



UNITED NATIONS

ECONOMIC  
AND  
SOCIAL COUNCIL



GENERAL

E/CN.12/956

7 March 1973

ENGLISH

ORIGINAL: SPANISH

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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA

Fifteenth session

Quito, Ecuador, 23-30 March 1973

preceded by a Meeting at the Technical Level  
beginning on 20 March

PARTICIPATION OF LATIN AMERICA IN THE WORLD POPULATION CONFERENCE  
AND WORLD POPULATION YEAR: POPULATION AND  
DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

Note by the secretariat

Secretariat Note

1. Population and development: population policies

1. Despite the growing concern of the Governments of the countries of Latin America about the high growth rate of their population and the intense geographic redistribution they are undergoing, very divergent opinions continue to be expressed as to what these phenomena mean and the policies which should be adopted, while most of the information necessary to prove the validity of the most essential aspects of the different theories is lacking.

The complexity of the relations between the population dynamics and social and economic development, and the polarization of positions in the face of this problem resemble those produced in other fields of the social sciences and in the consideration of the factors which determine development itself, where single-cause theories of different types, which give the preference to a specific sector of the social or economic structure as the promoter of change or as a basic obstacle, come into conflict.

Discussions on population and development are a necessary part of a broader-based discussion on the causes of under-development and the theories and ideologies which explain it and the political formulas to deal with it. The approach in this case tends to transcend actual facts, replacing information by abstractions of such a general nature that they distort the expression of the problems, and obviously, possible solutions. The controversy covers a broad range of questions, from the relation between size of population and national power, the size, structure and growth of the population and extent of the market, the supply of human resources, the potential of political change and pressure for social change, to much more specific aspects, such as the relation between the degree of fertility of a woman and her share in the job market.

An evaluation of each of the alternatives of these controversial questions requires a break-down of the table of values, the theories of social change, the interpretation of under-development and basically the image of the future society which is considered to be viable and desirable.

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2. The controversial nature of many of the questions which arise from any consideration of the topic may stem from undefined or ambiguous situations. In order to overcome these difficulties it is necessary to use complementary approaches composed of different perspectives of analysis. The basic approaches are:

(a) The inclusion of the demographic factor within the broadest possible framework of images of society, so as to propose the necessary coherence between aims and policies, between the values on which it is desired to build future society and those which must be respected in order to achieve this aim.

(b) The objective consideration of the possibilities for a specific society to provide assistance for the needs of a growing population, whatever model of the future is used for action, conserving the environment and ensuring the rational use of its natural resources.

(c) The inclusion of the population policy in general and sectoral development policies as a whole, expressing the need to harmonize their proposals and indicating under what conditions adjustments may be carried out or, conversely, where the incompatibilities lie.

(d) The consideration of the capital resources available, in any of the national strategies programmed, so as to include, in the immediate future and as rationally as possible, the effect of population growth on a development project which is not only desirable but also viable.

3. It is possible that in the immediate future, total action as regards family planning and the urbanization and modernization tendencies of social structure tends to reduce reproduction rates to levels around those of the developed countries. Whatever changes, however, occur in fertility, the growth rates of the population will for many years continue to be so high that the population will increase to a vast extent. As the base of the population expands, even growth rates, much lower than present rates, will become enormous absolute increases.

Whatever the national policy is as regards population growth, is particularly urgent that development policies should be compatible with problems of volume, distribution of the population by age and space and the needs of employment and social services.

4. The problems mentioned in the foregoing paragraphs, the concern of the Governments of the region as regards the limitations or possibilities which present demographic trends impose on their development policies and the need to find the means of harmonizing these trends with the aims of development plans for the present decade - already taken into account in the express mandates of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and ECLA itself - show the need for an in-depth examination of the tasks the secretariat will have to carry out in order to fulfil its mandates and in order to be able to offer the Governments the elements indispensable for the preparation of their demographic policies and their inclusion in the broader framework of the development policies.

5. Starting from the basis that ECLA's main job is to research into Latin America's development problems, as a basic element for policy formulation, it is obvious that the final aim of the tasks being carried out on population matters should be to contribute to clarifying the essential aspects to be borne in mind for the preparation of population policies as an integral part of general development policies. The formulation of a population policy, however, should be based on acquaintance with the factors which determine demographic tendencies and their consequences. Consequently, it is equally obvious that ECLA should be particularly concerned with studying the relations between population and development.

6. Demographic tendencies probably figure among the most important factors determining the course of future development in Latin America, but the trend and intensity of their effects will vary from country to country, depending on the interaction of all the other factors which influence the development process.

As has already been mentioned, it should always be borne in mind that any population policy should be an integral part of any strategy adopted in order to attempt to implement a specific style of development; consequently, its definition and its aims and instruments (and, generally speaking, the role of the Governments) will vary in terms of the style of development predominant in each country. Even taking into account that the formulation and implementation of population policies are exclusive tasks of the Governments, ECLA should study these problems with a view of making available to the Governments the elements they need in order to be able to take their own decisions.

7. Attempts to formulate and implement population policies come up against very serious difficulties:

(i) The lack of real, coherent, long-term development strategies, which can be used as a frame of reference for population policies.

(ii) The present state of knowledge on the relations between demographic evolution and development, which means that the consequences of specific policies cannot be evaluated with sufficient accuracy.

(iii) Measures of demographic policy will always play a secondary or complementary role, although they may be of substantial importance within the group of factors influencing demographic tendencies. The latter are largely determined by trends and policies in employment, education, health, housing, levels and distribution of income and technological innovations of many types. For all these policies to be clearly formulated, account should be taken of demographic trends and aims. To determine the feasibility of their targets and programming techniques, a much more intensive use should be made of demographic analysis than has been the practice until now. It would, however, be ridiculous to claim that demographic consequences would be, for example, of basic importance in the formulation of employment, health or education policies; demographic aims cannot constitute an end in themselves, but should be determined in terms of the benefits for development which it is expected to obtain from achieving them.

The difficulties enumerated reveal a persistent contradiction in the review of population problems and policies. For one thing, the recommendations formulated are so general that they almost succeed in confusing population policy with development policy. For another, proposals for immediate action are limited to accepting or refusing public support for family planning programmes.

The formulation of a population policy presupposes acquaintance with the factors determining demographic trends and their consequences. Studies made up till now on the relations between demographic variables and economic and social factors, are far from complete, and cover a very limited field within the broad diversity of the economic, social and demographic conditions which may be observed. Consequently, their results should be used with extreme care when it is a matter of interpreting the past or planning the future development of the countries of Latin America.

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An analysis of the historical trends of population growth and economic development (measured in terms of per capita earnings), does not show a well-defined relation between the two. This does not necessarily mean, however, that the growth of the population does not affect per capita earnings, but rather that it affects them in very different ways according to the causes behind the growth of the population and the levels and tendencies of a group of economic, social and cultural variables.

The population of the majority of the Latin American countries is small in comparison with their surface area and natural resources. Even with the technology used, the countries of the region could obviously support a much larger population with a high level of living, on condition that existing production, consumption and distribution structures changed. This alone, however, does not take into account the time variable of basic importance in the analysis of the development process, nor the difference in dynamism of the demographic, economic and social factors of each country.

An analysis of the influence of the growth rate of the population on development requires some consideration of the diversity of situations occurring in Latin America.

In developing countries, in many cases, an exceptionally high population growth rate contributes to aggravating many of the problems which have to be solved if the process of economic and social development (whatever style of development is adopted) is to be speeded up. Rapid population growth requires a high investment rate only to maintain the level of per capita earnings. This situation means that less capital is available to increase the productivity of human resources and thus increase per capita earnings. This does not imply an admission that the solution to the development problems of these countries simply lies in reducing the growth rate of the population. This would, however, be beneficial in many cases, but its effects would have less impact than the institutional, political and social reforms which are equally urgently required, would have.

In other countries, however, where the growth rate of the population is relatively low, and where there is a low population density and abundant natural resources, increased population growth may be advantageous for boosting the development process. In the smallest countries, with their scarce resources of little variety, the possibilities of a rapid increase

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in the population being absorbed into national economic life in the form of producers and consumers, are poor, and condition the rate of development to a considerable extent. Other major countries, with abundant and varied natural resources, are in a much better situation to make use of the potential contained in a higher rate of growth of the population, as regards production and consumption, to expand the domestic market and to profit from the existence of a mobile labour force which adapts to changes in the structure of the demand for labour inherent in the development process.

It should be emphasized that the use of the concept of optimum as regards population size for the analysis of the relation between population and development has been much criticized for its dependence on the situation of science and technology and the differentiation in the use of human resources according to different models of development. It is, however, more satisfactory to consider the optimum growth rate of the population over a specific short period, bearing in mind the progress of science and technology, the availability of natural resources, the capacity of the economic system to absorb human resources, and other factors.

The age-structure of a country's population has considerable economic and social consequences, since it is a factor determining the proportion of the population participating in economic activity, in the educational system, requiring housing, medical assistance, social security, etc. The fact that the population of many of the countries of the region is made up to a large extent of children and young adults increases the magnitude of the problems arising from the need to satisfy educational, housing, social services, etc. requirements. In this case, the economically active population has to carry a weight of dependence of exceptional magnitude. This produces a decline in the level of savings, and consequently limits the possibilities of investment for economic and social improvement.

The problems stemming from the rapid growth of the urban population are much more obvious, even for the lay observer. Although the migration towards the cities is a movement of the population which promotes modernization and raises the level of living of the population, these results depend to a large extent on the balance between the industrial development of the urban areas and the modernization of agriculture and the ability of the urban areas to absorb this migration.

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In the urban areas, the rapid growth of the population makes the assimilation of the migrants a difficult task in terms of providing them with employment, adequate housing and other public services; in the rural areas, the changes in sex and age structure and the socio-economic structure of the population generally turn out to be disadvantageous, since the emigrating population is made up of young adults of working age and the enterprising and capable among the adults.

It is generally agreed that the agrarian structure, employment possibilities, income level and the high natural growth rate of the rural population are the most important variables explaining the rural-urban migration. It is also agreed that there exists a group of non-economic factors which provides motivation. Present knowledge of the relative importance of the different motivations for migration is too limited for any selection of the incentives and checks which could help in the preparation of a special population redistribution policy. Nor has any integral analysis been made of the relative importance of this redistribution in comparison with other changes or rigidity of structure inherent in different styles of development.

Internal migration and fertility are the two variables which certainly have the greatest importance for the demographic evolution of the Latin American countries in the future. The first is of importance for its relation with urbanization, the second in connexion with the growth and age-structure of the population.

At the present time, it is recognized that a national population policy should give special consideration to the problems stemming from in-migration and that it should include, inter alia, measures directed at easing the problems of rapid urbanization. The idea is also gaining support that the backward regions should be industrialized as far as is economically possible.

Unlike international migration, the control of internal migratory movements presents great practical and institutional problems. These movements may possibly be influenced by applying different measures or plans of action including economic and social incentives and restrictions, but present know-how as regards the factors which determine these migrations is much too incomplete to allow any quantitative estimate of their effect.

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In the industrialized countries, fertility declined slowly during the period of transition from a traditional agrarian society to a modernized industrial society with a high degree of urbanization and considerable social mobility, and where the status of women was becoming practically incompatible with the conception and upbringing of a numerous family. In these countries, the change in attitudes towards family size did not occur to any appreciable extent through publicity campaigns nor was it due to the technological possibilities of birth control; it was rather the consequence of a process of adaptation of the family to new economic and social conditions.

In the developing countries, the demographic transition in general, and fertility tendencies in particular are following very different patterns, and, even more especially, chronologies.

Present know-how as regards the factors determining fertility tendencies only allows very general theories to be expressed as to their future evolution in the countries of Latin America, since the information available shows that the interest in limiting numbers of births in large sectors of the population does not correspond to the know-how and methods available to achieve this.

It is obvious that recent advances in the technology of birth control and the dissemination and efficacy of the mass communication media have notably increased possibilities of effective birth control, even in populations with low levels of income and education. The drop in fertility has thus been, potentially at least, divorced from the changes in economic and social conditions.

## 2. Recent work by ECLA on population and development

At its thirteenth session, ECLA adopted resolution 290(XIII), which recommended that the secretariat, in the context of its programme of work for the Second United Nations Development Decade, should give special attention to studies, research and advisory services designed for, inter alia, "the continuation of demographic studies in order to shed more light on population problems".

The programme of work of the secretariat adopted at the same session, established in the social development programme assigned to the Social Affairs Division, the population policy sub-programme.

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To expand its programme of work on demography, ECLA requested and obtained extra-budgetary financing from the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA). This helped to strengthen the infrastructure of population studies by forming a population unit within the Social Affairs Division. The series of documents produced by this unit included a study on migration, urban marginality and sociological stratification, a note on internal migration in Brazil between 1890 and 1970, a study containing an estimate of Latin America's urban growth between 1950 and 1970, (in major, medium and small cities), a study on the use of demographic data and studies in regional development planning, "Development strategy implications of population growth and labour force absorption in Latin America", "Volume and characteristics of international internal migration in Colombia", a document on the trends and direction of urban growth in Latin America between 1950 and 1970, "Urbanization trends in Brazil, 1950-1970" and "Family structure and change, a review".

In August 1970, a regional conference on population problems in Latin America (Conferencia Regional Latinoamericana de Población), organized by the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population, ECLA, CELADE and the Colegio de México, was held in Mexico City.

The substantial documentation presented at this conference served as a basis for a general review of the population problem in Latin America and for in-depth work on previous analyses. The document "Population trends and policy alternatives in Latin America" (E/CN.12/874), presented at the fourteenth session of ECLA in April 1971, comprised a summary of the situation and tendencies of the region as regards demography, giving special attention to the probable continuation of these tendencies, analysed the relations between different economic and social factors and demographic variables; and investigated the crucial problem of formulating policies, with some suggestions in this connexion.

In August 1971, a Seminar on the Use of Demographic Data and Studies for Planning Purposes (DEMOPLAN) was held in Santiago under the joint auspices of the Population Division of the United Nations, the IDB, ECLA, ILPES, PREALC, OAS and CELADE. The following topics were discussed with officials in charge of national planning: (i) The possibilities and prospects for the use of demographic data and studies in the planning of development; (ii) Substantive and methodological aspects of the system of relations between demography and planning, and methods and techniques required to incorporate the demographic variables in planning; and (iii) the general lines of a teaching programme for these methods and techniques 1/.

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1/ See the final report of the Seminar (ST/ECLA/Conf.41/L.17).

During 1972, the appraisal of the International Development Strategy provided an excellent opportunity for a systematic and conceptual presentation of the present state of knowledge of population actuality and policies in the countries of the region. Two reports were prepared, one on some implications for development of population tendencies during the 1960's, and the other on employment and the use of human resources in Latin America. These two reports will be revised for publication in 1973.

The ECLA population programme has been implemented with the collaboration and co-ordination of the CELADE and the Population Division of the United Nations. CELADE has advised ECLA in preparing its programme of work on population and has prepared criticisms and commentaries on the documents brought out.

ECLA in turn has collaborated in CELADE's teaching programmes. Since 1967, ECLA's demographer has given an annual course on population estimates and projections for the trainees of the Basic Course and has supervised their research projects.

The support ECLA has given CELADE came once more to the fore during the fourteenth session of the Commission when resolution 304 (XIV) was adopted. This recognized "CELADE as an autonomous agency under the aegis of the Commission and requests it to continue to extend and improve its teaching, research and advisory activities in the field of population".

Meanwhile, during the last few years, ECLA has considerably expanded its programme of work on demographic statistics. At present there is a programme for the promotion of continuing demographic statistics in the region and a group of regional advisors, members of the Statistical Division. These include two census experts, one sampling expert, one computing expert, one vital statistics expert and census cartography expert.

This effort should be complemented by a similar expansion of research into the relations between demographic change and development making possible the full use of this statistical data in planning, since the exploratory work carried out up till now by the Population Unit has been insufficient to satisfy the needs of the region in this connexion.

### 3. ECLA's expanded programme on population and development

The foregoing served as a basis for discussion at the meeting of the Group of Experts on the ECLA Population Programme, which met in Santiago in December 1972 2/.

In the light of the conclusions of the meeting 3/, the secretariat has developed the following work programme in the field of population and development.

#### (a) General points

The expanded work programme in the field of population is aimed at undertaking a more comprehensive diagnosis of the situation and trends of development in Latin America, with a view to developing criteria for incorporating demographic variables into the development plans and strategies of the countries of the region.

The expanded programme proposed comprises three areas of activity that are closely interlinked:

(i) Interdisciplinary research into the relationships between demographic change and development, taking account of the different situations and styles of development that exist in Latin America.

(ii) Technical assistance, at the request of Governments, to improve demographic statistics, incorporate demographic variables into development planning, and provide the basic data required for formulating, implementing and evaluating population policies.

(iii) Co-operation with Headquarters and the specialized agencies of the United Nations that are undertaking population programmes with a view to ensuring that these programmes take proper account of the socio-economic and cultural background of the countries of the region, direct their attention towards the problems that are considered most important for development, and bear in mind the political views prevailing in each country. During the coming two years, these activities will form part of the programme of activities for World Population Year and the World Population Conference, 1974.

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2/ See "Problemas de población y desarrollo en América Latina". Note by the secretariat (ST/ECLA/Conf.46/L.1).

3/ Group of Experts on the ECLA Population Programme, "Proyecto de informe" (ST/ECLA/Conf.46/L.2/Rev.1).

The programme will rely on the joint efforts of the Population Unit of the Social Development Division, the team of regional advisers on censuses and vital statistics attached to the Statistical Division, and the Social and Demographic Statistics Section of the same Division. It will be assisted by experts in other ECLA divisions and programmes that are co-operating in the implementation of specific projects. Assistance will also be given by high-level consultants, recruited for short periods to undertake the studies mentioned in the programme, and co-operative projects will be arranged with research centres in the region 4/.

ECLA will seek the most suitable way of facilitating co-ordination of these activities with the programmes of other bodies, such as ILPES, CELADE, the population group in CLACSO, FLACSO, UNESCO, PASB, PREALC and various national institutions.

(b) Research

The basic aim of the research programme is to provide Governments with the criteria they require to formulate population policies in line with development policies and programmes. ECLA will undertake studies that will provide systematic interpretations of the relations between population change and development.

The analysis, interpretation and synthesis of the issue of population and development will be focused on the following priority areas.

(i) Case studies of the relations between population growth and economic development. These studies will be designed to give an interpretation of the role of demographic trends in the development of the Latin American countries. The studies will be undertaken in a few selected countries that can be considered typical as regards population growth and development, and will take a historical and comprehensive approach to examination of sectors, regions and issues undertaken by an interdisciplinary team. These studies will provide an excellent opportunity for bringing other activities of ECLA in the particular country into sharper focus and for improving co-ordination, which should help to raise efficiency.

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4/ While studies of a co-operative nature will substantially enlarge the secretariat's capacity for action, they will require a larger number of specialists on the permanent staff.

(ii) Studies of population policies and theories on the links between demographic change and development. A critical analysis will be undertaken of existing theories and their validity in the different situations and styles of development to be found in Latin America. An inventory and an analysis will be made of population policies in the countries of the region, including an examination of the components and instruments of such policies and the role played in them by the public sector.

(iii) Appraisal of the International Development Strategy for the Second United Nations Development Decade. ECLA will continue to undertake periodic reviews and appraisals of the IDS. It is expected that the implementation of the ECLA population programme will yield fresh contributions to forthcoming appraisal documents, although the material will probably have to be supplemented with special studies.

(iv) Specific studies. These would be selected in the light of the priorities that emerge from the studies mentioned in points (i) and (ii) above, and would basically cover the following:

- (1) Demographic aspects of the problems of employment and underemployment of the labour force.

The relations between population growth and unemployment and underemployment will be analysed by integrating population analysis with a study of socio-economic structures and styles of development, taking into account the findings of research into urban marginality, studies on employment and income distribution, and the research undertaken into demographic trends and urban development.

- (2) Effect of migration in urban and rural areas

The fact that migrants are a representative sample neither of the population they come from nor that which they join has a major bearing both on the two areas concerned and on the migrants themselves. It would therefore be very useful to carry out two complementary studies, one to analyse the impact of emigration on the economic and social organization of communities where exodus has been large and the other to examine the process of assimilation of migrants in the destination areas, with special emphasis on the problem of their adaptation to new living conditions and employment.

/(3) Effect

(3) Effect of certain policies on the geographic distribution of the population

The relatively low average density of population in Latin America and the existence of large tracts of land with virtually no population or with a very low density, together with urban concentration and metropolization, play a very important role in the integration of population policies for development planning. Theoretically, Latin America's potential for spacial distribution of population is better than that of other parts of the world and research is needed into the feasibility and relative effectiveness of various redistribution policies.

(4) Family structure and social change

The family is the basic social group in which the interrelationship of demographic change and development is felt; hence the importance of research at this level for the formulation of population policy. This study will constitute a review, in the light of Latin American experience, of the central thesis (constantly cropping up in studies on the family) that, as a result of a general process of modernization and industrialization, this social group is gradually changing from the extended type of family, characteristic of traditional agrarian societies, to the nuclear or conjugal type that is observed in highly urbanized or industrialized modern societies. The study should shed new light on changes in the structure and functions of the Latin American family in its various manifestations and the concomitant social changes in different national contexts.

(5) Demographic aspects of educational problems

The levels and trends of morality, fertility and migration determine the growth rate and age structure of the population in general and of the population of school age in particular. A full understanding of the problems of educational development requires demographic analyses on the basis of which the potential demand for educational services can be estimated in the light of the expected trend of demographic variables. This study will form the core of a more comprehensive examination of the adequacy of human resources for development purposes.

(6) Demographic aspects of the rural population

The situation of the rural population is rapidly changing in Latin America. Although rural areas have ceased to be isolated and static, population growth and other factors have gradually undermined the systems of land ownership, crop-growing, marketing and local and urban-rural relationships to such an extent that a growing proportion of the rural population has no alternative other than marginalized poverty. The study of the situation and characteristics of the rural population in general, with emphasis on the living conditions and attitudes of the marginalized rural groups, should contribute useful background material for development planning.

(7) Population growth and income distribution

The growth and structure of a population depends on the levels and trends of mortality, fertility and migration. In most Latin American countries, fertility is the dominant factor in the growth and structure of the future population. Domestic migration, moreover, will largely determine the geographic distribution of the population. The size of families, the death rate of specific social strata and the residential areas are all connected with the level and distribution of income. These in turn affect savings and investment and other factors. The purpose of the study will be to analyse these relationships in various social groups, in as great a detail as possible for certain Latin American countries.

(c) Technical assistance

Nearly all the technical assistance which the secretariat is currently providing in the population field is centred on population statistics. An increasing number of requests for assistance are expected, however, in connexion with the use of demographic data and studies in planning and with the basic information required for the formulation of population policies. ECLA is not at present in a position to meet this demand. Apart from the shortage of human and financial resources, a huge effort in terms of the accumulation of basic data is necessary in order to define the Commission's thinking vis-a-vis each of these questions. Nevertheless, it is expected that such a demand could be met within the medium term and in those circumstances it would be essential to co-ordinate the research and technical assistance projects concerned.

/(d) Collaboration



(d) Collaboration with respect to the World Population Conference, 1974, and other activities of the World Population Year, 1974

This collaboration is expected to relate to two types of activities: institutional activities with a view to the more efficient organization of the Conference and the symposia and to secure the active participation of Governments, and theoretical activities consisting in the preparation of documents and information for these meetings.

ECLA, as a regional agency of the Governments in order to determine their views, advise them in completing the questionnaires sent to them by the Secretary-General, and in connexion with the objectives of the Conference.

To help them adopt positions vis-a-vis the topics of the World Conference, the Governments might consider the advisability of holding a regional seminar at the beginning of 1974 in order to co-ordinate the region's position at the forthcoming World Conference.

The secretariat of the World Conference has requested ECLA to participate in the preparation of documents and studies for the Conference and the symposia in these fields:

(i) Co-operation with CELADE in the analysis of the questionnaires sent to the Governments by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in connexion with the second survey regarding population trends, economic and social development and the policies and programmes of action in this field;

(ii) A document for the Symposium on Population and Development, which will consist of an illustrative exercise on the impact on development of alternative possibilities of future population trends, taking into account different styles of development;

(iii) A document on population, resources and the human environment, with special attention to their interrelationships according to different forms of population settlement in urban and rural areas, for the Symposium on Population and the Human Environment, which will also serve as a basis for the documents on the subject for the World Conference;

(iv) A document, in collaboration with CELADE, on economic and social factors which influence fertility, mortality, migratory and urbanization trends;

/(v) It

(v) It is also hoped that ECLA will provide comments on other documents of world scope which will be prepared by Headquarters, the specialized agencies and other institutions in regard to their approach to the situation and trends in Latin America.