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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

Second African Population Conference
(organized in co-operation with the
United Nations Fund for Population Activities)
Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania
9-13 January 1984

Item 11 of the agenda

SUMMARY OF PREPARATORY ACTIVITIES FOR THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON POPULATION - 1984

Note of the Secretary General of the Conference*

*Prepared by the Population Division, Department of International Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat.

1. During its second session in 1981, the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations decided to convene in 1984 an International Conference on Population. The Council stipulated that the Conference should focus on questions of the highest priority and would contribute to the review and appraisal of the World Population Plan of Action adopted at Bucharest in 1974. In conformity with the decision of the Economic and Social Council, the Conference will work within the framework of the Plan of Action the principles and objectives of which remain fully valid, and should, in addition, contribute to its further implementation.
2. Within the organization of the United Nations, the Population Commission was designated as the intergovernmental preparatory committee of the Conference. The Executive Director of the United Nations Fund for Population Activities was appointed Secretary-General of the Conference, and the Director of the Population Division of the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs was appointed Deputy Secretary-General. The United Nations Fund for Population Activities, the Department of Technical Co-operation and the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs were each given responsibility in the preparatory work for the Conference; co-ordination of substantive preparations for the Conference were assigned to the Population Division of the DIESA. The Council also agreed to accept the invitation of the Government of Mexico to act as host to the Conference, and decided to hold it in Mexico City from 6 to 13 August 1984.

In order to co-ordinate the substantive contribution of the regional commissions, specialized agencies and other bodies of the United Nations system, the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination established a special task force. The task force met twice in Geneva, 18-21 May 1982 to organize

inputs into the substantive preparatory work and on 15-20 September 1983, to review and comment on the draft documentation which had been prepared. Further, to provide overall guidance, orientation and co-ordination of the inputs from the relevant secretariat of the United Nations system, a Steering Committee, chaired by the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation, was established. The Steering Committee met on 31 March 1982, 21 January 1983 and 14 October 1983.

3. Substantive preparatory activities for the Conference had as their principal goal the preparation of two documents which would serve as the basis for its discussions. The first of these documents is a review and appraisal of the progress made towards achieving the goals and recommendations of the World Population Plan of Action, examining the principal demographic trends and population policies adopted during the years since the World Population Conference. The second document, closely linked to the first, sets forth a set of specific recommendations for further implementation of the Plan of Action in the light of the experience gained during the past ten years.

4. For the preparations of these documents, the goal was to draw upon as wide and varied as possible a body of expertise, bearing in mind the need for the utmost economy, as stipulated by the Economic and Social Council. In order to carry out the preparations, four expert group meetings were held, one for each of the demographic issues of the highest priority as that which had been identified by the Population Commission:

(a) Economic, social, demographic and political factors related to the family and fertility with particular reference to countries of high fertility;

(b) Population distribution and development strategies, with reference to rural development, urbanization and internal and international migration;

(c) Economic, social, demographic and political factors linked to health and mortality, especially in countries of high mortality;

(d) Interrelationships between population, resources, environment and development.

5. In each one of these meetings, some 10-15 experts were invited, along with representatives of the regional commissions and the Specialized Agencies of the United Nations and of selected intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations concerned with population. The meeting of the Expert Group on Fertility and the Family took place in New Delhi from 5 to 11 January 1983; that of the group on population distribution, migration and development was held in Hammamet from 21 to 25 March 1983; the Expert Group on Population, Resources, Environment and Development was held in Geneva from 25 to 29 April 1983; and the meeting on mortality and health policies took place in Rome from 30 May to 3 June 1983.
6. The four expert group meetings worked within the following set of basic guidelines: first, the principles and objectives of the World Population Plan of Action are not subject to change since they remain fully valid; second, it is necessary to translate these principles and objectives into operational terms and to propose solutions and programmes of action usable by policy makers and those responsible for the implementation of the programmes; third, it is desirable to expand the Plan of Action in such a manner as to permit the integration of additional development sectors; finally, the necessity to give particular attention to questions referring to human rights. In general, the expert groups were asked to attach particular importance to practical implications of each of the topics on their agenda.
7. For each of the expert groups, the Population Division prepared a background report reviewing the theme of the meeting to serve as a basis for the group's discussions. In addition, the Secretariat commissioned a series of papers on specific issues by individual experts. Following each of the meetings, the Secretariat prepared a report summarizing the group's deliberations and presenting the specific recommendations made by the expert group. It is anticipated that the proceedings of the four expert group meetings will be published in due course.
8. In addition to the documents mentioned above, the Population Division also carried out a survey among Governments concerning their appraisal of their country's demographic trends and their population policies. This Inquiry was the fifth in a series which began in 1963. As of mid-October 1983, 116

Governments had submitted their responses. Analysis of these returns has provided valuable information for the preparation of documents for the Conference, and in particular for the review and appraisal of the Plan of Action as well as for recommendations for future action.

9. In addition, as called for by the Plan of Action itself, the Population Division prepared its fourth biennial report on the monitoring of population trends and projections of population. The topics dealt with included population size, mortality, fertility, urbanization, distribution, internal and international migration, interactions between population, resources, environment and development, and finally, the integration of demographic factors in development planning and policy making. The results of this fourth monitoring study have also been extensively utilized for the preparation of the basic documents for the Conference.

10. The full set of these documents dealing with the basic questions before the Conference will be distributed by the Secretariat of the Conference to the Governments at the beginning of December 1983.

11. A series of consultations such as this meeting in Arusha, are also being held in other regions, also to help ensure the substantive contribution of the regional commissions to the Conference, as requested by the Economic and Social Council. The first such meeting, organized by the Economic Commission for Europe with the collaboration of UNFPA, was held in Sofia, 6-12 October 1983. Additional meetings will be held in Lima, 29 to 6 April and in Amman, 25-29 March 1984. In the ESCAP region, the Third Asian and Pacific Population Conference, 1982, has already been followed up by a meeting of the ESCAP Committee on Population, 23-29 August 1983, where the International Conference on Population was on the agenda.

12. In addition to activities at the intergovernmental and governmental levels, the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (CONGO) also organized an international consultation on population questions. That consultation, which took place in Geneva from 13 to 15 September 1983, gathered together some 250 participants coming from some 60 countries and representing more than a hundred organizations.