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Asian Population Conference

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Asian Population Conference

In reviewing the population trends in the region in 1959, the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE) expressed concern about the accelerating rate of population growth in Asia and its implications for economic and social development, and adopted unanimously a resolution requesting the Secretariat to organize an Asian Population Conference in 1961 or 1962. At its 1960 annual session, ECAFE outlined the scope of the proposed Conference and made recommendations concerning its agenda and organization. It was recognized that the urgency of the population problems in the region called for the holding of a conference at an early date but on the other hand it was not considered desirable to hold this conference before the major results of the 1960 and 1961 population censuses would become available.

The Government of India invited the ECAFE to hold the Conference in New Delhi in December 1963. The postponement of the Conference to this date gave the ECAFE Secretariat, the governments and interested institutions in the region, an opportunity to make detailed preparations and undertake studies which would contribute to the success of the Conference. A Preparatory Committee consisting of representatives from Ceylon, India, Japan, Nepal, Pakistan, The Philippines, and Singapore was established to advise and collaborate with the ECAFE Secretariat in planning the Conference, especially with regard to substantive aspects of the arrangements.

All member and associate member governments of ECAFE in the region will be invited to participate in the Conference. Each government will be requested to nominate up to four or five experts in population, economics, sociology or statistics with experience in one or more fields of economic and social development, such as economic planning, public health, education, housing, social welfare or population policy. Furthermore, interested specialized agencies of the United Nations and international non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council will be invited to participate. A small number of resource persons will be invited by the United Nations to attend the Conference at United Nations expense.

The main purpose of the Asian Population Conference is to provide a forum where experts can examine the major problems of planning for economic and social development arising from the present and prospective trends in the growth, composition and geographical distribution of population. The implication of these trends as regards the needs for food, clothing, housing, education, employment, etc. should be examined. Consideration should also be given to the effects of these trends on the supply of human and material resources required to meet

these needs. In the light of the economic and social consequences of population trends the Conference may wish to examine various possible ways of dealing with the population problems including measures that would contribute to fuller utilization of human resources, and policies designed to affect population trends. The Conference should also consider ways and means of providing better information on population problems, and study the possibilities of international cooperation in these respects.

The Preparatory Committee has emphasized that the Conference should aim to seek practical solutions to population problems. These aims are likely to be realized if persons engaged in the scientific study of population problems as well as those engaged in the formulation and implementation of economic and social policies are well represented at the Conference. The Conference should therefore include persons nominated by governments, representatives of the United Nations and its interested specialized agencies as well as resource persons selected by the United Nations. In the selection of their representatives to the Conference, the governments should be urged to include experts with experience in the use and analysis of demographic data, in addition to those concerned with the development of national policies.

The tentative agenda for the Conference as recommended by the Economic Commission is outlined below:

I. The demographic situation and prospective population trends in Asia and the Far East

As background material, information on the present demographic situation will be made available for each country on the basis of recent census results, vital statistics, field studies and other sources. Population projections will be presented on various assumptions about the course of fertility, mortality and migration and the prospective population changes will be discussed.

II. Economic and social implications of prospective population trends

The effects of prospective trends in the growth, composition and geographical distribution of the population on the various sectors of the economy will be discussed. Consideration may be given to the demand for and, as appropriate, the supply of food, education (general and vocational), housing, public utilities, health and social services, as affected by population trends, in particular rapid urban growth. The effects of population changes on supply of savings and demand for capital formation may also be discussed.

III. *Economic and social policies designed to promote fuller utilization of human resources*

Demographic aspects of employment—level of employment as affected by prospective trends in the growth, composition and geographical distribution of the population.

Various economic and social measures may be discussed which are calculated to diminish the acuteness of population problems and minimize the liability constituted by surplus labour. Such policies may include utilization of under-employed labour, development of training programmes, establishment of proper balance between different types and levels of education, and measures to increase labour productivity.

IV. *Policies designed to affect population trends*

The following population policies may be discussed, in particular from the point of view of formulation of programmes, acceptability of measures and evaluation of their effectiveness:

- (a) Policies affecting population growth: Family planning and public health measures;
- (b) Policies affecting population redistribution, including measures affecting rural-urban migration and resettlement on land.

V. *Promotion of research and training, and dissemination of knowledge on population matters*

National measures and international co-operation to develop research and training programmes on population and related fields will be considered, including promotion of studies on the inter-relationship between population trends and economic and social development, the practical applications of population data in planning, and arrangements for international exchange of experience in research and training. Ways and means of disseminating knowledge on, and arousing public interest in, population matters may also be discussed.

VI. *Report and recommendations*

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