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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

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CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

Group of Experts on Population and Housing Censuses

Tenth session

Astana, 4-6 June 2007

ANNOTATED PROVISIONAL AGENDA FOR THE TENTH SESSION

to be held in Astana (Kazakhstan)
opening on Monday, 4 June 2007 at 10 a.m.

This meeting is organised jointly with Eurostat.

I. PROVISIONAL AGENDA

1. Adoption of the agenda.
2. Election of Officers.
3. Substantive topics for discussion:
 - (a) Census planning and management;
 - (b) Census technology: recent developments and implications on census methodology;
 - (c) Outsourcing of census operations.
4. Future work.
5. Other business.
6. Adoption of the report.

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II. ANNOTATIONS

Item 3(a). Census planning and management

Given the complexity of an operation like the population census – regardless of the methodology adopted – accurate planning and management of the different phases play a fundamental role for the success of the census itself. This agenda item will provide countries with the opportunity to exchange their experiences on census planning and management, presenting in particular specific solutions or tools for better quality assurance. Special attention will be paid to the challenges posed on census planning and management when innovative census methodologies are adopted, like the use of registers in combination with sample surveys or exhaustive data collection.

Item 3(b). Census technology: recent developments and implications on census methodology

More and more countries plan to take advantage in their census of technological tools developed in the recent years (like handheld devices or the use of internet for data collection). At the same time, established technologies (like optical reading of forms and imaging) are today more attracting than in the past thanks to increasing reliability and/or decreasing costs. During the discussion, countries will benefit from an exchange of experiences concerning the application of these technologies, looking in particular at the lessons learnt from countries where a census was taken in 2005 or 2006. The discussion will cover technical aspects but also the implications of the adoption of new technologies on the different phases of the census process. Countries will also discuss how to evaluate the different options in terms of census technology and methodology, taking into account the national circumstances (including factors like the objectives of the census, data availability from registers or other sources, population size, cost of labour, etc.) For this reason, the latest technology or the most innovative methodology may prove not to be the best choice for all countries.

Item 3(c). Outsourcing of census operations

An increasing number of countries consider outsourcing (to a commercial company or to another government agency) as an option for specific phases of the census. Outsourcing may represent a solution when the skills or the equipment required for a particular task or project are not available in-house. In deciding whether outsourcing is a cost-effective solution, however, full consideration should be given to the alternative of developing the needed skills or acquire the needed equipment, in particular when these could be used by the NSI for other purposes after the census. At the same time, strategies have to be put in place to make sure that quality is not compromised. In this agenda item countries that considered (or are considering) outsourcing could discuss what principles guided, or are guiding, the decision on whether outsource or not specific tasks/projects. Countries with experience on outsourcing will share their experience on the setting of specifications, the selection of the service/equipment provider and the monitoring of the outsourced project.
