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**REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON ENVIRONMENTAL STATISTICS OF
THE STATISTICAL CONFERENCE OF THE AMERICAS OF THE ECONOMIC
COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (ECLAC)***

* This report was prepared by the National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Informatics (INEGI) of Mexico, the coordinator of the Working Group.

Name of the Working Group and coordinator	Working Group on Environmental Statistics Mexico
Member countries of the Group and other participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Mexico and Panama • Technical secretariat: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) • Advisory body: United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
Outcomes of the programme of work 2009-2011	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. General activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmation of the member countries and organizations of the Working Group. • Inaugural meeting of the group held via teleconference. 2. Specific activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online forum created, with the support of ECLAC, to facilitate the work of the group, communication between national focal points and exchange of information. • Alliances and coordination mechanisms established with the working group on environmental statistics and indicators of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean and with subregional environmental commissions, including the Andean Community, Central American Commission on Environment and Development, Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR). • Proposal drafted on the creation of a basic set of region-specific environmental statistics. • Common format for national and regional metadata prepared to facilitate the comparison of variables and their future harmonization.

The results were presented of a regional study carried out by ECLAC in collaboration with the National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Informatics (INEGI) of Mexico, in their roles as technical secretariat and coordinator, respectively, of the Working Group on Environmental Statistics of the Statistical Conference of the Americas. The aim of the study was to examine international statistics activities in relation to the environment with a view to increasing the coordination between activities and optimizing their contribution to the development of the region's statistical data in this area. The study was based primarily on the results of a survey sent to 33 ECLAC member countries. The aims of the survey were to: (a) report on the current status of statistical programmes in the area of the environment; (b) identify the activities in the area of environmental statistics supported by international cooperation; and (c) determine the challenges and needs of Latin American and Caribbean countries in this area. In addition, a bibliographical review was conducted using other sources of information, such as websites.

The results of the study show that 80.5% of national institutions have an environmental statistics programme but lack the necessary human and financial resources. Another major challenge for environmental statistical programmes is the lack or inadequacy of inter-agency agreements.

In terms of international cooperation, the study reveals that most of the countries in the region (72%) participate in initiatives that directly or indirectly promote development of environmental statistics. In addition, 28% of the institutions that took part stated that they had environmental statistics projects supported by international cooperation.

According to countries and regional agencies, the priority areas for international cooperation support are training and technical assistance with technical and methodological issues ranging from the generation of basic statistics to the establishment of environmental accounts.

As revealed in the study, there are various organizations and initiatives relating to the development of environmental statistics in the region. Some initiatives cover the entire region, while others such as those of the Andean Community and Central America and the Caribbean have a subregional focus. Therefore, the Statistical Conference of the Americas plays an important role in promoting coordination of these initiatives by inviting various organizations to participate in the meetings of the Conference and its working groups. For example, the Andean Community, the Central American Commission on Environment and Development and UNEP all participate in the meetings of the Working Group on Environmental Statistics.

With regard to financing of international cooperation, the main donors have made relatively few investments in the development of environmental statistics. Some activities are financed bilaterally or by multilateral institutions, but many are isolated activities such as technical assistance, fact-finding missions, support for conferences or activities relating to monitoring of progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and which require relatively little funding. Therefore, donors must recognize the present demands in the area of development of environmental statistics in order to channel more funds towards this emerging area. For this reason, it is important to direct and transmit these requirements gradually, perhaps via the Working Group on Environmental Statistics of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC.

Lastly, recommendations based on the evidence uncovered by the study were put forward and should be analysed by the Executive Committee of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC and the statistical community of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Programme of work 2012-2013

<p>1. Description of the objectives</p>	<p>General objective: To promote the development of relevant statistics on natural resources and the environment and their integration into the national statistics systems of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.</p> <p>Specific objectives: To promote the creation of inter-agency platforms for collaboration in, and coordination and integration of, regional initiatives in environmental statistics, indicators and accounts.</p>	
<p>2. Main activities for the period 2012-2013, countries and agencies responsible and likely date of execution</p>	<p>Activities</p> <p>In response to the demand registered by the Working Group on Environmental Statistics, and with the support of the Knowledge Transfer Network, a decision was taken to organize a regional seminar on environmental statistics. The main objective of this activity is to present the new international methodological developments in the field of environmental statistics and create a forum for dialogue in the region to build a technical overview of the statistics needed to monitor climate change.</p>	<p>Country or agency responsible</p> <p>INEGI and ECLAC</p>

The seminar will be sponsored by the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC and will be held prior to the sixth meeting of the Conference, which it to take place on 14-15 November 2011 in the Dominican Republic. The outcomes of the Working Group's seminar will then be presented at the substantive seminar on environmental statistics that will be held as part of the official programme of the sixth meeting of the Conference.

Specific objectives

- Introduce and discuss the key content of the new draft Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics and its application in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.¹
 - Discuss the basic set of environmental statistics put forward by the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics and its relevance to Latin America and the Caribbean.
 - Present the new recommendations on water statistics and the progress made on the water accounts and statistics project carried out by ECLAC and the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ).
 - Present and discuss instruments for collecting global data on environmental statistics (with a focus on water issues).
 - Present the progress made at the global level in relation to statistics on emerging topics: climate change and the green economy.
 - Discuss the challenges and requirements of climate change statistics in Latin America and the Caribbean.
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¹ The Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics is intended to serve as a guide for the development of environmental statistics, including the collection and organization of those statistics using a structure based on the main components of the environment and information on natural events and the socio-economic activities that influence those components. The Framework will include a proposed basic set of environmental statistics and will promote the generation of statistics by countries using the same international standards.