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**REPORT OF ACTIVITIES OF THE WORKING GROUP ON INFORMATION
AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGIES (ICT)***

* Report prepared by the Working Group coordinated by the Dominican Republic.

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A. BACKGROUND

The Working Group on Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) arose from the concern expressed by several member countries of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) at its third meeting in June 2005, concerning the creation of a discussion forum on measuring access to and use of information and communications technologies. The aim is to contribute to the development and dissemination of statistics and indicators relating to ICT and their comparability at the regional level through the exchange of national experiences and the harmonization of methodologies.

At the fourth meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in July 2007, the following documents were presented for discussion and approval:

- Compendium of practices on the inclusion of ICT questions in household and business surveys.¹
- Core indicators proposal regarding information and communication technologies (ICT).²
- Preliminary version of an information system that includes variables of ICT access and use as well as use of social, demographic and economic indicators to measure the digital divide.

At the same meeting, the proposals of the Working Group on ICT relating to the promotion of statistics in this area were approved, and it was decided:

- To adopt and implement on an annual basis, according to the capacities of each national statistical office, the list of core indicators for ICT access and use in household and business surveys adopted in resolution 38/104 of the United Nations Statistical Commission, which will be updated in accordance with the progress made by the countries.
- To adopt as a methodological reference the compendium of best practices for the inclusion of ICT questions in household and business surveys.
- To request the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean to manage, through OSILAC and with the support of national statistical offices, the information system on ICT and social, demographic and economic indicators, and to keep the compendium updated.
- To request the countries to send to ECLAC on a regular basis the data from their household and business surveys in relation to key indicators of ICT access and use, and also social, demographic and economic variables, together with their respective methodological manuals, in order to keep the information system and the compendium updated.

¹ DDR/6, 3 July 2007 (Spanish only).

² Core indicators proposal regarding Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), (DDR/5), 12 July 2007.

- To welcome the proposal for technological and methodological cooperation formulated by Brazil, Colombia, Mexico and the United States, offering to the other member countries of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean the use, free of charge, of the electronic hardware and software used for data capture in censuses and surveys and also offering the sharing of methodology for the preparation of housing directories, and to request that the Executive Committee take the necessary measures to make that cooperation possible.
- To develop indicators, questions and methodology relating to surveys for governmental institutions, as has been the case for household and business surveys in regional workshops on information society measurement.
- To establish good practices, based on recent experiences (mainly in Brazil, Colombia and Peru) in the use in censuses and surveys of mobile collection devices (personal digital assistants, digital media centres and others) and other technological tools.
- To encourage the study of in surveys designed to provide basic information on ICT satellite accounts, taking account of recent experiences such as those in Chile.
- To promote the formulation of indicators on the social use of ICT, in accordance with proposals presented by Cuba, thereby deepening the harmonization of indicators of ICT access and use in educational and health institutions, cultural and sports centres and centres for public access to ICT. In this, consideration should be given to the key indicators proposed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for educational institutions.
- To identify mechanisms that enable the Observatory for the Information Society in Latin America and the Caribbean (OSILAC) and ECLAC, along with UNESCO, to promote increased coordination within countries between ministries of education and statistical offices, in terms of ICT statistics in education.
- To develop methodologies and boost their implementation for the creation and consolidation of statistical information subsystems concerning ICT, making use of data from administrative records.
- To encourage a research model that can be used by all the region's countries, in order to establish the reliability and quality of the surveys and sampling being carried out to estimate the use of ICT in various countries.
- To develop cooperation among countries for training in different areas, such as online data collection.

At the seventh meeting of the Executive Committee of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), (Bogotá, November 2007) the Director of the National Statistical Office of the Dominican Republic, in his capacity as coordinator of the Working Group on Information and Communications Technologies (ICT), presented a report on the activities of the Group and highlighted the progress made in implementing the key indicators:

- Of the 33 Latin American and Caribbean countries, 18 included at least one indicator of ICT use in households and businesses between 2003 and 2007.
- Nine included all or nearly all of the agreed key indicators in household surveys.
- Seven included all or nearly all of the agreed key indicators in business surveys.

The Working Group assisted OSILAC with the organization of the fourth workshop on information society measurement, held in San Salvador on 11 and 12 February 2008 and attended by representatives from 20 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, including: participants from 18 national statistical offices; six national institutions in charge of compiling, coordinating or producing statistics on ICT in their respective countries; participants of four international agencies; and other participants from academia, non-governmental organizations and the private sector. At this fourth workshop, the Group gave a presentation based on its activities report. The Group also presented a working document containing a proposal for indicators of the use of ICT in education, which was produced by the National Statistical Office of the Dominican Republic.

B. SUB-WORKING GROUPS

At the fourth workshop on information society measurement, in order to provide continuity in assessing ICT access and use, four sub-working groups were created for the development and pursuit of the harmonized measurement in surveys of households and individuals, business, education and government. These bodies will simultaneously be in charge of reviewing the methodological aspects of surveys, interviews and production of the agreed indicators, as well as defining new indicators required to continue to monitor the digital divide in all its dimensions and the progress that ICT represent in social and economic terms. These sub-working groups were formed as follows:

- Subgroup 1 Definition of new indicators in households and individual surveys and agreements on methodological aspects: Honduras (coordinator), Antigua and Barbuda, Brazil (Brazilian Geographical and Statistical Institute, IBGE), Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Mexico, Nicaragua (National Institute for Development Information, INIDE) Peru and Trinidad and Tobago.
- Subgroup 2 Definition of new indicators in business surveys and agreements on methodological aspects: Argentina and Chile (coordinators), Brazil, Cuba, El Salvador, Mexico, Nicaragua (eNicaragua), Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, ECLAC Division of Production, Productivity and Management, Ibero-American Network of Science and Technology Indicators (RICYT) and University of Costa Rica.
- Subgroup 3 Definition of harmonized ICT indicators in education, including methodological aspects: Dominican Republic (coordinator), Antigua and Barbuda, Cuba, Mexico, Panama and Uruguay.
- Subgroup 4 Definition of harmonized ICT indicators in e-government, including methodological aspects: Colombia (coordinator), Brazil (Brazilian Internet Committee, CGIB), Cuba, Mexico, and Trinidad and Tobago.

The sub-working groups will develop their activities to fulfill the following objectives:

- Make a proposal that includes new indicators necessary for measuring the impact of ICT in its different dimensions, mainly social and economic, as well as the capacities and barriers for their use;
- Identify methodological statistical difficulties existing for the implementation of questions required to elaborate the agreed core indicators, as well as the new indicators proposed;
- Review indicators proposed by countries of the region and other regions, as well as solutions given by these countries to methodological difficulties;
- Suggest solutions for these methodological difficulties.

The sub-working groups' terms of reference on their activities, work and work schedule are now available. These sub-working groups will have to present a document containing their agreements and discussions to the fifth workshop on information society measurement in December, 2008. During the year, they will present discussion advances to the coordinator of the Working Group on ICT of the Conference and to OSILAC.

In conjunction with OSILAC and the Latin American Network of Educational Portals, the Sub-working Group on Education held a workshop on ICT indicators in education (Santo Domingo, March 2008). The workshop was attended by representatives of the educational authorities of the region's countries associated with the Network, which made it possible to include representatives from this sector into the working group on education. As part of the workshop, the Working Group on ICT gave a presentation that summarized the background to the measurement of ICT use in education, and also presented for discussion the proposed indicators on ICT in education prepared for the workshop in San Salvador. At the 2008 Global Event on Measuring the Information Society, organized by the Partnership on Measuring Information and Communication Technologies for Development in Geneva in May 2008, OSILAC presented the proposal for indicators of the use of ICT in education, drafted by the working group on education.

C. FORTHCOMING ACTIVITIES OF THE WORKING GROUP

- To continue to support the strengthening of the OSILAC regional database to encourage countries to send in the results of the relevant measurements.
- To contribute by enhancing the compendium of practices on the inclusion of ICT questions in households, business and government on the part of National Statistical Offices.
- To participate in the fifth regional workshop on the information society in Latin America and the Caribbean to be held in December 2008 (venue to be confirmed). During the workshop, each working group set up at the fourth workshop is expected to present its proposal to the delegations in attendance.