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First Conference of African Demographers
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MATTERS ARISING FROM THE TENTH SESSION OF THE
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE TENTH SESSION OF THE ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

The tenth session of the Economic Commission for Africa, which was also the first meeting of the Conference of Ministers, met in Tunis from 8 to 13 February 1971. It was preceded by the second meeting of the Technical Committee of Experts from 1 to 6 February.

2. A full account of the material submitted to these meetings, together with information on discussions, resolutions work programme, etc. is given in the ECA Annual Report to the Economic and Social Council for the period 15 February 1970 to 13 February 1971, E/CN.14/519. In this note, the essential points relating to population activities are reproduced for ease of reference.

3. The following extract is taken from the report on the Activities of the Commission since 15 February 1970.

POPULATION PROGRAMMES

4. With the thrust and direction given by the Executive Committee and the Technical Committee of Experts and the finances provided by the United Nations Fund for Population Activities during the period, the secretariat expanded its activities as follows:

(a) Assisting Governments in understanding the population situation in the region and in giving due recognition to the interrelationship between population dynamics and economic and social growth;

(b) Helping Governments, at their request, to set up population programme services;

(c) Ensuring the training of personnel by supporting national institutions and establishing regional training and research centres; and

(d) Co-ordinating the regional activities of the United Nations organs in the field of population.

In these activities the secretariat has worked in close collaboration with the United Nations Population Division and the Office of Technical Co-operation.

Demographic Development

5. The second meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the African Population Conference was held at Addis Ababa, from 3 to 5 June, under the auspices of ECA and the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population and in co-operation with the International Planned Parenthood Federation

(see E/CN.14/489). The Government of Ghana has proposed that both the African Population Conference and the first session of the Conference of African Demographers be held in Accra, Ghana, from 9 to 18 December 1971 and from 20 to 22 December 1971 respectively. Preparatory arrangements, both scientific and organizational, are now under way and the secretariat is working in active collaboration with the national committee set up for this purpose. The Expert Group on Population meeting at Addis Ababa in June 1970, reviewed the population programmes of the secretariat and provided technical guidelines in the fields of studies, information services, training activities, regional advisory services and technical meetings (See E/CN.14/488).

6. At the request of the respective Governments, the secretariat organized missions to Botswana, Burundi and Swaziland to assist them in appraising the population situation and formulating requests to the United Nations Fund for Population Activities in the population field. It also formed a part of the United Nations interagency population mission to Mauritius, requested by the Government. The secretariat also undertook a study of the extent, organization and implementation of population programmes in a number of countries.

Establishment of demographic norms for Africa

7. As a follow-up to the Working Group on Fertility Studies and Evaluation of Population Programmes, which met at Addis Ababa from 26 to 30 January 1970, the secretariat organized a Technical Group on Pilot Studies on Fertility, Infant Mortality and Evaluation of Population Programmes with a view to evolving guidelines for African countries which are undertaking studies in these fields or propose to undertake them in the future (E/CN.14/473).

Demographic Studies

8. The secretariat undertook a study of census post-enumeration data, supplemented by visits to a number of countries in North and West Africa, a study of census and vital statistics data relating to towns and cities in Africa, and a study of age patterns of fertility in African countries and sub-national population groups. Projections of the total and urban populations of the African countries have also been revised. Other studies are either under way or will be taken up as soon as the number of staff dealing with population programmes is increased.

Collection, exchange and distribution of information

9. As part of its information service and clearing house activities, the secretariat issued the first three numbers of the African Population Newsletter, a publication reviewing the demographic situation in the region,

selected population topics and the activities and programmes of the African Governments and institutions in this field. The Newsletter contained the revised population estimates and projections for use by African Governments. The first number of the African Population Studies series is under preparation. The secretariat also distributed to government departments, institutions and individuals several publications of special interest to the region.

Advisory Services

10. Regional advisory services on different aspects of population were provided at the request of a number of Governments. Secretariat officials also assisted at interregional meetings on population and took part in several meetings on African demography organized by other bodies.

Research and training

11. As a result of negotiations, supplemented by missions organized by the secretariat, offers of host facilities for the establishment of demographic training secretariat, offers of host facilities for the establishment of demographic training and research centres were received from the Governments of Cameroon and Ghana for the French- and English-speaking countries south of the Sahara respectively, the former being supported by a resolution of the OCAM Heads of State and Government. Draft agreements are to be completed without delay and the centres will start operating early in 1972. The secretariat also provided assistance in demographic training and research to the Haile Selassie I University at Addis Ababa and the East African Statistical Training Centre in Dar-es-Salaam and is co-operating with a number of national universities and institutions in this field.

Co-ordination of activities

12. As a part of the regional co-ordination of programmes on population, the secretariat has organized the first United Nations Regional Inter-Agency Co-ordination Meeting on Population and a meeting on non-United Nations organizations interested in African population programmes, held at Addis Ababa, from 11 to 13 January and from 14 to 15 January respectively. The aim of these meetings is to facilitate co-ordination of the activities of various bodies, thus permitting a more rational distribution of scarce resources.

ANNEX

230 (X). POPULATION

The Conference of Ministers,

Noting with satisfaction the work of the secretariat in demographic training,

Satisfied with the establishment within the secretariat of a Population Programme Centre,

1. Invites the Executive Secretary to speed up the establishment of sub-regional centres for the training of demographers;
2. Requests the Executive Secretary, as part of the Commission's work programme, to carry out a study of population levels and trends in relation to economic and social development;
3. Further requests the Executive Secretary, as part of the Commission's work programme, to prepare a demographic manual, which will contain concepts and definitions suitable for African countries.

163rd meeting,
13 February 1971.