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**DRAFT PROGRAMME OF REGIONAL STATISTICAL WORK
FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN,
JULY 2005-JUNE 2007**

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I. BACKGROUND

1. The Executive Committee of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC has the task, inter alia, of preparing a draft biennial programme of regional statistical work which is submitted to the Conference for consideration and subsequent approval. The two meetings of the Executive Committee held in 2004 were chaired by Chile (in Santiago, Chile, in May and in Dallas, United States, in December). The members had been elected at the second meeting of the Conference (Santiago, Chile, June 2003).

2. At its second meeting in Dallas, on 31 November and 1 December 2004, the Executive Committee decided to give a new impetus to the Conference in complying with its mandate: to be the intergovernmental body that promotes and guides the development of statistics in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. It therefore proposed that at its third meeting the Conference adopt a strategic plan for 2005-2015 to serve as the framework for future biennial programmes.

3. In the context of the strategic plan and making use of the input from the debates and exchanges that will take place during consideration of the three substantive topics at the third plenary meeting of the Conference, the biennial programme of work should be oriented towards an increasing integration of the activities implemented at the subregional level, as well as those carried out in the region by multilateral agencies.

4. In view of the above, this document, which presents the areas of activity planned for the period July 2005-June 2007 in relation to statistical development in the areas of institution-building, dissemination, harmonization, training and technical cooperation, is submitted to the Conference for consideration. It is the result of a joint effort by the member countries of the Conference, regional and international organizations and the Secretariat of ECLAC.

II. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

5. The draft programme of regional statistical work for July 2005-June 2007 has a different format from the programmes for 2001-2003 and 2003-2005, as it incorporates the recommendations made by the Executive Committee, with a view to reflecting an enhanced adaptation to changes inherent in the regional and global process of statistical development. The organization of the programme also responds to the statement of the Executive Committee at its fourth meeting in Dallas (30 November - 1 December 2004), when it had recalled that the decisions and activities of the Conference emanate from its member countries and emphasized the greater responsibilities they should be given in implementing the activities.

6. In accordance with the basic principles of the Conference and of similar forms, particularly the mechanisms adopted by the Conference of European Statisticians, the Executive Committee had stated that at the third meeting of the Conference working groups should be established, made up of representatives of the member countries to analyse elements of common interest and draw up proposals or recommendations.

7. The Executive Committee had also emphasized the need to integrate into the programmes of work the initiatives agreed upon in the different subregional groups in order to avoid duplication of effort,

to give support to such initiatives and bring them into line with the region-wide objectives laid down in the strategic plan.

8. The Executive Committee had also considered that the strategic plan and the programme of work for July 2005-June 2007 to be defined by the Conference, by setting out objectives and activities that reflected national and regional priorities in relation to statistical development, should enable multilateral and subregional institutions to improve the coordination of activities in the region.

9. With regard to conceptual and methodological content, the regional programme of work covers essential areas at the current stage of regional statistical development in relation to economic and social issues, as well as topics that have arisen in response to new demands and concerns of Governments and civil society, as well as the institutional and technical challenges facing the national statistical offices to continue modernizing their management, and in the production and dissemination of information.

10. On the basis of the discussion on the proposal and adoption of the regional programme of work for July 2005-June 2007, the member countries of the Statistical Conference of the Americas, with the cooperation of the regional and multilateral organizations, will form working groups responsible for planning and coordinating the activities needed to meet the goals defined for the biennium.

11. The modus operandi recommended by the Executive Committee for implementation of the programme of work includes various forms of institutional operation which are used by the United Nations Statistical Commission and the Conference of European Statisticians. These are, in general, flexible initiatives which make it possible to take advantage of the capacities available in different countries and organizations. One example of this is the emergence of “city groups” in the context of the United Nations Statistical Commission, which has revealed the potential for joint work by governments and international and regional institutions, and demonstrated that the harmonious coexistence of different forms of organization appropriate to the level of development of statistics in different areas is possible.

12. ECLAC will also support the work of the Executive Committee in its capacity as secretariat of the Conference and will continue to offer its services as a technical advisor to the Conference. It will participate in an effective manner in the working groups and in the activities defined by the Conference in the context of the programme of work for 2006-2007, in compliance with the recommendation of the member States of ECLAC which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. The secretariat has prepared an information paper in which it submits to the Conference a selection of the statistical activities from the programme of work of ECLAC.¹

III. PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES

13. The draft programme of regional statistical work for Latin America and the Caribbean for July 2005- June 2007 consists of 4 subprogrammes:

Subprogramme 1: Institution-building

Subprogramme 2: Human resources and training

¹ LC/L.2316(CEA.2005/6).

Subprogramme 3: Development of statistical capacity

Subprogramme 4: International coordination and regional harmonization

14. The subprogrammes and the areas of activity proposed reflect the orientation of the working groups and their goals, as recommended by the fourth meeting of the Executive Committee.

15. In accordance with the guidelines provided by the Executive Committee, the definition and implementation of the programme of work for July 2005-June 2007 and the forming of working groups are the responsibility of the member countries, with the support of the international community and the secretariat of the Statistical Conference of the Americas.

Subprogramme 1: Institution-building

16. Institution-building for the national statistical offices includes areas of work involving legal and institutional issues, such as financing, budgeting and coordination of the national statistical offices. In order to make progress in this area, the Conference proposes to implement the following series of activities.

(a) Strategic management of national statistical systems

17. As indicated in the document *Development of national statistical systems and the responsibilities of national statistical offices*,² a programme of statistical activities for the countries of the region must be prepared on the basis of analysis, not only of the technical characteristics, the organizational, human and material infrastructure, and the budget resources of the offices responsible for reproduction and dissemination of official statistics, but also of the relationship of those offices with other information-producing offices.

18. This relationship, which is needed in order to generate, in an orderly manner, the statistics that society needs, also defines the way in which the national statistical system is subject to or is conditioned by other larger systems, such as the legal system and socioeconomic programming, or relevant international recommendations.

19. In view of the above, and in order to strengthen the strategic management of the national statistical systems, the following are proposed:

- (i) To conduct a regional assessment which broadens the analysis of the current status of the national statistical systems presented in the document *Development of national statistical systems and the responsibilities of national statistical offices* and specifies the needs identified by the national and regional bodies;
- (ii) To survey good practices in institution-building and strategic planning in the region, complementing them with experiences from outside the region; and
- (iii) To develop a programme of technical assistance and produce reference documents on these subjects.

² LC/L.2318(CEA.2005/8).

20. In order to carry out these tasks, the activities of the biennium include the preparation of a profile for a regional project to support institutional aspects of statistical development in Latin America and the Caribbean and to promote horizontal cooperation between countries of the region as well as the mobilization of national, regional and international resources for its implementation.

(b) Modernization of the management of national statistical offices

21. Modernization of the management of national statistical offices in order to achieve the best possible use of resources is a key component of the area of institution-building identified by the Executive Committee at its fourth meeting. In order to achieve this goal, it is planned to incorporate and adapt for statistical purposes the principles and practices of strategic management in the public sector, to form a foundation for good administration and oversight of national statistical offices and the creation of public value.

22. The Executive Committee also emphasized the need to establish strategic management and quality control plans in order to strengthen political support for the goals of statistical development. This support from the legislative and executive bodies is needed in order to provide the component organizations of the national statistical systems (and in particular the statistical offices) with sufficient authority and financial resources to ensure their proper functioning.

23. These plans can also ensure that the results obtained on the basis of the legislative and social mandate received from the political authorities to meet the demands and needs of users are successful in generating the quantity and quality of public value expected by the citizens. In particular, the management bodies of the national statistical offices are responsible for generating the maximum value possible for the population on the basis of the financial, human, physical and technological resources available in their offices, in order to achieve the objectives established in their mandates in an effective manner.

24. The inclusion of this area of activities in the programme of work of the Statistical Conference of the Americas for 2005-2007 is not intended to imply that such concerns and tools are not already part of the practices of the national statistical offices and of those responsible for the component organizations of the national statistical systems. The problem is, as identified by the Conference at its second meeting in June 2003, that they are applied only occasionally and not systematically and there is no reporting on actual implementation. These actions should therefore be an integral part of a medium-term work plan, they should be carried out in accordance with regional programmes and their progress should be monitored over time.

25. In the context of this subject, the activities identified by the working group are expected to promote the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics in the region and disseminate the United Nations recommendations with regard to organization of the statistical offices. The activities shall include the dissemination of best practices with regard to strategic management, the administration of human and financial resources and project planning among the responsible officers and management staff of national statistical offices and bodies that are part of the national statistical systems.

26. Special attention shall be given to the principles and objectives which guide the strategic planning of public statistics and to the assessment of their performance with regard to quality, timeliness and appropriateness to the demands of authorities, economic and social stakeholders and the citizens in general. In this last area, the strengthening of the relationship between the producers and users of statistics plays a central role in the process of reflection and strategic planning. The activities planned in relation to achieving these goals will be supported by the progress made in the region in strategic management and

quality improvement and by the best practices identified internationally and in the work of the Conference itself.

27. The following activities are proposed for inclusion in the programme of work:

- (i) To promote the use in the national statistical offices of management techniques and methodologies such as the logical framework, quality measurement, and others;
- (ii) To promote the participatory management of personnel, as a strategic basis for the policy of ensuring quality in statistical production and in the management of human resources;
- (iii) To research into timeliness and the potential for promoting reviews between countries and producing standardized quality reports in the region;
- (iv) To systematize the design and implementation of user satisfaction surveys, as well as establishing forums for dialogue; also to promote improvement of the relations with reporting units, facilitating data provision and promoting their ownership of the strategic objectives of the national statistical system;
- (v) To produce and make available to the legislative and executive bodies, as well as to the general public, documents which clearly reflect the mission of the national statistical office and its policies on dissemination and quality.

28. The activities related to this goal will be carried out in close collaboration with the working group responsible for preparing a regional strategy for human resource training.

Subprogramme 2: Human resources and training

29. The purpose of this subprogramme is to prepare a regional strategy for the training and management of human resources taking account of technical and management issues. The proposed activities are intended to support the countries of the region in the development of specific technical skills in the personnel of the national statistical offices, and for that purpose to identify regional and international synergies in training activities relating to management for the executive staff of those offices, and to statistical analysis for their technical staff. This will all contribute to the availability of highly qualified professional teams.

30. The efforts in this area are intended to establish a basis for coordinating the existing activities and initiatives in the region and to promote them by establishing a consortium of national offices and cooperation agencies.

31. During the 2005-2007 biennium, the Statistical Conference of the Americas intends to complete the inventory of existing activities and cooperation capacities, including international initiatives and experiences, which is being carried out at the request of the Executive Committee, in order to identify the priority needs for education and training in statistical areas by region and country and to boost training activities.

32. The work of the group will be based on the results of the survey carried out by Statistics Canada, the National Institute of Statistics of Chile, the National Statistical Institute of Spain and the Department of Statistics, Surveys and Censuses of Paraguay in preparation for the third meeting of the Conference, in

order to collect information on the statistical education and training needs of the member States of ECLAC and on the availability of human, financial and technical resources for the management and organization of training activities. The Conference therefore recommends incorporating into the conclusions of the working group set up during the period 2003-2005 (which are presented in the document *Survey on statistical education and training in the member States of ECLAC*, LC/L.2317(CEA.2005/7)) the outcome of the discussion of that document by the Conference.

33. Information will also be provided on the thematic contents of current national and regional programmes, which will assist with the process of programming the initial courses in accordance with the priorities identified, existing capacities and the offers of regional and international cooperation received by the Conference and its Executive Committee.

34. One additional goal during this period is to strengthen cooperation among the components of the national statistical system and academic institutions in order to promote the training of young professionals and research into applied statistics. The purpose of the planned activities is to improve and expand the dialogue between professional staff and academics, in order to prepare and train the future generations of technical staff for the national statistical systems and to promote cooperation in relation to defining research programmes.

Subprogramme 3: Development of statistical capacity

35. This subprogramme includes activities that are very varied, in both institutional and technical terms. All of these activities, however, are based on the shared need of national and regional statistical agencies to strengthen their technical capacity and to modernize and adapt themselves to the technological and methodological developments that guide the production and dissemination of statistics, as well as changes in information demands from users. Continuing with a tradition which began with the meeting of Directors of Statistics of the Americas in 1987, this subprogramme also includes activities oriented to incorporating technological innovations in the processing and dissemination of data and metadata.

36. During the biennium 2005-2007, each of the technical working groups established by the Statistical Conference of the Americas is to fix a long-term target in terms of production, quality and dissemination of statistics, as well as stages and methods for achieving them in a gradual manner. The groups identified will cover topics which for reasons of presentation have been arranged into two categories according to their purpose: the development of particular information systems (including dissemination of the system of national accounts 1993 and its revised version) or the improvement of national and regional practices in relation to procedures for data collection, analysis and dissemination (including preparation of the countries of the region for the 2010 round of population and housing censuses).

37. The working groups will cover the following subjects:

(a) Statistical information systems:

- National accounts and basic economic statistics
- Poverty and social statistics
- Gender
- Environment
- Science and technology
- Other

(b) Methods and programmes:

Population censuses
 Agricultural censuses
 Economic censuses
 Household surveys
 Opinion surveys
 Administrative directories and records
 Other

38. The activities common to each technical working group include identifying the priority stages for achieving their targets, taking into account the degree of relative development of the respective subject areas in each country. The working groups shall identify, in particular, the needs for institution-building, regional harmonization and training.

39. The main purposes of the activities carried out in the framework of support to the development of technical capacity are:

- (i) To provide assistance to the countries in resolving their main methodological and operational difficulties;
- (ii) To harmonize the contents, classifications and methodologies to the extent possible;
- (iii) To extend the use and application of new technologies and forms of organization on the basis of regional experiences;
- (iv) To train personnel from the region's national statistical systems in the production and dissemination of the relevant statistical information, as well as in the analysis and interpretation of statistical data.

Subprogramme 4: International coordination and regional harmonization

(a) Regional and inter-agency coordination

40. The Executive Committee will promote the active participation of the countries of the region in the analysis of the subjects included in the international programme of work of the United Nations Statistical Commission. It will also make efforts to coordinate common approaches and positions among member countries of the Statistical Commission. It will also monitor the dissemination and implementation in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean of the international recommendations adopted or proposed by the Statistical Commission.

41. The Executive Committee will develop, in coordination with the national, subregional and multilateral authorities which finance and implement programmes for strengthening statistical capacity in the region, mechanisms for enhancing the integration of their programmes, in accordance with the priorities established by the Conference.

42. For that purpose, the Executive Committee will devote its first meeting in the 2005-2007 cycle to investigating the most appropriate methods of financing and to identifying tools to facilitate and monitor the progress made in inter-agency coordination.

43. The activities planned include the updating and extension of the database on multilateral cooperation projects in the region (BADEPRO).

(b) Regional harmonization and convergence

44. Statistical institution-building in Latin America and the Caribbean also includes the harmonization of regional statistics. This line of work includes the goals and activities of the subregional groups and their associated members (MERCOSUR, Andean Community, Central America, CARICOM) and the strengthening of their integration with the common goals and activities of the Statistical Conference of the Americas.

45. The Statistical Conference of the Americas identifies the following as the main areas for progress in harmonization during the biennium:

- (a) The incorporation of the national accounts into the System of National Accounts 1993 (SNA 1993), in relation to both methodological progress in applying SNA 1993 and the availability of the required basic statistics. The Conference will continue to monitor progress in implementing SNA 1993 and all of the complementary systems (quarterly accounts, regional accounts and satellite accounts). The needs for technical cooperation and expert training and initiatives for enhancing basic statistics will also be identified. The Conference will also promote the preparation of the basic statistics required for the application of SNA 1993. For this purpose, it instructs ECLAC to continue to act as the coordination centre to receive cooperation requests and locate the experts who can provide the assistance needed.
- (b) In the context of the integration of international standards as a means of improving the quality and comparability of statistics in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Conference will support the review of the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities and the Central Products Classification and their implementation scheduled for the year 2008. The Conference also recommends that the countries of the region take an active role in this process of review by expressing their concerns and suggestions and discussing the relevant topics and proposed solutions.
- (c) The Conference recognizes that the task of monitoring progress towards the Millennium Development Goals represents an opportunity for strengthening the statistical systems in their social and environmental aspects, as well as for making progress towards harmonization of the relevant statistics in the region, as suggested by the document *Follow-up to the Millennium Development Goals: opportunities and challenges for national statistical systems*.³ The Conference will give due importance in its programme of work for 2005-2007 to achieving the Millennium Development Goals in regional activities and to their monitoring of their fulfilment. It also recommended, as part of that initiative of harmonization and monitoring, the inclusion of the indicators needed to respond to the commitments made by member countries at international summits (World Summit for Children, International Conference on Population and Development or Cairo Conference, Fourth World Conference on Women or Beijing Conference, Second World Assembly on Ageing of Madrid, World Summit on the Information Society in Tunisia and others). The activities related to that goal include the addition of a methodological development component, harmonized at the regional level, as well as the strengthening of national information and analysis capacities.

³ LC/L.2319(CEA.2005/9).

46. The objectives and activities for regional harmonization will be formally incorporated in the terms of reference of the thematic working groups referred to under subprogramme 3 on the **development of statistical capacity**. As European experience has shown, the statistical dimension is inherent in the process of regional integration. Accordingly, in expanding the relationship between producers and users of statistical information, specific consideration will be given to the needs for design, planning and monitoring of regional integration in their various economic, social, environmental and institutional aspects.