

## 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses

By

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22<sup>nd</sup> Population Census Conference

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### I. Background

1. For over six decades, the United Nations Statistical Commission and UN Regional Statistical Committees have played a key role in supporting national census taking. The UN Statistical Commission established the *1950* and the *1960 World Population Census Programme* that was followed by the *1970, 1980 and 1990 World Population and Housing Census Programme*. These initiatives by the Statistical Commission were then followed by the initiation in 1994 of a *2000 World Programme of Population and Housing Censuses* in support of census-taking worldwide. These most recent actions taken by the Commission resulted in a resolution by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in support of the *2000 World Population and Housing Census Programme* (Resolution 1995/7).

2. How successful was the *2000 World Programme of Population and Housing Censuses*? Having in mind the complexity and multitude of issues related to conducting population and housing censuses, the answer is not straightforward. Measured by the number of world countries or areas that conducted a census, of the 230 countries and areas that report to the United Nations *Demographic Yearbook*, a total of 201 have conducted a population and housing census or a population register-based census, since 1995. Censuses vary greatly in their total populations that they must cover: from fewer than 100 persons in small island areas, to more than 1.2 billion persons in countries such as China and India.

3. It is important to note that 91 per cent of the world's population resides in a country that has conducted a census since 1995<sup>2</sup>. This is a significant success. Much, however, remains to be done; only 57 per cent<sup>3</sup> of Africans reside in a country that has conducted a census in the Africa region, compared with almost 100 per cent in Oceania<sup>4</sup>, 99 per cent in Europe<sup>5</sup> and North America<sup>6</sup>, 97 per cent<sup>7</sup> in Asia, and 80 per cent in South America<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Prepared by the Demographic and Social Statistics Branch.

<sup>2</sup> This and all other percentages in this paragraph are computed on the basis of population estimates for year 2000, as presented in *World Population Prospects, The 2002 Revision, Volume I: Comprehensive Tables*, United Nations Publication, Sales No. E.03.XIII.6, United Nations, New York, 2003, page 559.

<sup>3</sup> On the basis of reports submitted to the *Demographic Yearbook*, in the period 1995-2004, the population and housing census was not conducted in Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Madagascar, Nigeria, Somalia, Sudan, Togo and Western Sahara.

<sup>4</sup> With the exception of several small islands.

<sup>5</sup> On the basis of reports submitted to the *Demographic Yearbook*, in the period 1995-2004, the population and housing census was not conducted in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

<sup>6</sup> On the basis of reports submitted to the *Demographic Yearbook*, in the period 1995-2004, the population and housing census was not conducted in El Salvador.

The world map:



## II. 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses

4. On the basis of previous programmes and the experiences from the 2000 Round of Population and Housing Censuses, the draft ECOSOC resolution on 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses supports the 2010 World Programme, urges Member States to carry out a population and housing census and to disseminate census results as an essential source of information for small areas, regional, national and international planning and development. It also asks the Secretary General of the United Nations to implement the 2010 World Programme.

5. The 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses builds on Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics<sup>9</sup>, more specifically, on recommendations for Action 2: Prepare for the 2010 Census Round. These recommendations emphasize the substantive work that needs to be undertaken in order to ensure the successful conducting of the 2010 Round of Censuses. They also outline the need for developing an overall strategy for funding and conducting censuses in low-income countries. The Marrakech Action Plan emphasizes the role of the United Nations Statistical Commission as an official governing body to address technical and coordination issues.

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<sup>7</sup> On the basis of reports submitted to the *Demographic Yearbook*, in the period 1995-2004, the population and housing census was not conducted in Afghanistan, Bhutan, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Lebanon, Myanmar, and Uzbekistan.

<sup>8</sup> On the basis of reports submitted to the *Demographic Yearbook*, in the period 1995-2004, the population and housing census was not conducted in Colombia and Peru.

<sup>9</sup> *Better Data for Better Results: An Action Plan for Improving Development Statistics*, Marrakech, Morocco, February 4-5 2004, as presented at: <http://www.worldbank.org/data/results.html>.

6. In that context, the Statistical Commission set a number of goals for the 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses. For the purpose of this paper, these goals are grouped into the following three broad categories

**Goal 1:** Conducting at least one population and housing census in every country or area in the period 2005-2014;

**Goal 2:** Producing an updated version of United Nations Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses;

**Goal 3:** Providing a platform for comprehensive exchange of experiences, countries' participation, technical assistance, information and data dissemination.

### **III. Progress report**

7. The activities under Goal 1 of the 2010 Programme were initiated by convening a United Nations Symposium on Population and Housing Censuses, in New York, 13-14 September 2004<sup>10</sup>. The purpose of this Symposium was to set priorities for the upcoming decade round of population and housing censuses (2005-2014) in light of the experience from the previous census decade (1995-2004). The Symposium also aimed at providing inputs for the drafting of a resolution requested by the Statistical Commission at its 35th session, calling on the Secretary-General to proceed with the development of a 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme<sup>11</sup>.

8. The Symposium addressed the roles and actions of national statistical/census authorities, United Nations Statistical Commission, United Nations Statistics Division and United Nations regional commissions, and other sub-regional organizations in support of the 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme. In this context, the Symposium recommended that the United Nations Statistical Commission, at its 36th session, adopt a draft of a Resolution on the 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses for Economic and Social Council consideration and adoption, that would:

- i. Support the 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses, consisting of a number of activities aimed at ensuring that Member States conduct a population and housing census at least once in the period 2005-2014;
- ii. Urge Member States to carry out a population and housing census and to disseminate census results as an essential source of information for small area, national, regional and international planning and development; and

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<sup>10</sup> The report of this Symposium is available in full at:  
<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/meetings/egm/Symposium04/default.htm>.

<sup>11</sup> Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2004, Supplement No. 4 (E/2004/24), chap. II. B, paragraph. 2 (a).

to provide census results to national stakeholders as well as the United Nations and other appropriate intergovernmental organizations to assist in studies on population, environment, and socio-economic development issues and programmes;

- iii. Emphasize the importance of the 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses for socioeconomic planning and request increased support for this Programme; and
- iv. Ask the Secretary General of the United Nations to implement the 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses.

9. As mentioned, the United Nations Statistical Commission is holding its thirty-six session in New York, 1-4 March 2005 and it will review the report on the work of the Expert Group it established at its thirty-fifth session<sup>12</sup>. This report presents a set of recommendations and activities of the Statistical Commission, its Expert Group and national statistical or census authorities that were adopted on global and regional meetings.

10. This 22<sup>nd</sup> Population Census Conference is also providing an opportunity, in this early phase of the 2010 Round, to collect information on national plans in regard to conducting population and housing censuses. Participants will be asked to complete and return a sheet that requests some basic information about the planning for the next population and housing census (dates, deadlines for particular phases and so forth). This information will be posted at the 2010 World Population and Housing Programme website, maintained by the UN Statistics Division. The updates on this site will enable continuous monitoring of national plans for population and housing censuses, thus providing guidance in regard to mobilizing the resources where they are most needed.

11. In an early effort to ensure the realization of Goal 1 of the Programme United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) in collaboration with the UN Statistics Division, is organizing the Advocacy and Resource Mobilization International Meeting, in New York, 24-25 February 2005. This meeting is expected to focus on best advocacy strategies for donor countries as well as recipient countries, and on resource mobilization and capacity building. It is also expected to recommend a regular yearly inventory of fund-raising activities within the framework of the 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses, to be held around the session of the United Nations Statistical Commission, with the purpose of assessing the progress related to mobilization of resources and strengthening national capacities for conducting censuses in the 2010 Round.

12. The activities under Goal 2 of the 2010 Programme were initiated by the Expert Group to Review Critical Issues Relevant to the Planning of the 2010 Round of Population and Housing Censuses, organized by the United Nations Statistics Division, in New York, 15-18 September 2004<sup>13</sup>. The Expert Group called for the revision and

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<sup>12</sup> This report is available at: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/sc2005.htm>.

<sup>13</sup> The full report is available at: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/meetings/egm/CensusEGM04/default.htm>.

updating, when needed, of the United Nations *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses* for the 2010 census round and ensure the accomplishment of this task not later than 2008. In addition, the Expert Group established a framework of Working Groups with specific assignment in relation to the principles and recommendations for population and housing censuses.

13. More specifically, the meeting recommended the following:

- a. The establishment of an expert subgroup with the aim of reviewing, updating or developing standards and frameworks (topics, concepts, definitions, classifications and methods) for both the essential core set of outputs and the broader set of topics of general interest and concern.
- b. The list of topics in the *Principles and Recommendations* should be revised to be as comprehensive as possible, taking into account different regional and national circumstances. Fully acknowledging that not all topics apply to all national statistical circumstances and that one size does not fit all, the experts proposed that the *Principles and Recommendations* should provide guidance on how to include topics in censuses according to national circumstances.
- c. The revised *Principles and Recommendations* should include a set of criteria that would guide national census authorities in determining the applicability as well as suitability of collecting data on individual topics through a census and also provide guidance on when alternative sources to censuses might be used.
- d. The *Principles and Recommendations* should provide guidance on the assessment of the level of disaggregation of the results needed so as to make a distinction between topics for which data are required at national/regional levels and consider best practices in addressing statistical needs for small areas. In addition, the recommendations should propose alternative sources of data as well as the suitability of the use of short and long census forms for the selected topics, depending on level of detail required.<sup>14</sup>

14. Following this Expert Group Meeting, the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) conducted, together with the Statistical Office of the European Union (Eurostat) a Joint ECE- Eurostat Work Session on Population and Housing Censuses, in Geneva 22-26 November 2005<sup>15</sup>, that outlined the priorities and activities in regard to census-taking in the region. Similarly, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) hosted the Expert Group Meeting on Population and Housing Censuses, in Bangkok, 9-10 December 2004<sup>16</sup>, which emphasized the importance of

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<sup>14</sup> Paragraph 8 of the Conclusions and Recommendations of the Expert Group Meeting to Review Critical Issues Relevant to the Planning of the 2010 Round of Population and Housing Censuses, available at: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/meetings/egm/CensusEGM04/default.htm>.

<sup>15</sup> Report of the November 2004 joint ECE-Eurostat work session on population censuses, CES/2004/49, United Nations, Geneva, 2004.

<sup>16</sup> The full report is available at: <http://www.unescap.org/stat/meet/census2004/index.asp>.

early support and coordination in regard to the 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses and identified priorities in the region.

15. Three working groups are being established to carry out the work of the Expert Group on the 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses. These working groups will be coordinated by a Bureau, while the United Nations Statistics Division will act as Secretariat to the 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses and to the Expert Group. In order to benefit from the revision processes of the Regional Commissions and to ensure coordination and general agreement on decisions reached, the work of regional task forces and working groups is incorporated into the framework of United Nations Expert Group Working Groups.

16. At the global level, the purpose of the proposed working groups is to work in conjunction with the Regional Commissions and other relevant organizations and to maximize efficiency of the process, avoid duplication of effort and to ensure coordination and harmonization of the results.

17. The working groups and subgroups are as follows<sup>17</sup>:

1. *Working Group on Standards, Frameworks and a Core Set of Outputs* with particular attention to: marital status, households, families and living arrangements; employment; education; mortality; human functioning and disability; internal and international migration statistics; housing; and coordination of a core set of census tabulations for international dissemination;
  - Technical subgroup on internal and international migration statistics
  - Technical subgroup on marital status, households, families and living arrangements
  - Technical subgroups on human functioning and disability
  - Technical subgroup on core set of outputs
  - Technical subgroup on coordination of a core set of tabulations for international dissemination
  - Technical subgroup on housing census topics
2. *Working Group on Census Planning and Management* with particular attention to alternative designs; strategies of integrated data collection and dissemination; quality assurance; outsourcing and IT
  - Technical subgroup on integrated data collection and dissemination
  - Technical subgroup on quality assurance
  - Technical subgroup on alternative designs

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<sup>17</sup> A detailed Proposal for Working Groups, with description of the working groups and technical subgroups, including areas of responsibility, composition and expected outputs is currently being prepared and is under consideration by the Expert Group.

### 3. *Working Group on Promotion of Censuses: Making Value Visible*

18. Goal 3 of the 2010 Programme to provide a platform for comprehensive exchange of experiences, countries' participation, technical assistance and information, covers a broad area of activities. The activities proposed under this goal were initiated by the United Nations Symposium on Population and Housing Censuses<sup>18</sup> and the Expert Group to Review Critical Issues Relevant to the Planning of the 2010 Round of Population and Housing Censuses<sup>19</sup> and emphasizes the crucial importance of the active involvement of Member States in implementing the 2010 World Programme.

19. The Symposium expressed strong and unambiguous support for the concept of active involvement of Member States and establishment of a trust fund in support for the World Programme, coordinated by the United Nations Statistics Division. The active involvement refers, but is not limited, to identifying technical expertise and other resources to be shared by Member States in the conduct of their censuses which may result, for example, in the sharing of IT expertise; the short-term exchange of professionals; sharing of training programmes; and the exchange of census information and data exchange, through a coordinated programme of partnership activities. The active involvement also includes pledging financial contributions to the Population and Housing Census Trust Fund by Member States and by other relevant intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations.

20. The Trust Fund would be used to bridge the distances between national statistical offices in their exchange of resources and support, by providing the funds needed for travel, consultation, fellowships and advisory work, as well as for research and development of standards and methods necessary for the successful implementation of the World Programme. While the trust fund would involve relatively few resources, it would act as a catalyst for members providing assistance and support to each other or for sharing national experiences. The trust fund will be an effective source for facilitating the provision of technical assistance, with the understanding that such a trust fund is not meant to be the main source of funds for conducting a national census. The Symposium also recognized that the trust fund would enhance the capacity of the United Nations Statistics Division as a conduit for exchange of relevant information and experience and a major repository of supporting materials and experiences.

21. As stated in the Conclusions and Recommendations of the United Nations Symposium on Population and Housing Censuses<sup>20</sup>, United Nations Statistics Division together with the United Nations regional commissions must be a broker of census experiences. A directory of census resources, national practices, experts and other available resources would allow countries to more easily obtain information when they need it. Sharing expertise among countries with mutual interests, within and across regions, such as the example of el Mercado Común del Sur (Mercosur) countries with

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<sup>18</sup> See footnote 10.

<sup>19</sup> See footnote 12.

<sup>20</sup> See footnote 10.

Bolivia and Chile, should be encouraged and supported by the United Nations Statistics Division.

22. The 2010 World Programme is developed in such a way to house and welcome substantial contributions of the United Nations Fund for Populations Activities and the United Nations Development Programme. It is of paramount importance to ensure the coordination of advocacy and fund-raising activities with substantial and technical ones.

23. In concluding, the success of the 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses will ultimately be measured by the active involvement of national statistical or census authorities at national level as well as at international level; it is thus worth noting that these first few months of the 2010 Round of Population and Housing Censuses witnessed a number of activities at global and regional level, as well as in many national statistical or census authorities in developing mechanisms for conducting population and housing censuses.