

***FIRST ADVISORY GROUP MEETING
FOR THE REGIONAL POPULATION MEETING***

Geneva (Switzerland) 1-2 October 1998

21-Oct-98

REPORT OF THE MEETING

The Advisory Group for the Regional Population Meeting (Budapest, 7-9 December 1998) met at the Palais des Nations in Geneva on 1-2 October 1998 to make recommendations on further preparations for the Meeting to its organisers - the Government of Hungary, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). This report summarises major recommendations of the meeting. The list of participants is attached to the report.

- 1. Context and objective of the Meeting.* The Chair of the Advisory Group (AG) reminded the AG members that the Meeting will be held in the context of the current quinquennial global review and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) (Cairo, 1994). This review and appraisal will culminate in a special session of the United Nations General Assembly (30 June-2 July 1999). The principal objective of the Meeting will be to review and appraise the implementation in the ECE region of the Programme of Action and the Recommendations of the European Population Conference (Geneva, 1993).
- 2. Co-operation with the Council of Europe.* The AG noted with satisfaction the offer of the Council of Europe to the organisers to contribute to the preparation of the Meeting in any way they deem appropriate. The AG also welcomed the two representatives of the European Population Committee (CDPO) of the Council of Europe as its new members. The proposal of the CDPO to the organisers to broaden the programme of the Meeting to include "international migration" as an additional theme was received with approval. The AG recommended that further preparation for the Meeting reflect these developments.
- 3. Programme of the Meeting.* The AG recommended that "international migration" be added as a fourth theme. As a result, the programme of the Meeting will include the following substantive themes: fertility: issues and policies; mortality and health: issues and policies; population ageing: issues and policies; and international migration: issues and policies. The AG recommended that the drafting of a background paper on "international migration," which will be a Council of Europe's contribution to the Meeting be pursued as originally proposed by the Council of Europe.

The AG also recommended that issues emanating from the Programme of Action, in particular reproductive health and rights, gender equity and empowerment of women, and adolescent fertility be accorded ample attention and treated as cross-cutting issues in the context of the four substantive themes of the Meeting.

4. *Expected outcome of the Meeting.* The AG took note of an earlier decision of the organisers of the Meeting, which was communicated to the ECE Governments through Information Notice No. 1, to have a report of the Meeting along with a regional co-operation plan negotiated and adopted by the Meeting. In line with recent consultations among the organisers regarding an expected outcome, the AG suggested that (i) the Meeting negotiates and adopts a brief factual report of the Meeting and (ii) two substantive annexes, provisionally titled (a) "Conclusions" and (b) "Co-operation Plan." The AG recommended that drafts of the two annexes be prepared by the ECE secretariat and considered at the next meeting of the AG (28-29 October 1998, Strasbourg) before being transmitted to ECE Governments and other participants at the beginning of November. The AG felt that both annexes should be relatively short, but comprehensive. "Conclusions" should, in the view of the AG, be a statement of the ECE Governments on regional population issues, progress achieved in the region concerning the implementation of the final documents of the 1993 European Population Conference (Recommendations) and the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (Programme of Action) and future key policy directions in the region.
5. *Pre-meeting informal consultations.* The AG considered a proposal for one day of informal consultations among the delegations of the ECE Governments to take place on Sunday, 6 December 1998, in Budapest. The AG recommended that the consultations be convened primarily in order to conduct initial discussions of and negotiations on the Report of the Meeting, in particular its annexes, "Conclusions" and "Co-operation Plan." At the same time, issues such as the composition of the Bureau of the Meeting, the conduct of the Meeting and modalities of further work on the Report and the annexes during the Meeting will be discussed.
6. *Ad Hoc Informal Consultations of the Economic Commission of Europe.* The AG took note with appreciation of an oral report delivered by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Hungary to the United Nations in Geneva on the discussions concerning the Regional Population Meeting that had taken place at the Ad Hoc Informal Consultations on 2 October. The Deputy Permanent Representative informed the AG that he briefed the Ambassadors of the ECE Governments about the plans for the Meeting and indicated that they had very well received the proposals for the Meeting. The Ambassador of Austria, speaking on behalf of the European Union countries, lent full support to the proposals.
7. *CES decision and invitations.* The AG was informed that "the Conference [of European Statisticians] accepted the invitation of Hungary to host the December 1998 Regional Population Meeting to be jointly organised by the Hungarian Central Statistical Office, ECE/CES and the UNFPA." The AG was also informed that in taking that decision, the Conference noted that the meeting was intended to be an intergovernmental technical one that would be attended by government representatives including statisticians, population experts and other specialists.
8. The President of the Hungarian National Statistical Offices has signed the invitations to the ECE Governments while the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Hungary transmitted them along with a note verbale. The Executive

Secretary of the ECE and the Executive Director of the UNFPA have extended the invitations to intergovernmental organisations. The Executive Director of the UNFPA extended the invitations to selected non-governmental organisations.

8. *Documentation for the Meeting.* The AG reviewed four background papers commissioned from and prepared for the Meeting by noted population scholars and recommended that they be prepared for translation, reproduction and distribution. It also reviewed a draft Provisional Agenda, a draft Provisional Order of Business and related draft documents, recommended modifications to them and suggested that the drafts be finalised and disseminated in the same manner. Also, the AG considered preliminary proposals and initial drafts for the Report of the Meeting and its two annexes and after an extended debate made suggestions as to how further work on these documents, in particular the "Conclusions" and the "Co-operation Plan", should proceed. The documentation of the Meeting, most of it in the three working languages of the ECE - English, French and Russian - will be dispatched to registered delegations around 5 November.
9. *Background documents.* The AG considered a proposal made by the ECE and the Council of Europe that a synthesis report based on national reports be commissioned from a consultant. They recommended that the proposal be accepted and that the synthesis report be made available to the Meeting as a background document. They also recommended that a report of a recently held meeting, co-organised by the UNFPA and WHO/Europe on reproductive health and rights and related issues in central and eastern Europe also be made available to the Meeting as a background document. The AG felt that the report will help stimulate debate on these issues throughout the Meeting.
10. *Registration and submission of national reports.* The AG urged the organisers of the Meeting to inform the ECE Governments and the invited intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations to register their delegations by sending completed registration forms to the Hungarian Central Statistical Office (HCSO) as soon as possible. (The form has been distributed as Annex 2 of Information Notice No. 1 and is available at the web site of the Meeting: <http://www.unece.org/ead/pau/rpm>.) They also urged the organisers to request the ECE Governments to send their national reports to the HCSO as soon as they are completed irrespective of whether or not they could observe the suggested deadline for the submission of the reports, 7 October.
11. *Delegations.* The AG was of the opinion that government officials of highest possible rank should lead national delegations. It received with satisfaction the Hungarian proposal to the Ad Hoc Informal Consultations held on 2 October and the endorsement of that proposal by the Ambassador of Austria that government officials at the level of Deputy Ministers or higher level head national delegations.
12. *Publicity and information.* The AG recommended that news media be informed of the Meeting as well as provided with promotional material in a timely fashion. It also suggested that the web site of the Meeting (<http://www.unece.org/ead/pau/rpm>) be now updated so that information about the Meeting and its preparation can be rapidly disseminated. The Council of Europe offered to assist the organisers with media and web-site activities.
13. *New venue of the Meeting.* The HCSO informed the AG that the venue of the Meeting is being moved from the Budapest Convention Centre to the

Budapest Hilton, where more convenient conference facilities were offered to the organisers.

14. *Strasbourg meeting of the AG.* On invitation from the Council of Europe, the next meeting of the AG will take place at the Council of Europe premises in Strasbourg on 28-29 October.
15. *Dissemination of this report.* The AG asked the ECE secretariat to prepare this report and make it available to the Permanent Missions to the United Nations in Geneva, so that it can be speedily transmitted to the capitals, as well as to the invited intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations.
16. *Informing the Bureau.* The Bureau of the CES will be informed on the recent preparations for the Budapest meeting during its 2-3 November 1998 meeting.

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