

**UNITED NATIONS EXPERT GROUP MEETING  
ON SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS  
OF CHANGING POPULATION AGE STRUCTURES**

Mexico City, 31 August – 2 September 2005



United Nations

**Department of Economic and Social Affairs**  
Population Division

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# DESA

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## PREFACE

There is today great diversity in the age structures of different populations, but rapid change is taking place nearly everywhere. In most countries of Asia and Latin America the proportion of children has been falling and the proportion in the working ages has been rising, thus producing demographic conditions favourable for economic growth—a “demographic dividend”. Developed countries already have relatively old populations and are coming to the end of the “dividend” period of rising proportions in the working ages. In contrast, many African countries still have rapidly growing populations with a high proportion of dependent children. However, over the next four decades, the proportion of older persons will increase rapidly in all regions of the world, with important implications for the pace of economic growth, the sustainability of pension and social security systems and the functioning and escalating costs of health systems.

To discuss the challenges and opportunities posed by these trends, the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, in collaboration with the Consejo Nacional de Población (CONAPO) of Mexico and with the support of the National Institute of Aging (NIA) of the United States of America, convened the Expert Group Meeting on the *Social and Economic Implications of Changing Population Age Structures*, which took place in Mexico City from 31 August to 2 September 2005. The present volume presents the proceedings of that meeting.

The Meeting brought together experts from different regions of the world to address the determinants, trajectories and consequences of changes in the age structures of populations for economic and social development and to discuss the policy implications of these changes, including policy options to take advantage of the demographic dividend and to mitigate the problems arising from changing age structures in different socio-economic and political contexts. Four main topics were discussed during the Meeting: the demographic dividend; intergenerational transfers in the context of changing age structures; the effects of population ageing at the macro level, including social security; and the impact of ageing on the health system.

Comments and suggestions on this report are welcome and may be addressed to Ms. Hania Zlotnik, Director, Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations, New York, N.Y. 10017, USA, fax number (1 212) 963-2147. This publication may also be accessed on the website of the Population Division at [www.unpopulation.org](http://www.unpopulation.org).

