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Open-ended Working Group on Ageing

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Item 4 of the Provisional Agenda

Existing international framework on the human rights of older persons and identification of existing gaps at the international level

Background note on the availability of basic demographic data on the older population prepared by the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs

1. **Data disaggregated by age and sex are critical for monitoring the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action.** Monitoring of the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing requires complete, accurate and timely data on the older population, defined as those aged 60 and over. The older population is characterized by a diversity of conditions that may only be revealed when data on this population are disaggregated by age, sex or other characteristics. Fundamental demographic data including the size of the older population, its composition by sex and age, and trends in survival by age are vitally important to monitoring efforts, yet the availability and quality of such data are insufficient for many parts of the world.

2. **The Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs provides consistent and comprehensive demographic information on older populations.** The Population Division produces reports on the characteristics of ageing populations at the global, regional and country levels. The most recent comprehensive analysis of ageing published by the Division is *World Population Ageing 2009*¹, which presents internationally comparable trend data on the size, composition and survival of the older population as well as supplementary information on other demographic and socioeconomic variables including marital status, urban and rural distribution of the older population, living arrangements, labour force participation and pensions. The publication includes a CD-ROM with country profiles for those indicators. The Population Division also participates in inter-agency collaboration with UNFPA and other Divisions of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to define and select appropriate indicators to track progress on the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action.

3. **United Nations estimates of population and mortality rely on nationally collected data but close gaps in availability and ensure comparability.** The trends in the size, composition and survival of the older population reported in *World Population Ageing 2009* are based upon *World Population Prospects*, the biennial estimates and projections of populations for the world, regions and countries that are produced by the Population Division. To generate the estimates for *World Population Prospects*, the Division relies on nationally collected data on population distribution by age and sex at older ages and on deaths by age and sex. The Division analyzes and adjusts the data as necessary to produce international comparable estimates. Where the necessary data are not available or are of poor quality, models of population distribution or mortality patterns are employed.

4. **Data disaggregated by age are increasingly important as the older population grows and ages.** The number of persons aged 60 or older worldwide rose from 204 million in 1950 to 760 million in 2010, and is projected to rise to 2 billion by 2050². The proportion of the world population aged 60 or over rose from 8 per cent in 1950 to 11 per cent in 2010, and will reach 22 per cent in 2050. Within the population aged 60 or over, the proportion that is aged 80 or over is projected to increase from 14 per cent in 2010 to 20 per cent in 2050. As the older population both grows and ages, ensuring the availability of detailed population counts by age and sex for ages above 60 has become increasingly important. The population

¹ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2010). *World Population Ageing 2009*. Sales No. E.10.XIII.5

² United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2011). *World Population Prospects: The 2010 Revision*, CD-ROM Edition.

estimates as of 1990 in *World Population Prospects* are published for 5-year age groups up to ages 95-99, with an open-ended age group of 100 or over.

5. Most countries that report census age distributions to the United Nations disaggregate older age groups. Tabulations from the United Nations Demographic Yearbook database confirm that the number of countries supplying detailed population census data for the oldest age groups to the Demographic Yearbook – with an open-ended age group beginning at age 85 or higher – has increased between the 1990s and the first decade of the 2000s. Annex table 1 lists the countries that have reported census data since 2000 to the Demographic Yearbook. The table shows that very few countries currently report data truncated at lower ages such as 75 or over. While this is a welcome development, data on the population at older ages still require careful analysis for evidence of age exaggeration or other misreporting such as a tendency to round ages to years ending in 0 or 5. Such misreporting may be particularly problematic in contexts where dates of birth have not been well recorded, but even in countries with high-quality data, data at the oldest ages often require some evaluation and adjustment for analysis.

6. Deaths worldwide will become increasingly concentrated at older ages. Indicators of the survival of older populations are vital both for monitoring their well-being and for estimating changes in the size of populations. In 2005-2010, 54 per cent of deaths worldwide in 2005-2010 occurred at ages 60 or over and 21 per cent occurred at ages 80 and over. As mortality declines, the percentages of deaths occurring in those age groups are projected to increase rapidly to 80 per cent and 42 per cent, respectively, by 2045-2050. A proper understanding of global mortality and population change will increasingly rely on knowledge of detailed age-specific death rates within the older population.

7. Civil registration data on deaths are necessary to directly measure mortality for the older population. The preferred source of data for mortality estimation is vital statistics based on complete reporting of deaths by age and sex from a civil registration system. The necessity of registration data for measuring mortality among older populations is particularly acute, because alternative survey-based methods that can produce indicators of mortality levels among children or working-age populations are not applicable for older populations.

8. Absent or incomplete death registration data are a major gap in knowledge of levels and trends of mortality among the older population. The United Nations system requests countries to provide registration data on deaths by age and sex on an annual basis.³ Annex table 2 lists those countries that have provided at least three years of nationally-representative death registration data by age and sex to United Nations statistical compilations since 2000. In several regions, namely Europe, Northern America, and Latin America and the Caribbean, a large proportion of countries regularly report data to United Nations compilations with detailed disaggregation at older ages. The data must be carefully evaluated for completeness, and in a number of these countries, particularly in Latin America and the Caribbean, civil registration systems have not achieved levels of completeness

³ Data on deaths by age and sex are collected by both the United Nations Statistics Division, which publishes the data in the United Nations Demographic Yearbook, and the World Health Organization, which also collects data on causes of death for inclusion in the WHO Mortality Database and for estimation of cause-specific mortality and burden of disease.

necessary for valid analysis. In Africa, Asia, and Oceania the number of countries reporting registration data to the United Nations compilations remains comparatively low (the number of countries reporting at least three years of registration data since 2000 was 7 of 57 countries in Africa, representing 17 per cent of the African population; 26 of 50 countries in Asia, representing 13 per cent of the population, and 7 of 22 countries in Oceania, covering 74 per cent of the regional population), and registration completeness remains a concern for many of the developing countries of these regions that do report data. The lack of registration data from many large countries of Africa and Asia represents a major gap in the knowledge of survival trends for the older population of the world. Strengthening of civil registration systems to certify and record deaths, including the age, sex, and cause of death, is an important priority for monitoring the Madrid Plan of Action.

9. **The benefits of civil registration systems extend beyond demographic monitoring.** There are important human rights and development dimensions of improved civil registration. Registration of vital events conveys administrative and legal benefits on individuals, such as establishment and proof of identity, citizenship, property or inheritance rights. At the societal level, complete and accurate data on births, deaths and causes of death form the basis for well-informed planning and policy-making across sectors. Thus the dividends of investment in registration systems go far beyond basic demographic monitoring.

ANNEX TABLE 1. COUNTRIES OR AREAS THAT REPORTED POPULATION CENSUS COUNTS BY AGE AND SEX SINCE 2000 TO THE UNITED NATIONS DEMOGRAPHIC YEARBOOK

<i>Countries or areas reporting census population data since 2000 by age and sex to the Demographic Yearbook</i>	<i>Latest census year reported</i>	<i>Start of open-ended age group in latest year</i>
Africa		
Algeria	2008	85
Benin	2002	98
Botswana	2001	75
Burkina Faso	2006	95
Burundi	2008	95
Cape Verde	2010	90
Egypt	2006	75
Ethiopia	2007	95
Ghana	2000	99
Kenya	2009	80
Lesotho	2006	98
Liberia	2007	85
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	2006	85
Malawi	2008	98
Mauritius	2000	98
Mayotte	2007	99
Morocco	2004	95
Mozambique	2007	95
Namibia	2001	95
Niger	2001	90
Nigeria	2006	85
Réunion	2006	95
Rwanda	2002	85
Sao Tome and Principe	2001	99
Senegal	2002	95
Seychelles	2002	100
South Africa	2001	100
Sudan	2008	95
Swaziland	2007	90
Tunisia	2004	80
Uganda	2002	95
United Republic of Tanzania	2002	80
Zambia	2000	85
Zimbabwe	2002	98
Asia		
Armenia	2001	85
Bahrain	2001	90
Bangladesh	2001	80
Bhutan	2005	100
Brunei Darussalam	2000	100

<i>Countries or areas reporting census population data since 2000 by age and sex to the Demographic Yearbook</i>	<i>Latest census year reported</i>	<i>Start of open-ended age group in latest year</i>
Cambodia	2008	98
China	2000	100
China, Hong Kong SAR	2001	100
China, Macao SAR	2001	85
Cyprus	2001	100
Dem. People's Rep. of Korea	2008	100
Georgia	2002	100
India	2001	80
Indonesia	2010	98
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	2006	100
Israel	2008	95
Japan	2005	100
Jordan	2004	97
Lao People's Dem. Republic	2005	100
Malaysia	2001	95
Maldives	2006	98
Mongolia	2000	100
Nepal	2001	98
Occupied Palestinian Territory	2007	80
Oman	2003	98
Philippines	2000	100
Qatar	2010	75
Republic of Korea	2005	85
Saudi Arabia	2004	80
Singapore	2000	100
Sri Lanka	2001	100
Tajikistan	2000	100
Thailand	2000	100
Timor-Leste	2004	75
Turkey	2000	100
United Arab Emirates	2005	85
Viet Nam	2009	95
Yemen	2004	75
Europe		
Albania	2001	100
Austria	2001	95
Belgium	2001	100
Bulgaria	2001	70
Channel Islands	2001	99
Croatia	2001	100
Czech Republic	2001	100
Denmark	2001	100
Estonia	2000	100
Finland	2000	100
Gibraltar	2001	99
Greece	2001	100
Hungary	2001	100

<i>Countries or areas reporting census population data since 2000 by age and sex to the Demographic Yearbook</i>	<i>Latest census year reported</i>	<i>Start of open-ended age group in latest year</i>
Ireland	2006	100
Isle of Man	2006	100
Italy	2001	100
Latvia	2000	100
Liechtenstein	2000	100
Lithuania	2001	100
Luxembourg	2001	100
Malta	2005	100
Monaco	2000	100
Montenegro	2003	100
Netherlands	2002	100
Norway	2001	100
Poland	2002	100
Portugal	2001	100
Republic of Moldova	2004	100
Romania	2002	100
Russian Federation	2002	85
Serbia	2002	100
Slovakia	2001	100
Slovenia	2002	100
Spain	2001	100
Sweden	2003	100
Switzerland	2000	100
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	2002	100
Ukraine	2001	100
United Kingdom	2001	100
Latin America and the Caribbean		
Anguilla	2001	95
Antigua and Barbuda	2001	85
Argentina	2001	100
Aruba	2000	95
Bahamas	2000	90
Barbados	2000	80
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	2001	98
Brazil	2000	100
British Virgin Islands	2001	80
Chile	2002	100
Colombia	2005	100
Costa Rica	2000	99
Cuba	2002	100
Dominica	2001	85
Dominican Republic	2002	98
Ecuador	2002	95
El Salvador	2007	98
Falkland Islands (Malvinas)	2006	80
French Guiana	2006	95

<i>Countries or areas reporting census population data since 2000 by age and sex to the Demographic Yearbook</i>	<i>Latest census year reported</i>	<i>Start of open-ended age group in latest year</i>
Guyana	2002	75
Honduras	2001	100
Jamaica	2001	98
Martinique	2006	95
Mexico	2010	100
Montserrat	2001	95
Netherlands Antilles	2001	95
Nicaragua	2005	100
Panama	2010	100
Paraguay	2002	90
Peru	2007	98
Puerto Rico	2000	100
Saint Lucia	2001	98
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	2001	85
Suriname	2004	95
Turks and Caicos Islands	2001	99
Uruguay	2004	100
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	2001	100
Northern America		
Bermuda	2001	100
Canada	2006	100
Greenland	2000	95
Saint Pierre and Miquelon	2006	95
United States of America	2000	100
Oceania		
American Samoa	2000	75
Australia	2006	100
Cook Islands	2006	60
Fiji	2007	95
Guam	2000	100
Kiribati	2005	65
Micronesia (Fed. States of)	2000	85
Nauru	2002	90
New Caledonia	2004	95
New Zealand	2006	100
Niue	2001	94
Palau	2005	95
Papua New Guinea	2001	90
Samoa	2006	75
Tokelau	2006	75
Tonga	2006	100
Tuvalu	2002	95

Source: Tabulations based on the United Nations Demographic Yearbook database (data.un.org and internal files).

ANNEX TABLE 2. COUNTRIES OR AREAS THAT HAVE REPORTED AT LEAST THREE YEARS OF NATIONALLY REPRESENTATIVE DEATH REGISTRATION DATA BY AGE AND SEX SINCE 2000 TO THE UNITED NATIONS DEMOGRAPHIC YEARBOOK OR THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION MORTALITY DATABASE

<i>Countries or area reporting at least three years of data since 2000</i>	<i>Latest year available</i>	<i>Start of open-ended age group in latest year</i>	<i>Country's estimation of death registration completeness¹</i>
Africa			
Egypt	2009	85	C
Mauritius	2009	85	C
Morocco	2007	80	U
Réunion	2008	95	C
Saint Helena	2010	100	C
Seychelles	2009	85	C
South Africa	2007	95	U
Asia			
Armenia	2009	100	C
Azerbaijan	2009	100	C
Bahrain	2008	75	C
Brunei Darussalam	2009	85	C
China, Hong Kong SAR	2009	85	C
China, Macao SAR	2009	99	C
Cyprus	2009	100	C
Georgia	2008	100	C
Israel	2009	100	C
Japan	2009	100	C
Kazakhstan	2008	100	C
Kuwait	2008	95	C
Kyrgyzstan	2009	100	C
Malaysia	2008	95	C
Maldives	2009	100	C
Mongolia	2009	100	C
Occupied Palestinian Territory	2007	100	U
Philippines	2005	95	C
Qatar	2009	95	C
Republic of Korea	2009	100	C
Saudi Arabia	2005	80	..
Singapore	2008	100	C
Sri Lanka	2008	100	C
Tajikistan	2008	100	U
Thailand	2006	85	U
Uzbekistan	2005	85	C
Europe			
Albania	2004	100	C
Andorra	2009	110	C
Austria	2009	110	C

<i>Countries or area reporting at least three years of data since 2000</i>	<i>Latest year available</i>	<i>Start of open-ended age group in latest year</i>	<i>Country's estimation of death registration completeness¹</i>
Belarus	2009	100	C
Belgium	2007	109	C
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2009	110	C
Bulgaria	2009	100	C
Croatia	2009	110	C
Czech Republic	2009	110	C
Denmark	2009	110	C
Estonia	2009	110	C
Finland	2009	110	C
France	2009	110	C
Germany	2009	110	C
Greece	2009	110	C
Hungary	2009	110	C
Iceland	2009	110	C
Ireland	2009	110	C
Italy	2008	100	C
Latvia	2009	110	C
Liechtenstein	2009	110	C
Lithuania	2009	110	C
Luxembourg	2009	110	C
Malta	2009	100	C
Montenegro	2009	110	C
Netherlands	2009	110	C
Norway	2009	110	C
Poland	2009	110	C
Portugal	2009	110	C
Republic of Moldova	2009	100	C
Romania	2009	100	C
Russian Federation	2009	100	C
San Marino	2004	100	C
Serbia	2009	110	C
Slovakia	2009	110	C
Slovenia	2009	110	C
Spain	2009	110	C
Sweden	2009	110	C
Switzerland	2009	110	C
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	2009	100	C
Ukraine	2008	100	C
United Kingdom	2009	100	C
Latin America and the Caribbean			
Anguilla	2007	85	C
Antigua and Barbuda	2008	95	C
Argentina	2008	95	C

<i>Countries or area reporting at least three years of data since 2000</i>	<i>Latest year available</i>	<i>Start of open-ended age group in latest year</i>	<i>Country's estimation of death registration completeness¹</i>
Aruba	2007	95	C
Bahamas	2007	100	C
Barbados	2007	95	C
Belize	2008	95	U
Brazil	2009	100	U
British Virgin Islands	2003	95	C
Cayman Islands	2004	95	C
Chile	2008	100	C
Colombia	2010	100	U
Costa Rica	2010	100	C
Cuba	2009	100	C
Dominica	2009	100	C
Dominican Republic	2009	100	U
Ecuador	2008	95	U
El Salvador	2008	95	C
French Guiana	2008	95	C
Grenada	2008	95	C
Guadeloupe	2008	95	C
Guatemala	2008	95	C
Guyana	2006	95	C
Haiti	2003	95	U
Jamaica	2004	100	U
Martinique	2008	95	C
Mexico	2009	100	C
Montserrat	2006	95	C
Netherlands Antilles	2006	100	C
Nicaragua	2006	95	U
Panama	2009	100	U
Paraguay	2008	95	U
Peru	2008	100	U
Puerto Rico	2008	100	C
Saint Kitts and Nevis	2008	95	C
Saint Lucia	2005	95	C
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	2009	85	C
Suriname	2008	100	C
Trinidad and Tobago	2006	95	C
Turks and Caicos Islands	2005	95	C
United States Virgin Islands	2005	95	C
Uruguay	2004	95	C
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	2007	100	C
Northern America			
Bermuda	2009	100	C
Canada	2007	100	C
Greenland	2009	100	C

<i>Countries or area reporting at least three years of data since 2000</i>	<i>Latest year available</i>	<i>Start of open-ended age group in latest year</i>	<i>Country's estimation of death registration completeness¹</i>
Saint Pierre and Miquelon	2008	95	C
United States of America	2008	85	C
Oceania			
American Samoa	2009	85	C
Australia	2009	100	C
New Caledonia	2007	95	C
New Zealand	2009	100	C
Northern Mariana Islands	2006	100	U
Tuvalu	2003	80	U
Wallis and Futuna Islands	2008	100	C

¹ Completeness code from Demographic Yearbook. "C" indicates that the country considers overall death registration at least 90 per cent complete. Demographic analysis may suggest that data for specific age groups are less complete. "U" indicates that the country considers overall death registration less than 90 per cent complete. "." indicates that the code is not available.

Sources: Tabulations based on the United Nations Demographic Yearbook database (data.un.org and internal files); WHO Mortality Data base documentation, 25 March 2011 update. Accessed from <http://www.who.int/whosis/mort/download/en/> on 20 June 2011; United Nations Population and Vital Statistics Report, 5 July 2011 update, accessed at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/vitstats/serATab3.pdf> on 13 July 2011