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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

**REPORT****TASKFORCE MEETING ON 2010 POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUSES  
CAIRO, 12-13 NOVEMBER 2005****Summary**

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), in cooperation with the United Nations Statistics Division, the International Labour Organization, the Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations, the Central Agency for Public Mobilisation and Statistics, Egypt, and the Ministry of National Economy, Oman, organized the Taskforce Meeting on 2010 Population and Housing Censuses, which was held in Cairo on 12 and 13 November 2005.

Discussions focused on the following: (a) emerging issues and basic topics of the 2000 round of population and housing censuses (1995-2004), which could be taken into consideration in the 2010 round; (b) the concepts, definitions and classifications used, and the extent to which they conform to the international equivalents; and (c) the amendments that member countries propose to the concepts and definitions in the current revision of the United Nations *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, revision 1*.

The Meeting made a number of recommendations on the following topics: the establishment of working groups to prepare reports on various aspects of population and housing censuses; the formulation of the programme of work of the regional taskforce on population and housing censuses; and the determination of the date by which reports must be submitted.

This report contains a brief review of the most salient issues that were considered during discussions and the most important points that were the focus of recommendations.

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## Introduction

1. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), in cooperation with the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations (AGFUND), the Central Agency for Public Mobilisation and Statistics, Egypt (CAPMAS), and the Ministry of National Economy, Oman, organized the Taskforce Meeting on 2010 Population and Housing Censuses, which was held in Cairo on 12 and 13 November 2005. The main objectives of the Meeting were to discuss emerging issues and basic topics of the 2000 round of population and housing censuses (1995-2004), which could be taken into consideration in the 2010 round.

### I. RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY THE MEETING

2. Participants at the Meeting made a number of recommendations to Governments, national statistical bodies, ESCWA and the relevant United Nations organizations. Those recommendations are set forth below:

(a) The endeavours exerted by UNSD in cooperation with the regional commissions and member States with a view to revising *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, revision 1*, were commended;

(b) The United Nations organizations taking part in the Meeting should be invited to provide technical support and advisory services to member States, in order to enable them to make proper preparations for the implementation between 2005 and 2014 of the 2010 round of censuses;

(c) Emphasis should be placed on the importance of standardizing the concepts and definitions of population and housing censuses, in order to facilitate the process of comparing the results of such censuses at the regional and international levels. Similar emphasis should be placed on the importance of revising the statistical classifications used when collecting and disseminating data: they should be brought into line with national conditions before censuses are initiated. Those classifications include the International Standard Classification of Occupations, the International Standard Industrial Classification of all Economic Activities and the International Standard Classification of Education;

(d) Emphasis should be placed on the importance of exchanging national experience of carrying out censuses, with a view to minimizing cost and publishing results as rapidly as possible, thereby enabling decision makers and policy developers to make timely use of census outcomes. Similar emphasis should be placed on the need to involve data users at all stages of census preparation, including the determination of issues to be covered by questionnaires and the final outcomes;

(e) ESCWA should be invited to administer an Internet discussion network that could be called "census net", the aim of which would be to enable member countries to exchange ideas on and experiences of carrying out population and housing censuses and familiarize themselves with the relevant administrative and organizational processes;

(f) ESCWA member countries should be encouraged to ensure the transparency of census data and publish them supported by the metadata of the concepts and methods used in the data collection process. Member countries should also be encouraged to use traditional and modern methods, including information technology, in order to disseminate data promptly to users;

(g) ESCWA member countries should be advised to study the new methodologies used in carrying out censuses, including rolling censuses, which have been tested and adopted in France and Peru, for example, with a view to benefiting therefrom;

(h) Member countries should be encouraged to study the experiences of some of the countries in the region in collecting data using optical character recognition: that method will be used in the population and housing census in Egypt in 2006 and was already used in the 2005 population census in Morocco. Attention should also be given to the use by Oman of handheld devices in collecting data directly during the enumeration phase.

## II. ISSUES DISCUSSED

### A. THE 2010 WORLD PROGRAMME ON POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUSES

3. The UNSD representative presented a review of the 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses. The review included an introduction to the programme of work related to population and housing censuses at the regional and international levels and its goals; a historical overview of the 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses and the outcomes of the 2000 round; the importance of the Programme and the challenges it faces with regard to preparation, implementation and use of the expected outputs; an overview of the part played by UNSD in that field; and United Nations resolutions concerning the establishment of an expert group for the 2010 round of population and housing censuses and the duties of that group.

### B. STANDARDS AND DEFINITIONS USED IN THE 2000 ROUND

4. The Chief of the ESCWA Statistical Coordination Unit presented a paper on the principles and definitions used in the 2000 round. In that paper, consideration in respect of standards and questions used was given to several indicators, including place of residence and birth, duration of residence, place of previous residence, population size, locality, rural/urban distribution, household, nuclear family, head of household, relation of individual to the extended/nuclear family, marital status, nationality, religion, language, ethnic/racial group, fertility, mortality, educational level, economically active population, the reference period used, unemployed persons, non-economically active population, income, institutional sector, place of work, and disability and its cause.

### C. PROPOSED STANDARD TABULATIONS AND BASIC TOPICS

5. The UNSD representative presented a review of the proposed tabulation and the set of basic topics, of which there are 36, to be addressed in population and housing censuses. Those issues include, inter alia, population, migration, demographic characteristics of the family and individuals, fertility and mortality, educational level, economic status, and disability. The UNSD representative also reviewed the tables proposed for the display of presentation of census results and ways of presenting such tables.

### D. THE FORMATION OF WORKING GROUPS TO REVIEW *PRINCIPLES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUSES*

6. Country representatives were divided into the following working groups:

(a) Working group one, to work on the issue of housing censuses and their characteristics, comprises representatives of Bahrain, Egypt (chairman), Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine and Saudi Arabia. This group will propose components of housing characteristic issues for the 2010 round, on the basis of the lessons learned from the 2000 round;

(b) Working group two, to work on the basic components for building principles and recommendations for population and housing censuses for the 2010 round and related outcomes, comprises representatives of Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Oman, Palestine (chairman), and Yemen. This group will determine the basic issues for formulating principles and recommendations for the 2010 round of population censuses;

(c) Working group three, to work on information and communication technologies (ICT) and reliance on outsourcing, comprises representatives of Egypt, Oman, Palestine and United Arab Emirates (chairman). This group will study the use of ICT, including optical character readers and handheld devices, in data collection;

(d) Working group four, to work on modern approaches and means used in administering censuses, comprises representatives of Egypt, Kuwait, Lebanon (chairman), Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. This group will put forward ideas on new methodologies for administering censuses, including rolling censuses.

7. The duties of the above working groups will include the revision of *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses*, using the following:

(a) The recommendations made by the meetings on population and housing censuses that were held in Cairo in 2002 and 2003 and the workshop on the economic characteristics of population;

(b) The outcomes of the meeting on population and housing censuses in ESCWA member countries that was held in Yemen in 2002;

(c) The results of previous censuses, brochures and census questionnaires in ESCWA member countries;

(d) The conclusions of the Gulf Cooperation Council working group;

(e) The outcomes of the discussions of the working groups set up by UNSD;

(f) 2000 round population and housing census forum documents;

(g) The results of questionnaires on population and housing censuses prepared by ESCWA;

(h) The discussions that took place in the course of the Meeting and the related recommendations;

(i) An Internet page will be designed for the regional taskforce in order to permit the members of the working groups to communicate with each other and prepare the report containing the recommendations on the issues for which they are responsible;

(j) Those documents should be between six and ten pages in length; summarize the situation; and contain observations and recommendations related to the principles and recommendations for population and housing censuses. The documents should be sent to all participants by the end of February 2006 for review and evaluation;

(k) All the documents prepared should be presented at a meeting to be held in the first week of April 2006. The representative of the United Arab Emirates has offered to host the event.

### **III. ORGANIZATION OF WORK**

#### **A. DATE AND VENUE OF MEETING**

8. The Taskforce Meeting on 2010 Population and Housing Censuses was held in Cairo on 12 and 13 November 2005.

#### **B. OPENING**

9. At the opening, statements were made by the Director of CAPMAS, the Director of Social Statistics in the Ministry of National Economy, Oman, the representative of UNSD and the Chief of the ESCWA Statistical Coordination Unit.

10. The Director of CAPMAS began his statement by welcoming the participants and organizers. He expressed the satisfaction felt by his organization at having cooperated in the arrangements for the Meeting. He stressed the importance of censuses and of improving preparations for them, in order to obtain clear and comprehensive data that can assist in formulating plans for the future. He referred to the forthcoming census in Egypt, which will be conducted in 2006, saying that preparations for it were in hand, and emphasising the need for coordination between all parties in the country.

11. The Director of Social Statistics in the Ministry of National Economy, Oman, welcomed participants to the first meeting of the regional taskforce. He stressed the importance of reaching recommendations and

formulating a programme of work for the ESCWA region of which the aim would be to improve the administration of population and housing censuses, while taking into consideration the particularities of the region.

12. The representative of UNSD expressed his pleasure at taking part in the Meeting. He said that it was important that all member countries should conduct censuses, and that UNSD was ready to provide technical support and advisory services for the preparation and implementation of population and housing censuses. He concluded his statement by saying that UNSD was in the course of revising and preparing the second revision of *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses*.

13. The Chief of the ESCWA Statistical Coordination Unit welcomed participants and thanked CAPMAS and UNSD for their cooperation, and Oman and AGFUND for their participation in organizing the Meeting and contributing to its funding. He said that the Meeting was being held pursuant to one of the recommendations made by the Statistical Committee at its sixth session, which called for the formation of a regional taskforce responsible for coordinating the efforts of the countries of the region with regard to the 2010 round of population and housing censuses. He then reviewed the objectives, affirming that the main outcome of the Meeting would be preparation for the regional document that would be taken into consideration when *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses* was revised, in completion of the work carried out by UNSD in cooperation with the regional commissions and member countries. He concluded his statement by referring to the importance of population censuses and the statistics and indicators derived therefrom, both with respect to clarifying and studying social phenomena and using census outcomes to formulate appropriate policies that would promote the development process and monitor progress towards the achievement of national and international millennium goals.

#### C. PARTICIPANTS

14. The Meeting was attended by 26 representatives from all the ESCWA member countries and experts from United Nations organizations. The list of participants is contained in the annex to this report.

#### D. ORGANIZATION OF WORK

15. The agenda of the Meeting contained the following items:

1. Opening of the workshop;
2. Experiences of and lessons learned in carrying out 2000 round population and housing censuses;
3. Revision of the United Nations handbook *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, revision I*;
4. Determination of the extent to which countries apply international concepts and definitions to population and housing censuses;
5. Preparation of a regional document relating to the revision and updating of the United Nations handbook *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses*;
6. The 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme, which was adopted by the United Nations Statistical Commission at its thirty-sixth session;
7. Determination of priorities and steps to be taken by countries in application of the Programme;
8. Future plans of the regional working group;
9. Closure of meeting.

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