

### **Session III: "Morbidity, mortality and reproductive health: Facing challenges in transition countries"**

In my interruption I would like to remind to participants one very important point from the excellent background paper prepared for the previous session by Francesco C. Billari. Unfortunately due to the limit of time I did not manage to point it at the morning. So there is written: "...Collective of comparative data at the micro-level is of an enormous importance". Presentations of our panelists and whole discussion on this session confirm us in the extreme topicality of the problem of statistical data reliability in Caucasian region. When in the 1998 our Centre at the first time initiated to raise the discussions on this topic at the meetings under the aegis of Population Activity Unit of UN ECE, it seemed implausible for international research community that Georgian population statistics might be influenced so much by the deterioration of vital statistics in 1990s. It seemed especially unbelievable for the country being before 1990s in the composition of former Soviet Union, which has been already recognized by the UN as a region with a complete vital statistics. And now, after several years, existing population statistics on Caucasian countries causes the growing difficulties for international experts in the estimation of mortality in the region and provokes the emerging requirements of demographers and population experts to work with the alternative scientific estimations. But, as Vladimir Shkolnikov clearly showed us, there are not till now a common agreement among different experts on Caucasian mortality figures and researchers meet with the permanent obstacles in the monitoring of real mortality trends in this region. It seems for me that this problem would be actual for this region while the national system of population statistics would be significantly improved, as well as it is difficult to find any serious alternative to routine vital statistics. I hope that together with progressive changes followed to the rose revolution in Georgia people responsible for population statistics will make effective efforts on governmental level for solving the problem of comparability and reliability of Georgian vital statistics. Our Centre is working out some suggestions and proposals on these topics that supposed to be presented in the nearest future to the Georgian government.

It should be mentioned that, despite of essential methodological and technical assistance of international agencies to national statistical offices started from the early 1990s, the last years still did not result in any profound changes in the structure and quality of population statistics in Caucasian region. Moreover there are some new problems for us, population analysts that we have met recently. The matter is that after last Georgian population census of 2002 whole vital statistics on Georgia for the period between two population censuses, 1989 and 2002, has been changed. These estimations are already recognized as a new official vital statistics on Georgia and new data are recently published by the State Department for Statistics of Georgia in its 2003 statistical yearbook. The results of this work, which has been done by Georgian statistical office, may be considered as an obvious demonstration of the lack of international collaboration on the methodological issues between statisticians. The abovementioned estimations have nothing in common as with international recommendations on intercensal population estimations also with the well-known techniques for using of census data for correction of registered number of vital events.

For example, new estimations of Georgian statistical office on mortality are based on the free manipulation of one corresponding indicator from Coule-Demeny model life tables (level 23, model West) for twelve different years between two population censuses. Concerning the new statistical estimations on birth, when we compare them with census data, we found that new yearly numbers on live births after 1995 are less than number of population reached for year 2002 the age, corresponding to relative year of birth. And the last but not least objection to the new Georgian official vital statistics is related to the free manipulation with the statistical figures. If you remember, I have presented to you at the first session the example with phenomenal high (119-120) sex ratio at births, which according to special research is confirmed to be plausible and is explaining by practice of selective abortions in Caucasus. This problem of increasing sex ratio at birth in Georgia, which as we hope would cause a special attention of specialists and policy makers, has been easily eliminated by Georgian statistical office. Making their new estimations on births statisticians simply changed in the statistical figures the proportion of boys and girls in the live births. In a new official statistics on birth you will not find this surprised sex ratio at birth, as well as new more moderate rate around 110 has been used by statisticians. Using this way Georgian statistical office has solved very easily the problem with high sex ratio at birth in Georgia. No figures, no problem, is not it?