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**REPORT OF THE SECOND MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
OF THE STATISTICAL CONFERENCE OF THE AMERICAS OF THE
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**

Panama City, Panama, 11 and 12 December 2002

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A. ATTENDANCE AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

Place and date of the meeting

1. The Executive Committee of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean held its second meeting in Panama City, Panama, on 11 and 12 December 2002.

Attendance¹

2. The meeting was attended by representatives of the following member countries of the Executive Committee of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean: Brazil, Canada, Chile, Panama and Spain.

3. Representatives of the following countries, which are not members of the Executive Committee, were also present: Cuba, Ecuador, Mexico, Nicaragua and Uruguay.

4. A representative of the Inter-American Statistical Institute was also present.

Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson

5. The meeting was chaired by Mrs. Carmen Feijó, Coordinator of International Relations of the Brazilian Geographical and Statistical Institute (IBGE) in her capacity as representative of the Government of Brazil. Mr. Luis Enrique Quesada, Director of Statistics and Census of Panama directed some of the sessions as Vice-Chairperson.

B. AGENDA

6. The Committee adopted the following agenda:

1. Adoption of the agenda
2. Progress report on the activities of the Programme of International Statistical Work for Latin America and the Caribbean, June 2001-June 2003
3. Information system on bilateral and horizontal cooperation activities
4. Implementation in Latin America and the Caribbean of the International Comparison Programme and cooperation with the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21)

¹ See annex 1.

5. Guidelines for the preparation of the programme of international statistical work for Latin America and the Caribbean, July 2003-June 2005
6. Scheduling of the second meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC
 - (a) Place and date
 - (b) Drafting of the provisional agenda
 - (c) Assignment of responsibility for introducing substantive items
7. Other matters
8. Agreements and decisions of the meeting.

C. PROCEEDINGS

7. At the opening session, statements were made by the following: Mrs. Carmen Feijó, Coordinator for International Relations at the Brazilian Geographical and Statistical Institute, in her capacity as representative of the Government of Brazil and Chairperson of the Executive Committee of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC); Mr. Hubert Escaith, Officer in Charge of the Statistics and Economic Projections Division of ECLAC; and Mr. Rafael Zúñiga, Secretary-General in the Office of the Comptroller-General of Panama.

8. The President said that it was a source of great satisfaction for her to be chairing the current meeting of the Executive Committee, which ensured continuity in the work of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC pending the second meeting of the Conference, scheduled for mid-2003. She recalled the objectives of the Conference, namely to promote the improvement of national statistics and to further cooperation between countries of the region, and underscored the importance of the current forum for strengthening national statistical institutes. She expressed gratitude to the host country for its hospitality and wished participants success in tackling the extensive agenda before them.

9. The Officer in Charge of the Statistics and Economic Projections Division conveyed the best wishes of Mr. José Antonio Ocampo, Executive Secretary of the Commission. Recalling that the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC had, at its first meeting, adopted the first programme of international statistical work for Latin America and the Caribbean, he said that that programme, currently in its final phase of implementation, would be put before the Executive Committee for its assessment of the progress achieved to date. The Committee would also have the task of adopting guidelines for what would constitute the second programme of international statistical work for Latin America and the Caribbean and the substantive issues that would be considered at the second meeting of the Conference. Activities in the area of statistics had been stepped up in recent years and, indeed, statistics were being increasingly incorporated into the process of formulation and monitoring of social policies at the national, regional and international levels. As such, the current forum and others of its kind needed to approach the issue of their coordination and harmonization from a regional perspective. He reiterated that ECLAC—in particular, the Statistics and Economic Projections Division—was committed to continuing to provide the technical support and institutional services required to enable the Executive Committee to fulfil its mandate in the most fitting manner. Lastly, he thanked the host country for all the courtesies and facilities extended to the ECLAC secretariat for the organization of the current meeting.

10. The Secretary-General of the Office of the Comptroller-General of Panama welcomed participants and expressed his satisfaction that the meeting should be held in his country. He stated that the initiative would be extremely positive as an opportunity for sharing experiences in priority areas of national agendas. Current technological progress posed increasing challenges for national statistical offices in terms of information, since it was increasingly necessary to have highly specialized staff. Panamanian society was convinced of the value and relevance of statistics. Recently, Panamanian authorities had invested over US\$ 15 million in the census programme for the 2000 round, the results of which were to be published shortly. Lastly, he declared open the second meeting of the Executive Committee of the Statistical Conference of the Americas and wished participants success in their deliberations.

Progress report on the activities of the Programme of International Statistical Work for Latin America and the Caribbean, June 2001-June 2003 (agenda item 2)

11. The Chief of the Social Statistics Unit in the Statistics and Economic Projections Division of ECLAC gave a brief outline of the progress report, which highlighted the advances made in implementing the activities listed in the Programme of International Statistical Work, June 2001-June 2003. The report gave a detailed account of the cooperation activities conducted in the field of statistics and in which member States of the Conference had participated together with regional and international organizations.² As regards the performance ratio, 75% of the activities originally scheduled in the programme of work had been completed as at 30 November 2002. The different subprogrammes reflected a certain asymmetry. For example, more than average progress had been made with subprogramme 1 (Adaptation and production of basic statistics within the framework of a regional strategy for the implementation of the System of National Accounts 1993 (1993 SNA) and subprogramme 3 (Indicators on social variables and well-being), whereas subprogramme 2 (Environmental statistics and statistics on science, technology and innovation) and subprogramme 4 (Dissemination of statistical information) were below the average performance ratio, owing essentially to the difficulty in securing resources to support them.

12. A series of initiatives had been carried out, which, while they did not appear on the programme being submitted for evaluation, were of special interest to member countries of the Conference, as they concerned the commitments adopted in the Millennium Declaration. ECLAC had signed an agreement with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank for the establishment of databases and for monitoring the objectives and goals set forth in that Declaration.

13. The delegations participating in the discussions generally expressed their satisfaction with the progress of the statistical activities. In particular, several delegations pointed out that it was vital for countries of the region to have a proper system of environmental statistics.

14. The representative of the Inter-American Statistical Institute reported that a national seminar was being organized in Panama, thanks to a donation from the World Bank, and that that event would later be followed by a seminar on environmental auditing, including the statistical component.

² "Progress report on the activities of the Programme of International Statistical Work for Latin America and the Caribbean, June 2001-June 2003" (LC/L.1697/Rev.1), Santiago, Chile, 29 November 2002.

Information system on bilateral and horizontal cooperation activities (agenda item 3)

15. In compliance with a commitment made at the first meeting of the Executive Committee, the Chief of the Social Statistics Unit in the Statistics and Economic Projections Division gave a presentation on the annex of the report³ and reported on the bilateral and horizontal cooperation work accomplished during the period under review. He also reported on the measures adopted by the ECLAC secretariat for the creation of a subsite on the web page of the Statistics and Economic Projections Division, in which information would be included on offers of cooperation and activities underway in this area. The information system would be a means of monitoring activities with a view to coordinating and strengthening cooperation and directing it towards priority issues.

Implementation in Latin America and the Caribbean of the International Comparison Programme and cooperation with the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21) (agenda item 4)

16. A representative of the ECLAC secretariat then presented the International Comparison Programme coordinated at the international level by the World Bank and regionally by ECLAC, and explained its objectives, methodologies and operational procedures.

17. For the most part, delegations expressed considerable interest in the objectives of that ambitious project. Nevertheless, they voiced a few concerns about the scope of the work that would have to be undertaken at the national level to achieve those objectives and about the need to identify additional sources of financing to supplement the national efforts that the project would demand.

18. The ECLAC representative then presented an oral report on the cooperation activities conducted under PARIS21, recalling that the diverse members comprising that partnership facilitated dialogue between users and producers of statistics. The objective of the partnership was to promote the use of statistics for defining and monitoring development policies. He outlined the partnership's principal activities, drawing attention to those completed or scheduled at the subregional level within the framework of the Andean Community, and referred specifically to two workshops held, respectively, in Santa Cruz and Paris in May and October 2002. He also reported on activities scheduled for the beginning of 2003 in Central America, and on plans for launching activities in the Caribbean.

19. Various delegations gave their views on this point and expressed their appreciation for the activities conducted by the partnership in the region. Some referred to the project for statistical cooperation between the European Union and MERCOSUR (together with Chile), which was in its final stages of implementation, and reported that a second phase of the project could be started within two years. Nevertheless, it was emphasized that the working groups to which the project had been assigned should proceed with their work.

Guidelines for the preparation of the programme of international statistical work for Latin America and the Caribbean, July 2003-June 2005 (agenda item 5)

20. The ECLAC secretariat presented the guidelines for the programme of international statistical work for Latin America and the Caribbean for the period July 2003-June 2005, which consisted of four subprogrammes: Subprogramme 1: Adaptation and production of basic statistics within the framework of a regional strategy for the implementation of the System of National Accounts 1993 (1993 SNA);

³ Ibid.

Subprogramme 2: Improvement of the production and use of social and social welfare statistics; Subprogramme 3: Improvement and expansion of the production of statistics on specific issues; and Subprogramme 4: Modernization of statistical systems and dissemination of information.

21. In response to a suggestion by the representative of Panama, in her capacity as Vice-Chairperson, participants gave their views on each of the four subprogrammes included in the programme of work.

22. With respect to subprogramme 1, several delegations underscored its importance and considered that ECLAC had detailed each of its elements in a highly appropriate manner. They said that the region already had a substantial number of sufficiently qualified professional statisticians in that field, so that training activities should be concentrated on more specific aspects of how the various institutions solved problems relating to the management of national accounts. In addition, emphasis was placed on the relevance of including some new initiatives under the subprogramme, including the need to learn of the experience of central banks in handling over national accounts to national statistical offices, the inclusion of statistics on agriculture, the update of economic classifications and products and the strengthening of directories of offices.

23. With respect to subprogramme 2, while reiterating the importance of having statistics on social variables and well-being, delegations identified some areas in which a process for improving statistical production could be introduced, as, for example, with respect to children's issues, the increase in coverage of social statistics, the use of administrative registers on the basis of the panel or semi-panel methodology for generating flow statistics and the need to take into account statistics on the informal sector. Participants recognized the need for a systemic approach which would allow for greater consistency of social data and underscored the importance of furthering dialogue between producers and users of social statistics.

24. Delegations welcomed the inclusion of statistics on gender equity in subprogramme 3. Reiterating the importance of environmental statistics, the delegation of Mexico reported that that country had started to calculate environmental GDP for different zones in the country. In turn, the delegation of Chile said that the production of statistics were an important issue for local development. With respect to statistics on science, technology and innovation, it was stressed that although those activities were still insufficient in the economies of the region, their statistical visibility should be increased.

25. The delegations welcomed the inclusion of subprogramme 4 on institution building of statistical agencies in the outline for the preparation of the proposed programme of work.

26. In order to strengthen national statistical institutes and deepen horizontal cooperation, the Chairperson recommended establishing a register of the capacities and requirements of national statistical institutes in the region. The delegation of Spain read out a letter from the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies of France on the subject, which stated that ECLAC could centralize and coordinate those actions by following an agenda drawn up by the Conference.

Scheduling of the second meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC (agenda item 6)

27. The Vice-Chairperson recalled that the agreements adopted at the first meeting of the Executive Committee of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC, held in Rio de Janeiro, identified the following substantive issues to be addressed at the second meeting of the Conference: the public credibility of national statistical institutes; the preparation of directories and use of administrative records

as a primary source of information and as a frame of reference for surveys and other statistical research; and management directed at ensuring the quality of data in national statistical institutes.

28. Following a lengthy and wide-ranging discussion, the delegations identified the substantive issues to be examined at the second meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC, approved a proposal for its provisional agenda and agreed upon a place and date for the event.

29. Lastly, the Executive Committee adopted the report on its second meeting and the agreements set out below.

Other matters (agenda item 7)

30. No other matters were raised.

D. AGREEMENTS ADOPTED

At its second meeting, held in Panama City on 11 and 12 December 2002, the Executive Committee of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean adopted the following agreements:

1. To take note with interest of the International Comparison Programme project, being coordinated at the international level by the World Bank and at the regional level by ECLAC, and to instruct the ECLAC secretariat to keep it duly informed of any developments relating to this initiative.

2. To adopt the guidelines for the preparation of the programme of international statistical work for Latin America and the Caribbean for the period July 2003-June 2005 and to request the ECLAC secretariat, in consultation with the Chairperson of the Executive Committee, to prepare the proposed programme of international statistical work for Latin America and the Caribbean for the period July 2003-June 2005 for presentation at the second meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC, in the light of the observations formulated at the current meeting and those transmitted through the electronic forum, which would be open until March 2003 on the ECLAC web site.

3. To hold the second meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC in Santiago, Chile, at the headquarters of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) from 18 to 20 June 2003.

4. To approve the proposed provisional agenda for the second meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC, which appears as an appendix to the present agreements.

5. To thank the Government of Panama and, in particular, the Directorate of Statistics and Census for the hospitality extended to participants and for its excellent organization of the meeting.

Appendix

**PROVISIONAL AGENDA OF THE SECOND MEETING OF THE
STATISTICAL CONFERENCE OF THE AMERICAS OF ECLAC**

1. Adoption of the agenda and organization of the work of the second meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC
2. Report on the Programme of International Statistical Work for Latin America and the Caribbean, June 2001-June 2003
3. Presentation of the proposed programme of international statistical work for Latin America and the Caribbean, July 2003-June 2005
 - (a) Presentation of subprogramme 1: Adaptation and production of basic statistics within the framework of a regional strategy for the implementation of the System of National Accounts 1993 (1993 SNA)
 - (b) Presentation of subprogramme 2: Improvement of the production and use of statistics on social variables and well-being
 - (c) Presentation of subprogramme 3: Improvement and extension of the production of statistics on specific issues
 - (i) Environmental statistics
 - (ii) Statistics on science, technology and innovation
 - (iii) Statistics on gender equity
 - (d) Presentation of subprogramme 4: Modernization of statistical systems and dissemination of statistical information
4. Presentation and discussion of substantive issues
 - (a) Public credibility of national statistical institutes
 - (b) Preparation of directories and use of administrative registers as a primary information source and as a framework for surveys and other statistical research
 - (c) Management geared to ensuring the quality of data produced by national statistical institutes
5. Report of the Rapporteur
6. Adoption of agreements
7. Election of the Executive Committee of the Statistical Conference of the Americas for the period 2003-2005

**LISTA DE PARTICIPANTES
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

**A. Estados miembros de la Comisión
Member States of the Commission**

**1. Member States of ECLAC represented on the Executive Committee of the Statistical Conference
of the Americas of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean**

BRASIL/BRAZIL

Representante/Representative:

- Carmen Feijó, Coordinadora, Relaciones Internacionales, IBGE

CANADÁ/CANADA

Representante/Representative:

- Béla Prigly, Director, International Relations Division, Statistics Canada

CHILE

Representante/Representative:

- Máximo Aguilera Reyes, Director Nacional, Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas

ESPAÑA/SPAIN

Representante/Representative:

- Antonio Martínez, Director del Gabinete de la Presidencia del Instituto Nacional de Estadística

PANAMÁ/PANAMA

Representante/Representative:

- Luis Enrique Quesada, Director de Estadística y Censo
- Carlos A.T. Palacios, Subdirector de Estadística y Censo

2. Member States of ECLAC not represented on the Executive Committee of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC

CUBA

Representante/Representative:

- Teresa Lara Junco, Subdirectora General, Oficina Nacional de Estadísticas

ECUADOR

Representante/Representative:

- Carlos Francisco Cortez Castro, Director General, Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos

MÉXICO/MEXICO

Representante/Representative:

- Jaime Andrés De la Llata, Director General, Cuentas Nacionales, Estudios Socioeconómicos y Precios

Miembros de la delegación/Delegation members:

- Francisco Javier Gutiérrez, Director General de Estadística

NICARAGUA

Representante/Representative:

- Miguel Ángel Casco González, Director General, INEC

URUGUAY

Representante/Representative:

- Orual Andina, Director General, Instituto Nacional de Estadística

**B. Organizaciones intergubernamentales
Intergovernmental organizations**

Instituto Interamericano de Estadística/Inter-American Statistical Institute

- Evelio O. Fabbroni, Secretario Técnico

**C. Secretaría
Secretariat**

Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe (CEPAL)/Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)

- Hubert Escaith, Officer in Charge, Statistics and Economic Projections Division
- Juan Carlos Feres, Chief, Social Statistics Unit, Statistics and Economic Projections Division
- Luis Fidel Yáñez, Legal Adviser, Office of the Executive Secretary