

Mr Stanley M. T. Wambua, Governance statistics, Directorate of population & social statistics, Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, in his presentation "Collecting and dissemination of refugee statistics in Kenya"¹⁷ reported on the experience and future plans of refugee statistics in the country. Kenya has hosted a large refugee population for nearly three decades. Till 2007 statistics on refugees were produced by UNHCR. In 2007, the Department of Refugee Affairs (DRA) was created after the enactment of the Refugee Act. DRA is responsible for camp management, registration and documentation, refugee status determination, protection delivery and durable solutions. Operational information is provided by DRA, but it has no trained statisticians. Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) is the central agency for statistical production and coordination but has limited experience in dealing with refugees. In the 2009 population census, refugees were included in the population and enumerated as conventional households, but were uniquely identified. The data have not yet been analysed. IDPs were included among the regular population, but could not be identified as a special group. KNBS has not carried out a refugee or IDP specific survey. In 2015, KNBS has started producing refugee statistics using the administrative records of DRA and the 2009 population census. Data obtained from DRA are subjected to strict quality verification. The number of refugees disaggregated by sex and age are published in the annual Economic Survey report. KNBS plans to enhance the collection and dissemination of refugee statistics within the context of improving the national statistical system and adapting existing legislation to the new administrative arrangements of the country and strengthening national statistical capacity.

In his presentation "Refugee Statistics in Palestine",¹⁸ Mr. Maen Salhab, Director of Statistical Yearbooks Department, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, highlighted the main characteristics and challenges faced when producing statistics on refugees. The case of the Palestinian refugees is complex not only because its long history but also because Palestinian refugees are living in a large number of countries, the most important being Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. Data sources for Palestinian refugees in the State of Palestine are censuses and household surveys. The following categories are used: registered refugees, non-registered refugees and non-refugees. For Palestinians living abroad the following data sources are available: administrative records of the United Nations Relief and Works

¹⁶ See: <http://www.efta.int/sites/default/files/documents/statistics/training/Refugee%20Statistics%20in%20Azerbaijan.pdf>

¹⁷ See: <http://www.efta.int/sites/default/files/documents/statistics/training/Refugee%20Statistics%20in%20Kenya.pdf>

¹⁸ See: <http://www.efta.int/sites/default/files/documents/statistics/training/Refugee%20Statistics%20in%20Palestine.pdf>

Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), the reports of international organizations, and household surveys carried out jointly with the statistical offices of the host countries. Statistical areas covered on Palestinian refugees in the diaspora are demography, housing conditions, environment, living standards, education and health. Producing refugee statistics for Palestinian refugees faces a number of challenges which are not all unique to the State of Palestine, such as diverse and sometimes contradictory administrative and civil laws. Further, Palestinians are spread worldwide and often mingle with hosting countries localities (outside refugee camps) making it difficult to identify them.

In the presentation "Uganda's Experience in Collecting Data on IDPs",¹⁹ Ms Helen Nviiri, Principal statistician, Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS), reported on the experience of UBOS in dealing with refugees and internally displaced persons. The Uganda Bureau of Statistics is the principal agency responsible for official statistics and is responsible for coordinating, monitoring and supervising the National Statistical System. At present there are no more internally displaced persons in Uganda. A National Policy on IDPs was established in 2004 under the responsibility of the Office of the Prime Minister through the Directorate of Disaster Preparedness, Management and Refugees. UBOS over the years has collected data on IDPs through: The National Population and Housing Census (2002); the National Household Surveys (2002/03); the Northern Uganda Survey (2004); the Uganda Demographic and Health Survey (2006); the Uganda Panel Survey (2009/10) and The National Population and Housing Census (2014; on refugees). The 2002 census did not uniquely identify IDPs; in the 2004 Northern Uganda Survey and the 2006 Uganda DHS, IDPs were uniquely identified and special training for profiling IDPs in selected disaster prone districts was conducted. Mobility and desire to maximize benefit may lead to double counting of IDPs. The 2014 population census attempted to enumerate refugees, but they were not considered part of the usual population and only basic information was collected: age, sex and date of birth.

Mr Alphonse L. MacDonald, UNHCR consultant, presented his findings of a review of sample household surveys on refugees and his recommendations for the enhancement of the production of statistics on refugees and related concepts in his presentation "Review of refugee sample surveys, 2000 – 2014".²⁰ There is paucity of sample surveys on refugees; there is no international depository of refugee sample surveys; and there are few survey reports or studies of refugees in the public domain. A search of over 60 refugee-hosting countries from 2000 onward produced just 13 studies that could be considered. The majority of surveys suffered from the following technical challenges: lack of adequate sampling frames; non-existence of standard questionnaires and definitions; non-compliance with international standards of sample survey methodology; and dealing with highly mobile populations with a wide range of educational levels which had an impact on the complexity of the language to be used in the questionnaires. The quality of surveys on refugees will be improved if national statistical office are involved because they have a general mandate on national official statistics; they have specialized personnel especially in household survey methodology; they are used to comply with international standards; they have a nationwide coverage through branch offices, and maintain a pool of trained permanent or temporary field workers. To enhance the quality of refugee statistics, action at the global, regional and national levels would be required. At the global (and regional) level: the establishment of an international (or regional) depository of refugee surveys; development of an international refugee survey programme; development of standard questionnaires based on internationally agreed definitions and

¹⁹ See: http://www.efta.int/sites/default/files/documents/statistics/training/Uganda%20experience_IDPs.pdf

²⁰ See: http://www.efta.int/sites/default/files/documents/statistics/training/MacDonald_refugee%20sample%20surveys.pdf

operationalization of key concepts; and promotion of adherence to international standards. At the national level action: the modification of existing legal and administrative provisions to include refugee statistics in the mandate of NSOs; establishment of collaborative arrangements with the national agency responsible for border control and admission; make the NSO the guarantor for quality of statistical data on refugees; establish a comprehensive integrated population register which includes migrants, refugees and other related categories. If this is not feasible, at least establish a national migration cum refugee register and develop a module on refugees to be included in large-scale household surveys and the census.

Caveat: Not every number is a statistic; statistical data collection is resource intensive especially when dealing with rare populations. Departure from established methodology will cause unknown errors and biases, affecting validity and reliability. In addition, statistical data collection is a technical exercise and should be carried out by technically competent institutions and personnel.

Mr Samir Farid, Chief Technical Advisor, MED-HIMS, in his presentation “The Use of Household Surveys to Gather Data on Refugees: The MED-HIMS Experience”²¹ reported on the origin, structure and current results of the Programme. MED-HIMS is a joint initiative of the European Commission/Eurostat, UNHCR, UNFPA, ILO, IOM, The World Bank, and the League of Arab States. It is a specialized household survey programme designed to provide data on the determinants and consequences of international migration in seven countries in the Middle East and North Africa: Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, State of Palestine, and Tunisia. It covers the characteristics and behaviour of four groups of persons: migrants, return migrants, non-migrants and refugees. The refugee module has been developed in collaboration with UNHCR experts. Three questionnaires are utilized to collect data on refugees: 1. The Household Questionnaire; 2. The Individual Questionnaire for Refugees; and 3. The Household Socio-economic Characteristics Questionnaire. Potential respondents are identified through a large sample of households. If the number of identified refugees is not large enough for meaningful statistical analysis, an additional “targeted sample” of around 3,000 refugees is selected from the registration records of UNHCR in the country. This sample is interviewed using adapted versions of the questionnaires. MED-HIMS has been implemented in Egypt in 2013 and Jordan in 2014 and is scheduled for Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia in 2016 and Lebanon in 2017. An evaluation of the results from the MED-HIMS surveys in Egypt and Jordan indicated that the survey design and methodology was effective and generally successful in eliciting responses from respondents, including on a range of sensitive issues. However, a number of methodological challenges need to be addressed. Many refugees are “self-settled” and tend to live intermingled with the general population and may not necessarily be registered with UNHCR. Refugees change addresses and do not inform the authorities or UNHCR. In addition, refugees may be reluctant to be interviewed due to sensitive questions and a traumatic experience while motivation issues may be affected by post facto rationalisation.

The four discussion groups (see annex III) met to review a number of issues related to the proposed handbook and possible activities to enhance the collection of refugee statistics. The issues to be dealt with in this session were:

²¹ See: <http://www.efta.int/sites/default/files/documents/statistics/training/Farid%20MED-HIMS%20Forced%20Migration%20Survey.pdf> For more details see also: <http://www.efta.int/sites/default/files/documents/statistics/training/Review%20of%20surveys%20of%20refugee%20populations.pdf>

- B1. Use of population censuses to measure characteristics of refugees; priority measurement integration?; definitions of integration; other themes that could be measured through censuses.
- B2. Use of household surveys to measure characteristics of refugees, descriptive and comparative; themes that could be considered; integration in on-going national household surveys.
- B3. Ad-hoc surveys among refugees; objectives; sample frames, types of sample; questionnaire development; need and advantages of depositories of questionnaires and other methodological instruments.
- B4. Revisit coordination at national, regional and international level.
- B5. What are the major constrains for enhancement of refugee statistical data collection; options for the future; using 2020 World Population Census Programme and promoting establishment of international refugee statistical data collection programme.

The main conclusions of this group session can be summarized as follows.

- The census was considered a useful instrument to obtain data on refugees and other related groups, provided that all persons within the national boundary were included. It would allow comparing refugees with other groups and the general population. The census is most appropriate where there are no other reliable sources. It could also be used to validate administrative records, and could serve to create a national population register. However, definitions should be clear and easily understandable while adding additional questions is costly. Register based censuses will not be suitable to study refugee populations unless refugees can be identified in the population registers or linkage is established to other registers where refugee information exists.
- Household surveys would be useful if there is a large sample and if due consideration is given to ensure that a sufficient number of refugees and related categories are included. Best option is to include a special refugee module in on-going household survey with oversampling of refugee areas, if area sampling is used. It would be recommended to have a standard set of international recommendations and model questions. Practical challenges may make the exercise time consuming and expensive.
- Targeted ad-hoc surveys were in general considered an option if there were no household survey programmes, but two groups had opposing assessments of the cost of the ad-hoc surveys. Again, the standardized international modules were considered ideal.
- National, regional and international coordination was considered highly desirable. However, issues of national legislation may be an issue; NSO could be responsible for technical coordination, but coordination at policy level would depend on national situations. Regional and international coordination should be ideally based on existing (statistical and policy) mechanisms. The potential for a lead role for UNHCR or the UN Statistics Division was put forward. Financial and technical support to countries from the international community is required for all aspects of enhancement of refugee statistics.
- Among the constraints the lack of international guidelines was seen as a major bottleneck. This included the absence of detailed recommendations in the UN documentation for the 2020 World Population and Housing Census Programme; insufficient support to include refugee issues in ongoing household survey programmes; and the need for capacity building on specific refugee

topics has been expressed. In some instances, the lack of political will to include refugees in such data collection programmes may constitute a challenge.

Day 3: Friday, 9 October 2015

Session 4: International cooperation with a view to harmonize refugee statistics (Chairs: Norway and UNHCR)

1: European Migration regulation and the European Group for the Provision of Statistics

In this part of the session presentations were made on the EU Regulation on statistics of migration and international protection and on the European system of operational statistics on asylum seekers and refugees.

Mr Piotr Juchno, Statistical Officer, Eurostat in the presentation “EU Regulation 862/2007²² on statistics on Migration and International Protection”²³ provided an overview of this regulation applicable in the EU and EFTA countries. Up to 2008 there was no harmonized EU-wide system of data collection on migration and asylum. The Migration Statistics Regulation 862/2007 adopted in 2007 provided the legal frame for high quality data collection with a set of definitions and legal references; the frequencies and timeliness of data deliveries; a list of variables and disaggregation; a list of permitted data sources and criteria for quality reporting/revisions/corrections. Under the Regulation, statistics are collected and disseminated on international migration and population stock; international protection; prevention of illegal entry and stay; and residence permits and returns. Eurostat has identified some major constraints with regard to its data collection such as changing policy needs vs. statistical quality requirements (responsiveness); and the capturing of refugee populations among other migrant groups in Europe (e.g. in migrant integration statistics), in particular limitations of the existing statistical tools. Refugee statistics are not a core business for national statistical offices; hence, national coordination needs to be reinforced.

Mr David Dowey, Senior Data and Analysis Coordinator, European Asylum Support Office (EASO) in his presentation “Rationale for “Group for the Provision of Statistics”²⁴ provided an overview of the rationale, activities and achievements of EASO’s “Group for the Provision of Statistics.” Operational statistics are the by-product of a specific process and are flexible, and timely. In the case of EASO they are in support of the Early Warning and Preparedness System (EPS) of the EU+ (EU 28 plus Norway and Switzerland). The EPS provides a comprehensive, accurate, and timely statistical overview of asylum flows and related decision practices in the EU+. Its objective is “Accurate, timely and complete monitoring of the practical functioning of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS).” EASO uses Eurostat data as main source for official statistics and its own data collection mechanism with participating countries for its monthly, quarterly and annual publications. EASO cooperates with a number of EU institutions such as Eurostat (data availability and quality), Frontex (data sharing and joint analysis), EU-LISA (Eurodac data as additional source) and UNHCR (sharing of experiences). Experts from these agencies form the core of the Group for Provision of Statistics (GPS). Statistical information on the

²² See: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1446133459722&uri=CELEX:32007R0862>

²³ See: http://www.efta.int/sites/default/files/documents/statistics/training/1_Presentation_Eurostat_EU%20Regulation.pdf

²⁴ See: http://www.efta.int/sites/default/files/documents/statistics/training/EASO_RationaleForGPS.pdf

asylum process is collected as developments are ongoing (flow statistics). The indicators collected in the GPS are not only timelier than the Eurostat data on migration and refugees but also cover a shorter periodicity for some key indicators while ensuring its enhanced harmonization. However, such data have an operational and non-validated status, therefore implying limited public access to the data.

2: Closing session

Mr Olav Ljones, Deputy Director, Statistics Norway²⁵ then summarized the provisional conclusions of the conference on behalf of the five co-organizing institutions. These are presented in the next chapter of this report.

Mr Enver Taştı, Vice President, Turkish Statistical Institute²⁶, on behalf of the host country thanked the organizing institutions, UNHCR, Eurostat, EFTA and Statistics Norway for the initiative and the participants for their contributions to this memorable and successful event. The conference aimed at exploring how to better incorporate statistics on refugees into national statistical systems and to devise a plan for the development of a handbook with practical guidelines and recommendations on the compilation, production and dissemination of refugee statistics. He was confident that the results of this conference will not be an end in itself but will form the basis for further discussions and actions to achieve concrete results. He closed the conference with a request for the continued support and cooperation of participants in undertaking the challenging task of improving the lives of refugees through improved refugee statistics.

III. Conclusions

The conference conclusions as outlined below are based on the presentations, the outcome of the deliberations of the discussion groups and the discussions in the plenary session.

1. The Handbook

There was unanimous agreement to the desirability and usefulness of the handbook. It was suggested to modify the title to **International Recommendations for Refugee Statistics (IRRS)**. The content of the outline as proposed was deemed acceptable. However, some suggestions were made, namely to ensure that the IRRS should be user-friendly; to provide concrete instructions as to how procedures should be carried out; to make a systematic distinction between stock and flow statistics; to ensure that asylum seekers are included in the target groups; the need to emphasize adherence to the standard definitions of refugees and related categories, and adherence to international quality standards of statistical data collection. It has been agreed that the content of the IRRS will be existing or modified studies or articles that meet acceptable quality standards, or specifically commissioned articles.

Because of the apparent need for standardized instructions for statistical operation that are not consistent with the intention of the IRRS, it is suggested that the IRRS is supplemented by a **Refugee Statistics Compiler's Manual (RSCM)**, which should provide clear operational instructions on how to collect statistics on refugees and related categories.

²⁵ See: http://www.efta.int/sites/default/files/documents/statistics/training/Conclusions%20conference%20refugee%20statistics_v40LJ.pdf

²⁶ See: http://www.efta.int/sites/default/files/documents/statistics/ESCoP/Closing%20Statement_Refugee%20Conf_Enver%20TASTI_9Oct2015.pdf

There has been reference to the need to deal with other categories of populations of concern to UNHCR namely internally displaced persons and stateless persons. Given the mandate of the UN Statistical Commission, it is suggested that a handbook or international recommendations on IDP statistics be envisaged upon completion of the IRRS.

2. The scope

The importance of differentiating between refugee stocks and flows was emphasized repeatedly. In this regard, it is important to be distinct in the handling of the two key concepts of flows between countries and the stock of refugees in each country. In addition, ensuring that refugee statistics are an integral part of population statistics in each country shall be pursued in a consistent manner while simultaneously also ensuring consistency between countries.

Principles and definitions together with relevant data are crucial in the enhancement of refugee statistics. Further, references to estimation techniques and dissemination principles need to be included in the IRRS.

3. Definitions and classifications

Participants continuously stressed the need for scientific and consistent definitions and classifications to collect refugee statistics for both stocks and flows. In general, refugee statistics are produced by non-statistical offices and use categories that comply with the requirements of national legislation and societal needs. However, international comparability of statistics requires a common set of definitions, categories and methods. It is therefore suggested that the national statistical offices develop a system to transpose the national categories into the internationally agreed concepts and categories. In this respect it has been emphasized that a clear distinction should be made between persons (asylum seekers) who are covered by the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol and persons who have been granted leave to enter the country on grounds of "humanitarian" concerns. It is expected that UNHCR will take the lead to ensure that the categories of the international definition are consistent with international legislation. The IRRS proposes to use a classification system that incorporates the asylum procedure and its outcome (positive, negative, administratively closed etc.) in addition to categorization of refugees based on mass outflows (*prima facie*) or those granted temporary forms of protection. Ideally all of these cases could be dealt with in the IRRS.

Statistical categories should be reflecting the legal provisions. However, in the public discourse the term 'refugee' is often used in a sense that is not consistent with the legal and statistical definition. Statisticians should stress adherence to standard definitions based on legislation. Special attention should be given to incorporate the differences in practices of countries in the treatment of children of refugees born in the host country. In some countries which follow the *jus soli* principle they become automatically citizens, whereas in countries which follow the *jus sanguinis* principle they do not.

A number of issues remain to be determined, namely what is the status of "refugee"? Is it a permanent or temporary characteristic for the purpose of statistical reporting? Given that some countries use the category "persons with refugee background" does that imply that one is dealing with a permanent status? If not, when does one ceases to be a refugee in national and international statistics?

4. Data strategy

Data on refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons are collected by various actors including countries, international organizations and national and non-governmental organizations. There are many challenges associated with collecting these data and the various available sources have strengths and weaknesses. Different data sources provide different perspectives where some sources are relevant for establishing stocks, such as population registers and to a certain degree population censuses, while immigration authorities are better positioned to provide data on flows.

From a country perspective it is important to recommend systems that are efficient in cost and minimize the response burden. Data should be stored and made available for reuse. On the use of administrative data, the one way flow of micro-data goes from administration to statistics and not the other way. Refugees are considered vulnerable groups where adherence to data confidentiality and protection principles is of utmost importance.

5. Civil registration (including migration)

The conference took note of the crucial role that civil registration should play in the development of refugee statistics. It has been observed that refugees and related categories are not always included in the resident population that is covered in population registers. It is recommended that these groups are as a matter of principle included in the resident population. The development of a system for civil registration and vital statistics, preferably by the national statistical office, is highly recommended. If this is not possible at least a migration register, which may include refugees and related groups should be developed.

The information contained in the systems for population registers can be linked, preferably through a unique identifier such as a Personal Identification Number or through a set of standard variables. If refugees and related categories are included in the resident population then it is necessary to provide an identification code to distinguish these groups from the non-refugee categories. A system also has to be in place for covering asylum seekers whose cases are still pending, persons who have been granted temporary stay and/or those whose asylum application has been rejected as these instances will normally not be covered in such registers. This will facilitate the production of refugee statistics, both of stock and flow statistics.

6. Population censuses

The conference recognized that in the absence of population registers the census could be a suitable instrument to obtain information of refugee stock information provided that refugees and related categories are also covered by the census. It is recommended that refugees and related categories should be included in the resident population. In most census forms the required questions that would allow the identification of migrants are already the addition of a single question on the reason for the migration and would allow the identification of the refugee stock. To measure the flow of migrants and refugees a number of additional questions would need to be developed, increasing the cost of the census, however.

Depending on the content of the census questionnaire the information obtained could also be used to establish the characteristics of the refugee population and compare them with other relevant groups, such as migrants and the native population.

It is suggested that supplementary instructions are issued to the Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses to ensure that refugee populations, when applicable, are identified in the census population and those instructions for the required tabulations are included.

7. Household surveys

The conference recognized the appropriateness of the household survey to obtain detailed (stock) information about refugees. However, given that in most countries the refugee population is relative small this would require special designs to ensure that the statistically required number of refugees for analysis is obtained. It is recommended that refugees and related categories are included in the target population of all routine national household surveys. Moreover, it is recommended to include refugees and related categories in the target population of international surveys such as MICS and DHS.

Specially designed household surveys could be developed to obtain information on the flow and other characteristics of refugees. However, these are complex and resource intensive undertakings.

Among the participants there was limited support for a global refugee survey programme, mainly because of the resource requirements. If financial resources and technical support would be available it was seen as an interesting initiative.

8. National coordination

Official statistics on asylum and refugees are normally produced and disseminated by agencies that deal with admission and status determination. These are normally based on the administrative records kept by the agency. To allow national statistical offices to prepare statistics that comply with international definitions and categories it is necessary that the administrative records or information contained therein are available to the NSOs.

For the production of other statistical information it is suggested that all stakeholders involved in refugee activities be involved, but that the NSO play the role of guarantor for compliance with international standards of statistical data collection. It has also been suggested that the UNHCR office in the country coordinate their activities with the NSO.

9. International cooperation

The need for international coordination among agencies involved in refugee statistics was stressed. The roles of UNHCR, the UN Statistical Commission, and its secretariat, the UN Statistics Division are essential.

In the absence of an international repository for refugee household surveys it was suggested to use the World Bank's Microdata Library²⁷ or the International Household Survey Network.²⁸ The World Bank will contact the relevant people and explore its feasibility.

As a result of the conference the following suggestions are being made: in order not to lose the momentum of the initiative the establishment of an international professional network of practitioners in refugee statistics should be envisaged. Conference participants were invited to be involved in such an

²⁷ See <http://microdata.worldbank.org/index.php/catalog/central/about>

²⁸ See <http://catalog.ihnsn.org/index.php/catalog>

initiative with the objective of promoting cooperation and exchange of best practices and to encourage research. Details as how this would operate will be worked out by the organizing institutions.

Coordination at the regional level will be achieved through the collaboration with the relevant regional agencies and organizations. Several countries have suggested the holding of regional conferences on refugee statistics which would enhance the awareness on the need for improved national and regional statistics on this population. It would also provide an impetus to make the necessary administrative and technical arrangements to enhance the production of such statistics. Where applicable, this initiative should be closely coordinated with existing regional programmes in statistical development.

10. Road map

The conference was organized due to a decision and mandate by the UN Statistical Commission in March 2015. The organizing institutions, notably UNHCR, Turkey and Norway are bound to report back to the Commission at its next session in March 2016 highlighting the conference's conclusions and recommendations.

In anticipation of the endorsement of the IRRS, the lead agency (or agencies) for the publication and production of the IRRS has to be identified. To this effect, a proposal has to be put in place for an editorial board and the team of editors that would identify, select or commission the required articles. A time table, adequate funding and operational arrangements for such an undertaking have to be agreed upon and if required submitted to the UN Statistical Commission.

Given the success of this conference a follow up event could be anticipated in the fall of 2016 either to deal with the progress achieved in the production of the IRRS and additional documentation, to cover a topic in more depth (e.g. refugee sample surveys), or discuss a new topic such as statistics on internal displacement, as suggested previously.

Annexes:

- I. Agenda of the Conference
- II. Participants to the Conference
- III. Composition of the discussion groups
- IV. A proposal for International Recommendations for Refugee Statistics (IRRS).