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**DEVELOPMENT OF POPULATION DATA AND ESTIMATES**

(Memorandum Submitted by the Secretariat)

The Economic and Social Council, acting on the recommendation of the Population Commission at its first session, requested the Secretary-General "to provide means whereby the population statistics, estimates, and studies needed by the United Nations and by the Specialized Agencies may be supplied in collaboration with the agencies concerned ...(and) to report to the Population and Statistical Commissions at their next sessions on steps taken to this end." (Document E/400).

The Secretariat has made a survey of the types of population data needed by the various organs of the United Nations and by the Specialized Agencies. Informal conferences were held with representatives of FAO, ILO, ICAO, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund. There was no opportunity to confer with representatives of WHO or UNESCO, but the statements regarding the interests of these organizations in population data which were made at the first session of the Population Commission were taken into account.

This survey revealed three important facts:

1. The needs of the various agencies for population data are extensive. Some of the data may appropriately be developed by the Specialized Agencies most directly concerned, but there is a large amount of material which should be compiled centrally and which the various agencies expect the United Nations Secretariat to supply. The Secretariat will not be able to meet all of these demands at once. Priorities must be established so that the figures most urgently needed by all of the agencies can be provided as soon as possible.
2. Many of the data that are most needed cannot be obtained simply by compiling the statistics and estimates which the various governments now have available. Even the most elementary requirement, that is, current estimates of the total population of all countries, cannot be met in this way for all of the countries of the world. If the information which the United Nations and its affiliated agencies require for their programmes of work is to be supplied, the Secretariat must undertake, in collaboration with the statistical agencies of the various governments, to develop

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estimates where needed to fill major gaps in the existing data.

3. Data on all of the subjects on which information is required are more or less lacking in international comparability, and in some cases the series for individual countries lack comparability over time. At many points the lack of comparability seriously hinders or even prevents the use of the data for the administrative and analytical purposes of the international agencies. It is essential for the Secretariat, working in collaboration with the various governments, to develop the adjustments required for comparability in the basic series.

The first requirement is a table of estimates of total population of all countries of the world for current dates. These estimates are constantly needed, by the Secretariat itself and by several of the Specialized Agencies, for administrative purposes and analytical studies. The work of compiling them is now in progress.

Other data which demand a high priority are estimates of population by sex and age groups for current dates; forecasts of total population and of sex and age groups for dates in the near future (1948, 1949, and 1950); and longer-range forecasts. It is planned to begin work on the compilation of such materials before the end of the present year.

Subjects on which work cannot be begun in the immediate future, in spite of the urgency of the need, include the following:

1. Estimates of the labour force, by sex and age and by major industrial groups, for current and future dates. Among the important applications of these estimates are analyses of trends in national income, production and consumption of agricultural products and other goods, and potential industrial development of various countries. Their preparation requires the co-operation of the United Nations Secretariat with the ILO, as it involves the analysis of both population and employment trends.
2. Estimates of population by urban-rural classifications, for current dates. These are needed for purposes similar to those mentioned under 1. . Their compilation on an international basis is made difficult by differences in national practices with respect to definitions of urban and rural areas.
3. Estimates of numbers of families, households, married couples, etc., for current and future dates. These are needed for analyzing trends in demand for various commodities, and particularly for the study of housing requirements.

4. Statistics and estimates relating to literacy, educational level, and other population characteristics that are relevant to studies of various economic and social problems on an international scale.

5. Data on international migration. The problems involved in the compilation and analysis of these data will be dealt with in the documentation being prepared for consideration of the Population and Social Commissions, on the whole subject of international activities in the field of migration.

In the compilation of data on the various subjects mentioned above, the Secretariat will rely wherever possible on the official statistics and estimates provided by the various governments. Where these are not adequate to yield basic information that is urgently required, the Secretariat will encourage the statistical agencies of the various governments to develop the data needed, and will collaborate with them as much as possible to that end.

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