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**CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN
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**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION
FOR WESTERN ASIA (ESCWA)**

Joint ECE-EUROSTAT-ESCWA work session
on Migration Statistics*

Topic 1

Overview of migration in Algeria

Invited paper by the Office for National Statistics, Algeria**

1. Algerian emigration is closely connected with Algeria's recent political and economic history. Originally a predominantly rural country (nearly 85% at the beginning of the century), Algeria has experienced significant demographic upheavals which have heavily influenced its current situation.

2. And even though there were no statistical documents available for quantifying migratory movements in the past, we can state with certainty that Algerian emigration began long ago, probably as far back as the second half of the nineteenth century. But it was above all the colonization process which led entire tribes to leave the country for other Arab countries, in an effort to flee the colonial Government and system.

* Prepared by Aziz Mokhtari.

** The documentation for this work session will be processed as for seminars.

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3. During the recent war of national liberation (1954-1962), the French army and colonial authorities planned and implemented a policy of population regroupment and establishment of “prohibited areas”, which led to significant displacements of civilian populations from rural and mountain areas towards the cities and caused the reordering of the country’s traditional economy.

4. This trend was accentuated by the rural exodus which followed independence, encouraged by the national industrialization policy and by the wage-earning system, which provided a stable, regular income for workers used to another form of income. The countryside was drained of its manpower, to the benefit of Algeria’s cities (from only 31% in 1966, the urban population was estimated to have increased to nearly 50% by 1987) and cities abroad.

5. Domestic migration involved nearly 2.5% of the population in 1987 (approximately 570,000 people migrated during the period 1977-1987), as against 5.6% of the population in 1977.

6. In short, Algerian emigration became significant at the beginning of the twentieth century, and more so following the two World Wars, in which many young Algerians, enrolled in the French army against their will, took part. Many Algerians discovered Europe through service in the French army.

7. The reconstruction effort of the European countries, in particular France, brought a large volume of cheap labour, primarily of rural origin, from Algeria to France. These workers were basically confined to the hardest chores.

8. These movements continued, and were encouraged by European employers up to the beginning of the 1970s.

9. Further into the 1970s, migration towards Europe began to be sharply curbed. France adopted a restrictive policy, putting an abrupt end to the traditional migration of Algerians towards the former colonial metropolis.

10. At that point a family reunification movement began, with the effect of keeping alive a migratory flow which had been very strong prior to the 1973-1974 oil crisis. But the possibility of emigrating on the basis of family reunification was not to last indefinitely (entries into France for family reunification dropped from more than 9,000 persons in 1982 to less than 3,000 in 1996).

11. Towards the mid-1980s, therefore, the reunification trend, which was already ebbing, began to peter out altogether, at which point there was a resumption of individual migration by men, not only towards France, although France still received the heaviest flows, but also towards other destinations, in particular Canada, whose migration policy is more flexible.

12. The Algerian migratory movement may therefore be divided into three historical phases, a first phase which coincided with the beginning of the century, followed by a second roughly covering the 1980s and a third which is taking place currently.
13. Each phase involved migrants with very different demographic and social features.
14. The first phase involved mostly illiterate peasants, some whose knowledge of a city in their own country was limited to the marine terminal, and the second consisted of the wives and children they had left behind, who now joined them almost under the same conditions. In the second phase, however, the children's presence was an important factor; unlike their parents, they attended State school.
15. Family reunification was also to have important consequences for the Algerian émigrés in that it enabled them to take an important step in the integration process through their children, who grew up in the host country and absorbed its values.
16. The third and current phase is radically different from the first two (it should, however, be emphasized that these phases are not mutually exclusive and that there may certainly be occasional overlapping in these migratory processes) in that it no longer involves young Algerian peasants leaving the rural areas, but primarily city-dwellers often holding university diplomas. This third phase coincides with the dismantling of Algeria's managed economy and the transition to a market economy.
17. In this phase, emigration is not totally male as it was in the first phase, even if it still consists mostly of men. It is not aimed at a single, preferred destination, such as France, as it was in the past.
