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REPORT

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I. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Expert Group Meeting on Population and Housing Censuses was organized and sponsored by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). It was held in Bangkok, Thailand, from 9 to 10 December 2004. The meeting was convened in preparation for the 2010 Round of Population and Housing Censuses that would officially be launched at the upcoming session of the United Nations Statistical Commission. The meeting made the following recommendations.

General recommendations

1. The Expert Group commended ESCAP for calling this meeting to assist the secretariat in defining regional priorities for the 2010 Population and Housing Census round. Specifically, the meeting appreciated ESCAP's effort to establish a regional census programme covering the most urgent needs of its member countries to assist them in making preparations for the next census round as successful as possible.
2. The Expert Group also applauded the opportunity to give feedback to the 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses which was being led by the United Nations Statistics Division. In particular, it asked that the recommendations and conclusions of this meeting be taken into consideration in the revision and updating of the United Nations Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses.
3. The Expert Group requested ESCAP to facilitate communication between the regional and the global census programmes and ensure their full coordination and mutual support.
4. The establishment of a country driven regional census programme covering the most critical issues would greatly benefit the ESCAP membership and would contribute to the strengthening of information systems in Asia-Pacific as well as to the development of a regional network of national census experts.
5. To enable this partnership to function, the meeting recommended that ESCAP establish a forum where census stakeholders could meet as partners and discuss issues of concern and share experiences. In view of the crucial importance of the census as a key information source for both national and international data demands, including those relating to the MDGs, collaboration in this forum should be given high priority both by governments and ESCAP.
6. ESCAP's role as a coordinator of ad hoc technical assistance and other exchanges between the countries was also stressed as being of primary importance. Similarly the support of the Global Trust Fund for Censuses for financing some of the specialized technical advisory services to countries in need was considered instrumental in the partnership.
7. Recognizing that not all emerging topics and needs for assistance could be covered by the regional census programme, the Expert Group recommended that the priorities outlined below be used to establish the activities to be carried out in the coming years.

Critical issues and new emerging concerns

8. As key activities for the regional census programme, the Expert Group recommended

that specific work groups be convened in the future to deal with the following four topics which were of common concern and to discuss the listed issues in depth among national experts:

9. “Effective use of IT and GIS for census operations”. This work group should cover cross-cutting issues in the use of IT tools, such as Computer Aided Personal Interviewing (CAPI), Intelligent Character Recognition (ICR), Optical Character Recognition (OCR) and Optical Mark Recognition (OMR). The contribution of digital mapping techniques and Geographical Information Systems (GIS) to census operations should also be covered.

10. Given that statistical offices were increasingly outsourcing technical IT operations and hiring equipment to carry out census operations efficiently, the Group recommended that ESCAP facilitate an exchange of experiences with the writing of outsourcing contracts and that statistical offices share contracts which adequately covered their interests. It would also be important to share experiences in conducting evaluation and feasibility studies on the use of new technologies.

11. A “Using the census for measuring new and emerging priority issues” work group should focus on events and characteristics which, because of their rarity, were not well captured in sample surveys. For instance, information on health and human functioning or issues like maternal mortality and adult mortality might benefit from being collected in censuses in selected countries/territories. The census might also provide valuable information on poverty through the use of proxy indicators such as type of housing, tenure status, access to water, asset ownership, etc. Other examples of emerging issues of concern mentioned were ageing, migration, religion, ethnicity and race. Censuses also provided data which were useful for planning in smaller geographical areas on all the above characteristics.

12. The Expert Group stressed the importance of sharing experiences in collecting information on these new and emerging issues in censuses, so that others could benefit and learn from both positive and negative results. Building a tested knowledge base on these matters was not only a way of saving resources, but could be used to withstand political pressure to collect information on issues for which the census is not a suitable vehicle, e.g. income.

13. “Planning and financing the next censuses” was a topic recommended for a third work group. Amongst the issues proposed for discussion were how to make government see the value of censuses and how to raise supplementary resources needed to cover the increasing costs of censuses.

14. It was recognized that appropriate statistical legislation was of the highest importance for census planning and financing. The need for statistical laws and regular census taking was not fully understood by many governments. The Expert Group therefore requested ESCAP/UNSD and other international agencies to sponsor a census advocacy drive and to assist national statistical offices in making governments see the value in good statistical legislation and regular data collection.

15. The Expert Group noted that countries in the region, especially those in the Pacific, considered favourably the mutual provision of technical cooperation, particularly in the form of exchange of staff for short periods and study visits, and recommended that the Trust Fund

be used also to facilitate these sorts of initiatives.

16. Although recognizing that census taking was the responsibility of national governments, the Expert Group appreciated that countries in difficult circumstances and smaller countries were often not able to ensure that censuses were undertaken regularly, either because of lack of funding or because of lack of expertise. The Expert Group therefore recommended that ESCAP, UNSD, UNFPA, UNDP and aid agencies provided assistance to these countries to carry out their censuses.

17. Finally, the Expert Group recommended that a work group should focus on “Analysis, dissemination and utilization of census data”. The main topic of this work group should be how to make more extensive use of data for national planning and development, including the use of census data for small-area estimates for the benefit of local governments. The training of local officials on how to use such data without breaching confidentiality should also be discussed. It was also recommended that the problems connected with the use of census data for non-statistical purposes, e.g., voter registers, updating of administrative registers, etc. should be reviewed by the work group. A number of countries used census data for other than statistical purposes, which went against statistical laws concerning confidentiality in most countries. The proposed work group should also discuss the methodology connected with outsourcing data dissemination to private business providers.

Review of UN Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses

18. The Expert Group appreciated being part of the review process for the Principles and Recommendations and recognized the fundamental value of the publication as a common resource for statisticians and specifically for those involved in census taking. As a product created jointly by national statisticians from all regions, the Principles and Recommendations had universal value and had contributed to improving the quality of censuses and the efficiency of the census operations.

19. The Expert Group selected four parts of the Principles and Recommendations to review. The comments and proposals on these are listed below for further consideration in other forums:

20. Review topic “Geographical and Internal Migration Characteristics”:

i. Those countries which had used the *Principles and Recommendations* for the 2000 Round of Censuses had found it useful, with the exception of the sections on “Locality” (2.49, 2.50 and 2.51), which may be deleted as they add little value to the document.

ii. More concise definitions and criteria for determining “usual place of residence” should be provided. Elaboration was needed on when and how to count “de jure” and “de facto” population and how they may be combined to determine total population.

iii. The section on internal migration should begin with a paragraph or two about the importance of migration statistics and how they can be derived from the census.

iv. The topic of “floating populations”, and how to define and identify them should be included.

- v. Guidelines should be provided on the enumeration of hard-to-reach population subgroups such as nomads, illegal migrants, etc.
 - vi. Guidelines should be provided on whether migration data can be collected on a sample basis and if so what sampling scheme should be used to provide reliable estimates of migration.
21. Review topic “Census Products and Data Utilization”:
- i. The Expert Group recommended that the interrelations between the early phases of census planning and the subsequent development of census products and future data utilization should be clarified in the chapters of the *Principles and Recommendations* dedicated to census planning.
 - ii. Similarly, with regard to census products, how to identify users’ needs in the early phases of census planning should be explained. Countries should be guided to design census products according to different groups of users, e.g. the central government, the general public, academia, media, particular subgroups like children, and the private sector, according to their current and foreseeable future country circumstances.
 - iii. The *Principles and Recommendations* should be expanded in those chapters which guide the production of custom tabulations for meeting more focused thematic as well as geographical data needs.
 - iv. The Expert Group recommended that the *Principles and Recommendations* should provide more guidance related to the provision of samples of microdata for academic research.
22. Review topic “Demographic, social and disability characteristics”:
- i. The option of using both current sex and sex at birth should be considered.
 - ii. A conversion table from the ‘animal year’ into the ‘calendar year’ should be developed. The age group “85 years and over” should be further refined and three digits should be used instead of two for the age variable in the census questionnaire and suggested tabulations.
 - iii. The Expert Group recommended considering use of a new category of ‘consensual union’.
 - iv. The *Principles and Recommendations* should address how censuses could be used to count people holding multiple citizenships.
 - v. A discussion should be included on the use of such sensitive data as religion and ethnic group. The concept of indigenous groups should be elaborated and harmonized at global level.
 - vi. Censuses should be used to collect to the extent possible data on fertility and mortality to improve incomplete estimates from vital registration and other sources. Due to limited space in the census questionnaire, a separate form on fertility is required.

vii. The Expert Group recommended that paragraph 2.145 in the *Principles and Recommendations*, which defines literacy, should include the clause ‘in any language’. Functional literacy should be considered as a refinement, and national data collections should use the definition developed by UNESCO. There is need to study relationships between mental disability and literacy to see how to classify a mentally disabled person with formal education. The same concern was also raised for persons using sign languages only.

viii. The Principles and Recommendations should elaborate on how to make distinctions between formal education and traditional forms of education provided by religious authorities, communities or indigenous groups. Post-secondary education should be better explained and the inclusion of vocational training should be considered.

ix. The section on disability should be updated according to the WHO’s International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF).

23. Review topic “Relationship between population and housing censuses and other statistical activities”

i. The Expert Group recommended that the *Principles and Recommendations* highlight the analytical advantage of conducting population and housing censuses simultaneously as this would permit an integrated analysis of demographic and social data along with data on human settlements.

ii. The Expert Group noted that population and housing censuses could be used for providing sampling frames for agricultural and establishment censuses and surveys if a few questions on agricultural and economic activities were included in the census questionnaires.

iii. If sampling techniques were used in the design of a census, it was recommended that information be provided on standard errors to let data users assess the reliability of such estimates.

iv. The Expert Group urged NSOs to scrupulously follow the *Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics* in the conduct of censuses and in handling census data in order to safeguard the NSOs’ independence in the eyes of respondents and users. Furthermore, the Expert Group advised NSOs to be cautious in conducting a population census at the same time as activities related to registering the population for citizenship purposes.

Working in Partnership

24. The Expert Group requested ESCAP to continue convening an ad hoc forum to support the 2010 round of censuses in the Asia-Pacific region.

25. The Expert Group recommended that a “census newsletter” be created as a vehicle of exchange of experiences.

26. The Expert Group recommended that web-based census instruction materials and e-discussion groups be set up for supporting training and the exchange of experiences in the

field of censuses.

27. The Expert Group requested ESCAP to act as a focal point for coordinating the supply and demand of expertise in census operations within the region. The Expert Group endorsed the idea of using a questionnaire to enable ESCAP to obtain further information on countries' needs and on the available expertise to be shared.

28. The Expert Group concluded that a common concern in census operations in many countries was to ensure that enumerators were sufficiently trained and supervised so as to not endanger the quality and reliability of the data. Many different methods were used for training enumerators and could be shared. The Expert Group therefore recommended that ESCAP and SIAP, in participation with interested countries, organize a workshop to discuss issues related to using modern tools for training of census enumerators and supervisors.

II. PROCEEDINGS OF THE EXPERT GROUP MEETING

A. Attendance and Opening

2. The Expert Group Meeting was attended by statisticians and officials from national statistical offices and census organizations responsible for planning and implementing various aspects of census taking. Participants came from 18 countries and territories: namely, Cambodia; China; Hong Kong, China; India; Indonesia; Islamic Republic of Iran; Japan; Lao People's Democratic Republic; Macao, China; Malaysia; Mongolia; Nepal; Pakistan; Philippines; Republic of Korea; Sri Lanka; Thailand; and Viet Nam. There were also participants from various agencies and organizations, namely, United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD); United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA); International Labour Organization (ILO); Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO); Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC).

3. Opening the meeting, the Chief of Statistics Division and Officer-in-Charge of UNESCAP welcomed all participants to Bangkok. He underscored the importance that UNESCAP attached to population and housing censuses. The present meeting, convened even before the Statistical Commission adopted a resolution to officially proclaim the 2010 round of censuses, was a modest yet significant step to work with the countries of the region in order to prepare successfully for the forthcoming censuses. He stated that the forthcoming round of population and housing censuses was especially critical because of the Millennium Development Goals, which governments have embraced, and the role that censuses played in providing the necessary underlying data for monitoring those goals. He mentioned that 28 of the 48 MDG indicators depended in one way or another on census data. However, there was need to focus and foster the linkage between MDG-related and census campaigns as the recognition of the role of population and housing censuses in providing data for monitoring MDGs was still wanting among governments and even among certain agencies. On a positive note, he recalled that the importance of censuses had been recognized in a number of other environments. At the Second International Roundtable on Managing for Development Results, held at Marrakech in February 2004, preparation for the 2010 census round was one of the six action areas identified as priority for improving development statistics in the future. The aim would be to establish a census trust fund for the conduct of research to reduce census costs and improve census methods. The fund would also be utilized for advocacy purposes

to help national statistical systems make the case domestically and internationally for the necessary funding. Finally, he urged the meeting to treat census operations in a holistic manner since the huge investments put into censuses, as well as the experiences and the capacities generated by them, can in fact be utilized to the benefit of the statistical system as whole.

4. During the opening session of the meeting, Ms. Mary Chamie, Chief of the Demographic and Social Statistics Branch, UNSD, presented an overview of the experiences and lessons learned under the 2000 World Programme of Population and Housing Censuses. The meeting was reminded that under UN Resolution 1995/7, member states were urged to: 1) carry out population and housing censuses during the period 1995-2004; and 2) provide census results to the United Nations and other appropriate intergovernmental organizations. In response to that resolution, 196 countries of the world conducted a census of their population – up from 187 in the previous round. The proportion of the population covered by the censuses, however, decreased to 89 percent during the 2000 round from the previous level of 92 percent. In Asia, well over 90 percent of the population was covered by a census. With respect to providing census results to the UN, the meeting was informed that the number of countries that provided results to the Demographic Yearbook, the official UN publication on the demographic and social situation in countries, had sadly gone down. The experiences of the previous round, according to the speaker, had brought to light emerging issues that would have bearing on the design and the types of information that would be collected in the next round of population and housing censuses. Continued fertility decline in many countries and its implication on the ageing process, increasing international migration, and the need to address human functioning and disability were among the topics that are likely to influence census topics. Moreover, countries also would have to consider trends like globalization, shifts in the ethno-linguistic composition of the population of countries, the need for alternative census designs in the light of emerging data demands, and issues of declining public trust.

B. Objectives of the Workshop

5. The Chief of the Statistics Development Section, UNESCAP made clear to the experts the objectives and expected outcome of the meeting. She stated that the purpose of the Meeting was to review the experiences and lessons learned from the last census round and to determine the critical issues for the region related to the planning of the 2010 round of censuses. In 2005, the Statistical Commission was expected to launch the 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses. Among the priorities identified in the world programme would be the review and revision of the *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses*, the official UN publication that provides guidance to countries in planning and carrying out improved and cost-effective censuses.

6. UNESCAP, together with its member countries, would organize and implement a regional census programme and this Expert Group Meeting would set the priorities for the programme. A major goal of the regional programme would be to ensure that all countries in the region conduct a census and use accepted international standards for the enumeration. Based on national experiences and expertise, the current meeting would also discuss the *Principles and Recommendations* in order to provide guidance and inputs to the working group tasked with its revision. The specific objectives, therefore, were the following:

1. Identify the critical issues related to the planning of the 2010 Round of Population and Housing Censuses in the region
2. Identify the priorities of the regional census programme
3. Review the UN publication on *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses* to identify areas for improvement, taking into consideration the situation and the needs of the region
4. Agree on modalities for working together in partnership to ensure synergies in census-related activities and ensure the successful implementation of the 2010 Regional Census Programme

C. Meeting Agenda and Expected Outcome

7. The overall expected outcomes of the meeting were the following:
 1. A set of recommendations on which ESCAP can build a Regional Census Programme based on the region's experience and lessons learnt from past censuses and on emerging issues both at national and regional level
 2. Regional views for input to the Global Census Programme, including views on the revision of the Principles and Recommendations of Population and Housing Censuses
 3. Agreed modalities for partnerships to carry out the 2010 round of censuses

8. The Meeting agenda was organized into 4 substantive sessions. Session I, **Experiences and Lessons Learnt**, reviewed and discussed in plenary the implementation of the 2000 Round of Population and Housing Censuses in the ESCAP region. The discussion was based on a paper prepared by a consultant on the experiences and lessons learned by countries in the region in the course of their implementation of the 2000 round of censuses. Also for discussion was a secretariat paper based on the country statements which countries had been asked to provide prior to the meeting.

9. In Session II, **Critical Issues and New Emerging Concerns**, participants were asked to choose between four topics and sub-groups were formed to discuss different issues considered critical to countries in the region. The deliberations during the group discussions were subsequently presented in a plenary session where further discussions and prioritization of the topics were made. The topics discussed and group members were as follows:

Group I: **Analysis, dissemination and utilization of census data** - Cambodia, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Mongolia, Nepal and Pakistan.

Group II: **Using the census for measuring new and emerging priority issues, e.g., gender equality, mortality, small-area poverty estimates, disability, migration, religion, etc** – Lao PDR; Macao, China; Philippines; Republic of Korea; and ADB.

Group III: **Planning and financing the next censuses** – Mongolia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Viet Nam and SPC.

Group IV: **Effective use of IT and GIS for census operations, e.g., mapping, data collection, data capture, processing and dissemination** – China; Hong Kong, China; India; Japan; Malaysia; and Thailand.

10. The purpose of Session III, **Review of the Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses**, was to discuss some relevant sections of the census recommendations and to give feedback to the global revision process. The session started with a plenary session, wherein UNSD informed the meeting about the efforts being made at the global level to carry out the review. This was followed by group discussions on selected topics from the publication. Four groups were formed and topics assigned as follow:

Group I - Cambodia, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Nepal, Philippines and Thailand reviewed the sections on **Demographic, Social and Disability Characteristics** (paragraph nos. : 2.85 to 2.164; 2.258 to 2.277)

Group II - China, India, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran and Macao, China reviewed **Geographical and Internal Migration Characteristics** (paragraph nos.: 2.18 – 2.59)

Group III – China; Hong Kong, China; Japan; Malaysia; and Viet Nam reviewed the chapter on **Census Products and Data Utilization** (paragraph nos.: 3.1 to 3.54)

Group IV - Japan, Mongolia, Pakistan, Republic of Korea and Sri Lanka reviewed the sections that discuss the **Relationship between Population and Housing Censuses and Other Statistical Activities including Population Registers** (paragraph nos.: 1.28 to 1.49).

11. The last session, Session IV - **Working in Partnership**, was essentially a brain-storming session to suggest how countries in the region and relevant intergovernmental agencies could be working in “partnership” with ESCAP during the 2010 Round of Population and Housing Censuses.

12. The meeting documentation and reference materials are available at the following address: <http://www.unescap.org/stat/meet/census2004/index.asp> . Participants at the meeting were given a copy of the *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, Revision 1* (ST/ESA/STAT/SER.M/67/Rev.1, United Nations, New York 1998)

III. SUMMARY OF PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

A. Session I: Experiences and lessons learnt

13. The main discussion paper, The 2000 Round of Population and Housing Censuses in the ESCAP Region: Lessons Learnt and Emerging Issues, was presented to provide an overview of the status of the implementation of the censuses in the ESCAP region as well as to highlight some of the experiences and the problems encountered. On the whole, the implementation of the 2000 round of censuses in the region has been satisfactory in terms of the number of countries which actually undertook a census. Nearly all of the 58 members and associate members of ESCAP conducted at least one census of their population during the period 1995 to 2004. Only 4 countries had not done so (Bhutan, DPRK, Myanmar and Uzbekistan) and Bhutan and Myanmar were currently preparing for a 2005 census. While the majority of the countries conducted population censuses on a fairly regular basis every decade, in some countries the interval between the most recent census and the previous one had been more than 10 years. This was the case in Cambodia (36 years), Afghanistan (27), Sri Lanka (20) and Pakistan (17).

14. It was noted that international organizations played a key role in the implementation of the last census both in terms of helping countries fund some of the census-related activities as well as providing technical assistance through advisory services, publication of technical guidelines, conduct of training, and organization of meetings to discuss common issues within the region. The assistance proved crucial to the successful implementation of the census, particularly among less developed countries.

15. The presenter then discussed a few aspects of census taking with reference to experience in the region. Effectiveness of training for census field enumerators and supervisors was critical to the quality of census data; unfortunately the design and execution of training programme, in many countries, had not received as much attention as it should have. Quality checks and data evaluations had not been systematically and routinely carried out and therefore it was often difficult to ascertain the extent of coverage of the enumeration and the accuracy of data. In cases where post enumeration checks were undertaken, the results were often not made public for one reason or the other.

16. On the use of IT, the meeting was informed that so far there had been many attempts to use IT in data collection, such as web-based and/or off-line enumeration, or use of Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI). In the area of data capture, many more countries were now using scanning and Intelligent Character Recognition (ICR) technology. Success in the use of such technology had not been uniform.

17. Utilization of census data, however, needed to be further improved in most countries. The kind of census products produced by statistical offices and the strategies for their dissemination influenced the extent to which data were used for research, development planning and policy-making. Countries had pursued various ways, some very innovative, of packaging their products and disseminating them. India, for instance, had produced some very attractive products aimed at both IT and non IT users. Detailed analysis of the data, however, remained an area where most countries needed to do more.

18. The significance of the 2010 round of population censuses could be overemphasized due to increased demands on data in the light of the Millennium Development Goals. It was also essential that the 2010 census round was responsive to the demands for data needed to address emerging social and health issues such as migration, disability, ageing, and adult and maternal mortality.

19. The discussion drew attention to the issues involved in applying various strategies for improved training of enumerators. Use of verbatim training guides, ample use of audio-visual materials, and practice interviews during training were among the techniques that had been utilized and considered helpful in providing instructions to a vast number of enumerators. The meeting heard that in India, employment of school principals, head teachers and other government officials as master trainers contributed to the effectiveness of the census training programme. In the last census round, India also for the first time employed NGOs to provide gender sensitization training for enumerators. The Philippines had faced dilemmas with respect to the duration of enumerators' training. Due to a lengthy census questionnaire used in the last census round, the training period had to be extended which added to the overall census cost. For the next round, many NSOs were looking for training strategies that would be less costly, yet still be effective and result in better quality data. Nepal, drawing from its experience in the last census round, viewed the training of supervisors as key to the success of the training programme. The secretariat noted, with interest, the

issues raised with respect to training and considered it an area where it was urgent to share experience.

20. Other important lessons learnt from the past census were the need for conducting post enumeration surveys (PES) shortly after the main census and not after a long interval as was done in Nepal. Likewise, the need to have good cartographic maps for demarcating enumerator area boundaries was emphasized as very important so as not to miss out households and dwellings.

21. The secretariat introduced the summary of country statements with focus on issues and problems encountered during the latest population and housing censuses and how countries would deal with them in the upcoming censuses. The issues mentioned in the country statements covered a wide range of areas and problems related to census organization and management. The secretariat highlighted 6 common issues as experienced by many countries: namely, high costs of the census; confidentiality issues; use of new technologies; alternative approaches or designs; respondent cooperation; and developing the census to reflect new emerging concerns.

22. The meeting was informed that the issue of high costs required varying responses on the part of national statistical offices. Countries like Indonesia and Thailand were exploring possibilities to shift from a complete enumeration to a sample-based enumeration, in the event of cutbacks in the census budget. To conduct a cost-effective bi-census in 2006, Hong Kong, China was taking initiatives such as reduction of the sample size, extension of the data collection period and use of alternative collection methods including CD-ROM based e-questionnaire for self-completion. Confidentiality of personal data was reported as a prominent concern in developed societies and among well-educated people in developing societies; this required to be properly addressed by many statistical offices in order to secure public confidence and cooperation and, in turn, improve the accuracy of responses.

23. Many countries were planning to use new technologies for the next censuses as a way to improve the timeliness and quality of data capture, processing and dissemination. Several reported that they were cautiously testing web-based questionnaires or CD-based questionnaires before deciding whether to use them in data collection. In such cases, it was clear that the use of e-questionnaires would be limited to a small sector of the population with Internet connection. As this population normally is difficult to reach by the enumerators it may lead to better coverage.

24. Although the Asia-Pacific region was devising alternative designs or approaches to traditional census-taking to a much lesser extent than in other parts of the world, e.g., Europe and North America, some countries clearly were thinking of new designs. Japan, for instance, would use its administrative registers to complement the data of non-response. Thailand would use more extensively self-completion forms for respondents living in the Bangkok Metropolitan Area and some other municipal cities. Indonesia also considered introducing a mailing system to reach the difficult-to-meet persons.

25. Respondent cooperation was discussed as a critical issue affecting the quality of census data in view of decreased respondent cooperation noticed in some countries at the last census. Countries had used different strategies for census advocacy and publicity to target different audiences ranging from school students to policy makers. Still, this aspect of the census remained a challenging task that needed to be further explored for better census-taking in the next round. Finally, the secretariat reported national efforts to reflect new global and national trends in their upcoming censuses. This effort was made at two levels, i.e. inclusion of new or emerging concerns and improvement of

census methods. Some country examples were brought to the attention of the experts. For instance, the Philippines planned to include questions relating to maternal mortality and poverty in its 2010 census and to devise ways to improve the coverage of disabled persons and overseas workers, both of which were severely undercounted in the past. Nepal would further pursue its efforts to engender the census in the next round. The priority topics for the 2005 census in the Republic of Korea would be ‘fertility, ageing and housing quality’ while its 2000 census focused on ‘knowledge-based and information-oriented society’. In an effort to better measure the floating population, China, in its 2000 census, included new questions on birthplace and duration of residence and adjusted the minimum duration of residence for a permanent resident from one year to six months.

B. Session II: Critical issues and new emerging concerns

26. The next two sections (B and C) are the summary of the group discussions and the conclusions drawn in the plenary discussion that followed Sessions II and III.

Analysis, dissemination and utilization of census data

27. A number of countries in the region use census data for non-statistical purposes, e.g., voter registers, updating of administrative registers, etc. However, although technically feasible, it was recognized that census data used for these purposes was not advisable as it raised problems of data confidentiality and went against statistical legislation as well as the *Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics*.

28. The group emphasized that census data should be utilized more extensively for national planning and development. In this connection, free distribution of basic census results should be encouraged so that various stakeholders including governmental offices, research institutions and universities and international organizations could use them. In the case of data requiring further processing and dissemination in electronic forms, national statistical offices could continue to charge for the use of such data, but at varying rates depending on users’ capacity to pay. The money from these sales could be used for statistical capacity- or infrastructure building of the statistical offices.

29. The group noted that one of the benefits of census data was that small-area estimates could be disseminated to local governments. Such dissemination, however, required that workshops were organized at sub-national level to train local officials on how to use such data.

Using the census for measuring new and emerging priority issues, e.g., gender equality, mortality, small-area poverty estimates, disability, migration, religion, etc.

30. There was consensus in the group discussion that population and housing censuses offered a unique opportunity to collect data on rare events, such as disability and maternal mortality. To estimate these events from sample surveys required a very large number of observations, which was costly. The group therefore agreed that this feature of the census should be thoroughly explored in the next round.

31. Emerging and priority issues varied from country to country; yet there was a common view and intention to use the next round of population and housing censuses as a vehicle for collecting data needed to address such issues. The Philippines, for instance, intended to include questions to

determine maternal mortality and disability and had initiated a pretest of the questions. Emphasis was placed on the unique opportunity the census offered to measure more precisely rare events, such as maternal mortality or adult mortality at certain ages; such measurement had always been problematic in sample surveys because of sampling constraints. The same applied to the collection of data on human functioning and disability. The Republic of Korea had attempted in the past to include disability questions but failed, yet there was still pressure from the Ministry of Health to include some questions in the next round. It was agreed that census data on these issues could not go into details but could serve only to establish reliable benchmark information; further investigation needed to be undertaken through special surveys or other data collection avenues.

32. Ageing was becoming a priority issue in some countries and was being investigated in the Republic of Korea through the census. Questions would be asked in the 2005 population census on income, types of physical activities and sources of economic support for the aging population. These types of data would be collected from persons 60 years and over.

33. Problems associated with mega-cities had necessitated the need for data on the 'floating population' and commuting patterns, and a number of countries, including the Islamic Republic of Iran, Indonesia and Republic of Korea, were looking at the census as a source. Unfortunately, there was no standard definition for 'floating population' and countries had used and applied the term in different ways. The secretariat and UNSD were therefore called upon to formulate and disseminate guidelines in this regard, through the *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses*.

34. Macao, China was considering measuring the number of illegal migrants in the next census and was likewise seeking guidance on how to get better estimates. In the past, the measurement of illegal migration using census data was indirect, that is, by comparing the total volume of migration obtained from the census with administrative data on the number of migration permits issued. Improvement in the approach was being sought.

35. There was also a general agreement that the census was not appropriate for collecting data on income to be used for estimating poverty. It was mentioned that the Maldives attempted to do so but failed. Even if it was possible to have income reported in broad income categories, sample household surveys were still considered the only tool for the collection of detailed income data. Nevertheless, some experts felt that the census would still be useful for collecting data needed for poverty analysis; for example, possession of selected types of consumer durables, type of housing, water and toilet amenities could be asked in a census and would provide valuable information.

36. With regard to data requirements for monitoring MDGs, the group was reminded that, at the minimum, progress could be reported in relative terms. It was not essential to establish absolute levels of change relative to data for the baseline year set at 1990. It was, however, important to collect comparable data, so that change could be assessed correctly. It was suggested that countries that did not have benchmark data for 1990 on some of the indicators, go back to the data files from the 1990 census round and re-process them, where feasible, to establish benchmark indicators for their MDG reports.

37. Conscious attempts to make census data more gender-sensitive had been made in a few countries. In the Philippines, a review was being made of the method of collecting information on household heads to eliminate or minimize the possibility of biased responses that were based on stereotype concepts of head of household. In so far as engendering the census was concerned,

efforts made during the last census round in Nepal and India and these countries' continued concern in this regard were commendably noted.

Planning and financing the next censuses

38. Adequate technical capacities for carrying out census operations were available in the region. However, the representative of SPC reported that there were huge problems in the Pacific island countries, where NSOs were small and had high staff turnover. Many countries also felt that they would benefit from support in building their capacities in some specific technical areas. The collaboration between Thailand and Lao PDR was a good example and had resulted in staff from the National Statistical Centre of Lao PDR attending workshops for enumerators for the Thai agricultural census in a province bordering Lao PDR. Participants in the group felt that money from the proposed Census Trust Fund could be used to cover the cost of travel of statisticians wishing to learn from neighbouring countries and that such assistance did not significantly stretch the human resources of the host country. In the Pacific, in particular, countries would like statistical staff from one NSO to travel to another NSO to provide technical support when needed, however they would need the cost of travel and accommodation of such staff to be funded. In fact this was seen as the most cost effective way of providing technical support to these countries.

39. The group recognized that the next census round would require domestic mobilization of resources as well as resources from third country and international agencies. The next census round would require substantially more resources due to accelerated urbanization and migration. Consequently, there had to be good mapping and up-to-date household listings. In addition, there were increasing demands for additional data (e.g., relating to MDGs, disability, etc.) and for better dissemination and data access. One prerequisite for mobilizing domestic resources was the existence of statistical legislation (e.g., census/statistical act) ensuring that censuses were regularly taken. Governments should recognize that they had to fund core censuses activities with external sources being if possible to financing extraordinary or new activities. In this regard, there was a need to intensify dialogue between the NSO and relevant government authorities and to advocate more vigorously the value of the census. It was suggested that ESCAP and other international agencies should assist in this process.

Effective use of IT and GIS for census operations

40. In general terms, the group recognized the great support to census planning that a regional exchange of experiences on the use of IT may provide.

41. One of the cross-cutting issues in the use of IT tools, and especially of tools like Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI), was that of security. The group recommended that in considering CAPI and other IT tools, which potentially expose individual data to the risk of being leaked beyond legitimate users, statistical offices should decide with care about the adoption of these tools. In particular, the use of CAPI was problematic for operations in difficult locations: dust, weather and climate conditions may be constraints in the adoption of CAPI. Other obstacles for implementation were maintenance costs and potential under-utilization of handheld devices once census operations were over.

42. On considering Intelligent Character Recognition (ICR), Optical Character Recognition (OCR), and Optical Mark Recognition (OMR), the group recognized the great potential for savings that these different technologies offered. It agreed that statistical offices should consider using these

for their census operations as they can contribute, at least in the long term, to reducing expenditures, minimizing the time for issuing provisional and definitive census results, and improving the quality of data. Nevertheless, as the adoption of these technologies constituted a potentially large investment, the group recommended that adequate feasibility studies and market research about possible alternative technologies be made.

43. The group noted the high demand for digital mapping and the great support that Geographical Information Systems (GIS) could offer to census operations. The group also noted how GIS could help in defining with higher precision boundaries of enumeration census blocks: this was thought particularly important for urban boundaries rather than for villages or rural census blocks. Additionally, GIS had proved to have great potential in the field of dissemination of census data.

44. It was noted that many similarities existed among countries with regard to the combination of hardware and software solutions adopted for digital character or mark recognition. However, it was also recommended that each country adopt such solutions taking into account its own individual background setting, among which the group signalled geographic and population sizes as being the most relevant. The comparison of adopted solutions and of their associated advantages and disadvantages was considered of great interest among participating countries.

45. The group recommended that adequate contracts, with safeguards linking payment to performance, be used with IT vendors or outsourcing companies providing the technical equipment and related services. In this regard the group agreed that accountability and a clear attribution and retention of control and responsibilities by the programme management were crucial for minimizing the risks of failure. It was mentioned that exchange of information and experiences about contractual arrangements with private sector technology and solution providers might greatly help in obtaining the best market conditions for statistical offices.

46. The group noted that, after initial deployment of these IT technologies, statistical offices may develop adequate experience to serve many more than just census needs, thus having the positive effects of IT spill over to other operations.

47. The group was informed of feasibility studies conducted on emerging technologies such as the use of Internet web sites for online data-entry, the use of downloadable e-forms for off-line filling in by respondents with subsequent delivery back to the statistical office, the use of mobile phones to send digitized maps to enumerators, and so forth. It agreed that, although these possible uses of IT might be viable, most countries in the region were not yet at a mature enough stage of IT development to introduce them.

48. The issue of linking different databases through matching of a common individual identity key in order to build population registers was of interest to many countries; however, there seemed to be little regional experience in this possible application field.

49. Furthermore, without adequate informatization and sufficient development of quality databases, this possibility of benefiting from such use of different databases was considered premature for many developing countries.

C. Session III: Review of the Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses (discussion in groups and plenary)

Demographic, Social and Disability Characteristics

50. The group observed that the sex characteristic was commonly understood and used for census purposes as meaning sex at birth. It was expected that this concept would face some operational difficulties with increasing transsexual cases in a number of countries. The group agreed to pay due attention to this new but non-negligible issue in the 2010 world programme.

51. Some population groups reported their births based on the 'animal year', rather than the 'calendar year'. As this posed problems of conversion for the enumerators, the group recommended developing a conversion table for this purpose. At the same time it suggested, due to the increasing number of centenarians, to further refine the age group '85 years and over' and use 3 digits instead of 2 digits for the age variable in the census questionnaire and tabulations.

52. Since consensual unions outside of marriage are becoming common in many societies, the group recommended to consider the use of a new marital status category called 'consensual union'. It also emphasized the need to collect data on the number of marriages not only in polygamous societies but also in other societies to account for marital patterns. In addressing this issue, the group recognized that special cultural practices should be taken into account in the census (e.g., Cambodia reported emerging practices of couples reportedly married, but not living together; in Catholic societies 'marriage annulment' is increasing).

53. The group felt that the census should be used to count people holding multiple citizenships. But care should be exercised with such sensitive variables as religion and ethnic group which could be collected in all societies. It was also important that respondents were provided with sufficient clarifications on the potential use of those data at the time of enumeration. The group recommended that the concept of indigenous group should be elaborated and harmonized at global level.

54. The group recommended that countries with incomplete vital registration should use the census to collect fertility and mortality data in view of national health policy and MDGs requirements. Due to limited space on the census questionnaire, it recommended developing a separate form on fertility, which only a subgroup would complete. Additionally, rider surveys could be used.

55. The group endorsed the idea that paragraph 2.145 in the *Principles and Recommendations* which defined literacy should include the clause 'in any language' to indicate that literacy applied to any language. If functional literacy was used as a refined measure for literacy, national data collections should use the definition developed by UNESCO. In the same spirit, the group emphasized the need to study relationships between mental disability and literacy to see how to classify a person with formal education but who may have acquired some kind of mental handicap. The same concern was also raised for persons using sign languages only.

56. The group recommended that the *Principles and Recommendations* should elaborate on how to make distinctions between formal education and traditional forms of education provided by religious authorities, communities or indigenous groups. Post-secondary education needed to be better explained and the inclusion of vocational training should be considered.

57. The group recognized the need to update the section on disability according to new developments, such as the adoption of WHO's International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) framework.

Geographical and Internal Migration Characteristics

58. The group felt that an introduction to the section on geographical and internal migration characteristics would be useful. The introduction would highlight the importance of migration statistics and how they could be derived from the census. While most countries used the sections and found them useful, it was felt that the three sections on locality did not add value and could be deleted (2.49, 2.50 and 2.51).

59. Several countries had experienced problems in measuring the so-called "floating populations" in their censuses. In countries with rapid urbanization and growth of mega-cities these populations because of their substantial size and non-registered status could have wide-ranging impact on both the receiving and sending communities. The group therefore recommended that the *Principles and Recommendations* include a section on how the floating population is to be defined and measured in censuses.

60. Other sub-populations which were hard to reach for census enumerators were mentioned in this section, e.g. nomads, illegal migrants, etc, but suggestions on how these populations might be covered in the census were lacking.

61. Censuses counted people either by the "de jure" method through the application of the concept of usual residence, or by "de facto" method or by both. Countries had, however, differed in their use of the usual place of residence approach with respect to duration of stay. Some countries used six months whereas others used one year as the minimum duration of stay in a place for it to be considered a usual residence of a person. The group suggested including in the *Principles and Recommendations* guidance on when "de jure" and "de facto" enumeration would be most appropriate and how they may be combined to determine total population.

62. The group also felt that it would be useful to include in the section on migration some further guidance on sampling. For example, could such questions on migration be collected on a less than hundred per cent basis? If so, what sampling scheme would be most appropriate?

Census Products and Data Utilization

63. The group agreed that the analysis and dissemination of the census data should be part of the early phases of census planning. The output implications in the form of census products and data utilization should be well reflected in the chapters of the *Principles and Recommendations* dealing with census planning.

64. The group recommended that users' needs be identified early in the planning phase, and that a clear distinction should be made between the needs, and consequently the products, destined for the central government, the general public, academia, and the private sector, which all had different needs to be catered to. The group considered that demand for census data was not uniformly high in all countries as it depended on national circumstances; however, it was also recognized that the demand by different types of users was likely to change in the coming years, so countries should

equip themselves to serve emerging needs for census data using a long-term time frame after the 2010 round.

65. The group recognized and endorsed the current practice of making microdata available in anonymized form for academic research, and recommended that national legislation and technical requirements be developed to meet this need. The group called for more flexibility in statistical legislation to facilitate this type of use of microdata.

Relationship between Population and Housing Censuses and Other Statistical Activities

66. The group observed that most countries conducted population and housing censuses simultaneously and recommended that the tradition be continued because of a number of perceived advantages. The simultaneous conduct of population and housing censuses permitted an integrated analysis of demographic and social data along with data on human settlements. It also allowed cross checking of demographic and housing information, thus making the case for greater consistency between these two data sets.

67. Agriculture censuses, though usually conducted by the same statistical offices, were conducted separately from population and housing censuses. Population census data were, however, utilized in the sampling design for agriculture censuses when the unit of data collection for agriculture census was the household. Similarly, housing censuses could be useful for providing a frame for a census or survey of establishment. This could be achieved by including one or two questions in the houselisting operation for population and housing censuses on the use of buildings or on the kinds of economic activities carried out within the housing units.

68. None of the countries represented had yet considered establishing population registers to supplement or replace censuses. It was therefore the consensus of the group that population and housing censuses would not become redundant, at least in the near future.

69. Where sampling was used, the group recommended that NSOs should provide adequate information on the reliability of such estimates. The group urged NSOs to scrupulously follow the *Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics* in the handling of census data in order to maintain trust in the eyes of respondents and users that the data were only used for statistical purposes.

D. Session IV: Working in partnership

70. The secretariat introduced the topic and stressed the importance of member States' involvement in the regional census programme for the success of the 2010 round. Working in partnership together with ESCAP and the Global Programme to exchange experiences and technical expertise would be necessary for increasing effectiveness and for addressing the needs of countries in difficult circumstances. The meeting proceeded to discuss the modalities the cooperation could take, beyond traditional approaches such as technical workshops, which could be pursued in support of regional efforts in carrying out the 2010 round of censuses.

71. The meeting agreed that sharing of experiences in the field of censuses was of the highest importance as a modality of technical cooperation. It consequently endorsed the idea of launching a "census newsletter" as a vehicle for exchange of experiences and to promote bilateral study visits.

72. It was noted that web-based census instruction materials, examination, and certification as well as e-discussion groups were feasible and might be useful in the field of censuses. In that regard it was suggested that documentation posted on web sites should be as light and easy to access or download as possible. The meeting was informed that UNSD was considering hosting such discussion groups on their web site and that the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (SIAP) had in its programme of work the development of web-based training materials.

73. The meeting appreciated the presentation of ESCAP's summary of country reports and invited the secretariat to further analyse country reports for identifying and creating a directory of areas of expertise that countries could exchange. In developing this exercise, ESCAP was called upon to act as a coordinating focal point. The meeting agreed to the proposal that ESCAP should prepare a questionnaire to countries to collect information on expertise available in the region.

74. Individual countries informed the meeting of their need for technical assistance in specific areas such as census data analysis and computer programming for their forthcoming censuses.

75. The meeting welcomed the offer of the representative of the Asian Development Bank to support initiatives of technical cooperation in the field of censuses.

76. The meeting also discussed the problems related to the release of experienced staff for technical cooperation work and agreed that one possibility would be to send recently retired staff instead. Regarding ways of increasing the use and analysis of the census data, it was suggested that efforts be undertaken to make data available to PhD students for their research; this would complement the analysis done in-house or by other government departments.

Annex I

FOR PARTICIPANTS ONLY

21 October 2004

UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC (UNESCAP)

Expert Group Meeting on Population and Housing Censuses

9-10 December 2004
Bangkok, Thailand

PROVISIONAL AGENDA

Background

The United Nations Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs initiated the 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses by calling a Symposium and an Expert Group Meeting to discuss and agree on modalities for the new census round. The meetings agreed that in order to succeed, the active support of Member States and the Regional Commissions working in partnership was required. As partners, they can both receive and provide technical expertise as well as share information and resources through a coordinated programme of activities. A Trust Fund would be established to bridge the distances between NSOs and enable the effective sharing and exchange of know how and support.

Agenda

1. Opening
2. Experiences and lessons learned from the 2000 census round
3. Critical issues and new emerging concerns in the region
4. Principles and recommendations for censuses
5. Working in partnership to maximize the census results
6. Other

Purpose and outcome

The purpose of the Expert Group Meeting (EGM) is to set regional priorities for the upcoming decade round of population and housing censuses in light of the experiences from the previous round. Specifically the EGM is to define the critical and emerging issues to be considered, define priorities, identify goals and propose concrete actions that would be desirable to be carried out in the region in partnership with ESCAP. Based on the recommendations of the meeting the secretariat will formulate a regional census programme to be carried out over the next four years, which can feed into the global programme.

Annex II

FOR PARTICIPANTS ONLY

10 December 2004

UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Expert Group Meeting on Population and Housing Censuses
9-10 December 2004
Bangkok

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