



## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Expert Group to Consider Policy Responses to Ageing and Declining Populations at Headquarters, 16-18 October 2000**

#### ***Changing Demographic Trends Will Have Major Impact on Economies, Social Security Systems, and on Workforce***

The “smaller and older” populations that are projected for developed countries over the next 50 years will have major economic impacts, affecting everything from pensions and social security systems, to the size and make-up of the workforce. To explore long-term policy options to meet the challenges of these changing demographics, the United Nations is convening an Expert Group Meeting on “Policy Responses to Population Ageing and Population Decline” in New York from 16 to 18 October 2000.

Scholars from eight developed countries that are facing the prospect of a shrinking population that is increasingly getting older will propose and consider various options to confront the changing demographics that will ultimately cause Governments to reassess many established economic, social and political policies and programmes.

With fertility rates consistently falling in most developed countries, it now appears that an ageing and declining population is inevitable. In most cases, these countries will experience rapid reductions in the ratio of persons of working age (15 to 64 years) to older persons (65 years or older).

Yet with proper planning, countries can set policies that aim to ensure that the present standard of living is maintained. In particular, the meeting will look at issues such as retirement age, retirement and health-care benefits for the elderly, labour force participation, policies and programmes relating to fertility, and the levels and types of migration.

Organized by the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, and funded in part by a grant from the United States National Institute on Aging, the meeting is a follow-up to the report *Replacement Migration: Is it a Solution to Declining and Ageing Populations?*, issued by the Population Division in March 2000. That report found that while easing migration policies could alleviate worker shortages, it was only part of a number of actions that governments must take to tackle their population issues.

To launch the meeting, a panel discussion will be held on 16 October from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. in Conference Room 8. The panelists for the forum are: Isabelle Piquer, a correspondent of El Pais (Moderator); Makoto Atoh, Director-General, National Institute of Population and Social Security Research, Japan; Charlotte Hoehn, Director and Professor, Federal Institute for Population Research, Germany; and Paul Demeny, Distinguished Scholar, Population Council, U.S.A.

The Meeting will 1) review the demographic prospects of each country and region during the next half century; 2) identify the consequences of population decline and population ageing, and 3) examine various policy options that Governments might adopt to cope with such unprecedented demographic challenges. Policy responses are of two types: those addressing the determinants of expected population ageing and decline (such as by affecting migration, raising fertility, etc.), and those concerning the consequences of the demographic change (such as by increasing the age of retirement, altering pension systems, etc). In addition, the Meeting is expected to stimulate scientific discussion on these issues and improve the knowledge base and to identify priorities for future research in order to enhance informed policy and programme planning.

The meeting will focus on the eight countries, namely France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, United Kingdom, and the United States, and on the two regions, Europe and the European Union. All of these countries and regions are experiencing rapid population ageing and - with the exception of the United States - will likely register declines in their labour force and total population. While the meeting will focus on developed countries, the issue has enormous importance to developing countries, which are expected to experience similar, if not more dramatic, shifts as their populations get increasingly older.

For more information and for requests for interviews, please contact Joseph Chamie, Director, Population Division, at (212) 963-3179, or Daniel Shepard, Department of Public Information at (212) 963-2191, fax 963-1186 or e-mail, [shepard@un.org](mailto:shepard@un.org).

Additional information is also available on the Web site of the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, [www.un.org/esa/population.htm](http://www.un.org/esa/population.htm).