

ASIAN POPULATION CONFERENCE

By

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In 1959, while reviewing the population trends in the region, 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. A resolution requesting the Secretariat to organize an Asian Population Conference in 1961 or 1962 was adopted unanimously by the Commission. The scope, agenda and organization of the proposed Conference were outlined during the 1960 Annual Session of the ECAFE. The Government of India extended an invitation to the ECAFE to hold the Asian Population Conference in New Delhi sometime in 1963. The postponement to this later date will thus enable the governments in the region to make detailed preparations and undertake studies which would contribute to the success of the Conference. A Preparatory Committee was set up by the Secretariat to collaborate and advise in the planning of the said Conference although the final responsibility for the arrangements would rest with the United Nations and the Government of India.

The Preparatory Committee for the Asian Population Conference met at the Demographic Training and Research Centre, Chembur, Bombay, India from the 13th through the 16th of February 1962. The members composing the Committee had been invited by the Executive Secretary of the ECAFE to: (1) provide guidance and advice concerning the substantive and technical aspects of the Asian Population Conference, and (2) undertake liaison with the ECAFE Secretariat for the preparatory work of the Conference.

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At the Opening Session of the Committee Meeting on 13th February 1962, Mr. Halvor Gille, Chief of the Social Affairs Division of ECAFE, reviewed the plans for the Population Conference and stated its main purpose — to provide a forum where experts could examine the major problems of planning for economic and social development arising from the present and prospective population trends. It was further emphasized that the conference should not limit itself to theoretical discussion but should seek practical solutions to population problems including measures contributing to a fuller utilization of human resources and policies designed to affect population trends.

The followings members of the Committee representing eight countries in the region participated in the meeting:

Mr. R. Raja-Indra (Ceylon), Mr. P. C. Mathew and Mr. Asok Mitra (India), Mr. Minoru Tachi (Japan), Mr. Pushker Nath Pant (Nepal), Mr. Muhammad Khalid Hayat Khan (Pakistan), Miss Mercedes B. Concepcion (The Philippines), and Mr. Tye Cho Yook (Singapore).

The Staff Members of the UN Bureau of Social Affairs, ECAFE, ILO and UNESCO who were also present were: Mr. John D. Durand, Mr. Halvor Gille, Mr. You Poh Seng, Mr. Alwyn G. Paul and Mr. B. K. Sarkar. Observers were sent by the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population, the Demographic Research Centre at New Delhi, the Indian Statistical Institute and the Demographic Training and Research Centre at Chembur.

Mr. P. C. Mathew and Mr. C. Chandrasekaran, both from India, were unanimously elected Chairman and Rapporteur of the Committee, respectively.

To assist ECAFE in the task of undertaking the screening of background papers, a sub-committee of the Preparatory Committee was appointed consisting of the representatives from India, Singapore and the Philippines. A small number of resources persons from the region who would attend the Conference at United Nations' expense would be selected with

the advice of another sub-committee of the Preparatory Committee appointed for the purpose. The representative from Ceylon, Japan, Nepal, and Pakistan constituted the second sub-committee.

The Committee recommended the following steps to be taken with regards to arousing interest in the Conference.

1. Data from the recent population censuses may be released as early as possible in order to stimulate interest in the Conference and facilitate analytical work required for the preparation of the various documents to be submitted to the Conference.
2. ECAFE should prepare a few brief articles in non-technical language to be circulated through the UN Information Service to newspapers and magazines in the region. Similar articles may be prepared by the members of the Preparatory Committee and others.
3. Radio and press coverage prior to and during the Conference may be arranged by interested institutions in the region and committee members to maintain interest in the meetings.