Introduction

1. In view of the interest in the "1950 Census of the Americas" expressed at the first sessions of both the Statistical and the Population Commissions of the United Nations (Official Records, E/264, 1947), and the subsequent active participation of staff members of the United Nations Secretariat in this programme, the United Nations has been kept informed of activities and developments under the programme. The Inter-American Statistical Institute, and its Committee on the 1950 Census of the Americas (COTA) have welcomed the opportunity to work closely with the United Nations in matters relating to population and other censuses to be taken in or about 1950 by the nations of the Western Hemisphere, and have been most appreciative of the constructive participation of United Nations staff members, as the tempo of activities has increased.

2. The present brief report is intended to summarize the progress to date, and especially the actions of the Second Session of the Committee, held in Rio de Janeiro in February 1949.

Background information

3. The Committee on the 1950 Census of the Americas was created in January 1946 by the Inter-American Statistical Institute as a semi-autonomous, international technical committee for the promotion and co-ordination of censuses in nations of the Western Hemisphere. Although the dominant interest of the Committee has been in population, it has had an increasing interest in other census programmes of the American countries, including agriculture, housing, industry, commerce, etc.

4. The First Session of the Committee, held in Washington, D.C., in September 1947, was attended by members, or observers, from all of the countries of the Western Hemisphere.
resolutions of that session were reported to the third session of the Statistical and the Population Commissions. Of special significance among the actions of the First Session of COTA was the preparation of a short provisional list of essential population census items for censuses to be taken in or about 1950. This was known as the "Inter-American minimum list," and was modified and approved in final form by the Second Session, meeting in Rio in February 1949.

5. Activities between the first and the second sessions of COTA included (1) a meeting of the Committee's Co-ordinating Board, at which observers of the United Nations and FAO were present, to prepare definitions on population census topics, and to take other steps advancing the programme; (2) circulation to all countries of a questionnaire on population census topics, for national comments on the recommended definitions; (3) circulation of a census programme questionnaire, to obtain up-to-date information on the status of national programmes; and (4) the preparation of working documents for the Second Session, by the staff of IAST, technicians from various governmental agencies, and others. In addition, the United Nations Secretariat made available advance copies of provisional United Nations working documents prepared for the fourth session of the Population Commission.

Second Session of COTA

6. The Second Session of the Committee was held in Rio de Janeiro, 14-25 February 1949. The Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, with the approval of the Brazilian Government, was the host agency. Delegations from seventeen countries and three international organizations participated. The total number of registered delegates was fifty-nine.

7. Principal resolutions. Thirteen COTA resolutions were approved by the Rio Session and several motions of lesser formal importance. The most far reaching and significant of the resolutions were: That covering topics for the 1950 population census, which established a definitive "Inter-American minimum" for this census; that relating to the agricultural census, which fixed the topics and standards for this census, in so far as possible, in accordance with the plans for the World Agricultural Census as drafted by the FAO; and that relating to economic censuses, which recommended the taking of censuses of both industry and business, and proposed a minimum list of items for each. Important resolutions were also passed on the housing census; on the general problems of the 1950 census; on tabulations of the population census; on the problem of relating current national statistics to the results of the respective censuses in 1950; and on statistical centres for census training and consultation.
8. **Minimum population census programme.** As the "Inter-American minimum population programme," the following topics were agreed to at the Rio Session: (1) Total population; (2) sex; (3) age; (4) marital status; (5) place of birth; (6) citizenship; (7) language; (8) educational characteristics (including literacy); (9) fertility; (10) economic characteristics (occupation, industry, industrial status, and dependence on agriculture); (11) urban and rural population; (12) household (census family). Four additional topics were recommended as optional, or subject to certain conditions: (13) Housing data, to be included in the population census schedule if no separate housing census is taken; (14) cultural characteristics, in countries where pertinent; (15) population according to dependency on types of economic activity other than agriculture, in countries which are able to compile these data; (16) income from wages and salaries, in countries which consider it feasible to include these data.

9. **Training and consulting activities.** It was the consensus that the past emphasis on the training of individual technicians should be reoriented and that new programmes should, for the most part, take the form of "census clinics" of a regional character, where concrete problems could be brought before experts for analysis and consultation. Definite plans for one such centre, to be held in the Republic of Guatemala during the summer of 1949, were endorsed by the COTA at this Session.

**Third Session of COTA**

10. The Third Session of the COTA will be held in Bogota in November 1949, in conjunction with the Second Inter-American Statistical Congress. This Congress, under the auspices of the Inter-American Statistical Institute, is being convened at the invitation of the Colombian Government.

11. The Third Session will be concerned primarily with recommending a programme for the tabulation and publication of census data, not only for population but also for housing, agriculture, industry, and business. Also to be considered in greater detail than heretofore, are the problems of relating current statistical programmes to base data from censuses. It is expected that future meetings of COTA will be increasingly concerned with problems arising in connection with the analysis and use of census data for both national and international purposes.