Eighth meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of the
Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

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REVIEW OF OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES
FOR THE WORKING GROUPS

15-01112

CONTENTS

A. BACKGROUND

The working groups, formed at the third meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC (Santiago, June 2005), allow countries to work together and carry out activities linked to the implementation of the Strategic Plan.

While recognizing the working groups' great potential to implement regional initiatives, the need to review their operations and make them more efficient has been raised on various occasions. These proposals have been set out in various documents published over recent years, including the following:

- *Report on the review of the operating modalities of the working groups of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean* (LC/L.3285(CE.10/4)), presented at the tenth meeting of the Executive Committee of the Statistical Conference of the Americas (Havana, April 2011), which describes the operations of the working groups and includes some proposals to improve them.

- *Progress report of the working groups and recommendations for improving their operations* (LC/L.3612(CE/12/3)), presented at the twelfth meeting of the Executive Committee of the Statistical Conference of the Americas (Pucón (Chile), April 2013), which details the working groups' strengths and weaknesses, and makes general and specific recommendations for each working group.

- *Proposed operational guidelines for the working groups of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC* (LC/L.3694(CEA.7/4)), presented at the seventh meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas (Santiago, November 2013), which sets out the scope and objectives of the working groups, defines the roles of the coordinators, technical secretariats and the Executive Committee, and outlines the task forces' working methods.

- *Report of the Chair of the Statistical Conference of the Americas on the status of the working groups* (LC/L.3862(CE.13/5)), presented at the thirteenth meeting of the Executive Committee (Santiago, August 2014), which proposes tracking activities by defining subactivities with verifiable outputs, and establishing a reporting period of less than six months.

At the fourteenth meeting of the Executive Committee (Santiago, May 2015), member countries considered the need to clarify the procedures and requirements governing the formation and operation of the working groups. The Executive Committee therefore pledged to submit draft rules of procedure on the functioning of the working groups to the Statistical Conference of the Americas at its eighth meeting.

In this connection, this document reviews the operational guidelines for the working groups, for consideration and adoption at the eighth meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas. This proposal is largely based on the text contained in the *Proposed operational guidelines for the working groups of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC* (LC/L.3694(CEA.7/4)), adopted at the seventh meeting of the Conference.

B. OBJECTIVES OF THE WORKING GROUPS

The working groups are organizational arrangements that allow member countries of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC to address jointly a problem or issue concerning the objectives of the Strategic Plan, which are to strengthen the organization and management practices of the national statistical offices and the integration and coordination of national statistical systems; to foster the development of technical and methodological capacities in order to generate high-quality statistical information; and to foster coordination and cooperation between the member countries of the Statistical Conference of the Americas and international organizations.

The working groups shall formulate their programmes of work taking account of the human resources that member countries can contribute and the funding available to fulfil the proposed targets. Working groups are open to all member countries of the Statistical Conference of the Americas that wish to join, on the understanding that this implies a commitment on the part of the national statistical offices to incorporate in their usual work programme the time that the experts will need to devote to the relevant working group.

C. FORMING WORKING GROUPS

Working groups are formed at the request of a group of countries and may be established only at meetings of the Conference, that is to say, every two years.[1] The groups will be formed according to the following procedure:

1. Request

Member countries of the Statistical Conference of the Americas can request the formation of a working group by submitting a formal application to the Executive Committee which contains the following information (see annex for details):

    (a) Objectives

    (b) Rationale based on the current Strategic Plan

    (c) Working group member countries

    (d) Working group coordinating country

    (e) Working group technical secretariat

    (f) Work plan

    (g) Financial resources and funding sources.

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[1] Exceptionally, for the 2016-2017 biennium, working groups will be formed at the fifteenth meeting of the Executive Committee of the Conference, to be held in 2016, once the Strategic Plan has been adopted and the work priorities for the biennium have been defined.

2. Consideration

The Executive Committee shall consider the request to form a group, based on the application. Should the Committee be of the opinion that the formation of a working group is necessary and justified and that the proposed activities can be carried out with the financing as outlined, it will recommend that the Conference should approve the request at its next meeting.

3. Approval

At each meeting of the Conference, those applications that have been previously reviewed and accepted by the Executive Committee will be examined and submitted for approval. The Conference will debate the matter in plenary and will approve the requests by means of a resolution adopted by the Conference.

D. INSTITUTING AND MONITORING WORKING GROUPS

The working groups will produce progress reports on their activities every four months, so that the Executive Committee can monitor their activities properly. The programme of work and progress reports should be submitted using the format indicated in the annex.

The groups must ensure that communications and working documents are available in English and Spanish, so as to enable the participation of all member countries of the Statistical Conference of the Americas, without a language barrier. Furthermore, they should make determined efforts to continue to promote the participation of the English-speaking Caribbean countries and Haiti in the activities of the Conference, and especially in its working groups.

The working groups will be responsible for updating their page on the website of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC and the Knowledge Transfer Network in order to broadcast their activities and the outcomes of their work, and for coordinating the organizing and running of online training courses with the Network.

E. CLOSING WORKING GROUPS

A working group will be closed automatically at the end of the biennium for which it was established. At that time a report will be produced on the activities carried out during the biennium. This performance report will be presented at the meeting of the Conference that coincides with the closing date (the format is given in the annex). Should the working group wish to renew its terms of reference in order to undertake new activities, the process described above in section C must be followed.

F. WORKING GROUP COORDINATORS

Each working group shall have a coordinating country, designated by its member countries, with the following duties:

- Coordinate and agree upon the preparation of the corresponding biennial programme of work.

- Coordinate the group's work to complete the biennial programme and monitor its implementation.

- Coordinate the support work for the implementation of the biennial programme with the technical secretariat.

- Draft and submit to the Executive Committee progress and final reports on the group's biennial programme.

- Encourage all members of the group to participate in the group's activities.

- Maintain regular communications with the Executive Committee through the mechanisms that the Committee may determine.

- Maintain regular contact with the Knowledge Transfer Network and promote the use of its virtual platform for the coordination and discussion of the group's work.

G. WORKING GROUP TECHNICAL SECRETARIATS

Each working group shall have an international organization to act as its technical secretariat, with the following duties:

- Provide specialized technical support to the working group in the relevant thematic area.

- Support the working group in formulating projects and identifying and seeking financing for them.

- Facilitate coordination between the countries of the Conference and international bodies that specialize in the relevant thematic areas.

At the start of each biennial programme, the technical secretariats shall specify the resources, in terms of expert hours and other support, which they will make available to the working groups for the completion of their tasks.

H. ROLE OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Executive Committee, with support from the secretariat of the Conference, is responsible for monitoring the operations of the working groups and for providing support for their activities.

Under the leadership and coordination of the Chair of the Executive Committee, each Committee member will be assigned responsibilities for monitoring and supporting the activities of the working groups.

The Executive Committee will hold two face-to-face meetings or video-conferences per year to monitor fulfilment of the working groups' programmes of activities and to adopt and propose measures in this regard.

The Executive Committee will promote discussion forums to identify and build synergies between groups, and collaboration between their members.

At the relevant meeting, the Conference will take note of and consider the report on the implementation of the committed biennial programme and, acting upon the Executive Committee's report and recommendation, will determine the thematic working groups and their terms of reference for the next biennial period, with reference to the substantive priorities arising from the meeting of the Conference.

In addition to the working groups, the Executive Committee may establish other coordinating and working bodies to carry out specific mandates. In particular, it may, if necessary, recommend the creation of task forces or ad hoc groups, for example a group of experts who will maintain regular contact with each other, to draft a report, conduct tasks or prepare specific outputs in relation to particular topics or issues. The ad hoc groups or task forces may be useful for the working groups in dealing with a given issue on the programme of work and thus function as a subgroup for a limited period of time.

Annex

1. Format for the biennial programme of work

(a) Objectives

(b) Rationale based on the current Strategic Plan

(c) Working group member countries

(d) Working group coordinator country

(e) Working group technical secretariat

(f) Programme of work

Activity	Subactivity	Expected outcome	Responsible organization	Date
Indicate the major activities needed to achieve the objectives proposed	Detail the actions needed to implement each activity	Identify the expected outcome of each activity and specify the type of output	Indicate the organization responsible	Indicate the percentage of progress expected for each subactivity in each four-month period of the biennium (six in total)

(g) Financial resources and funding sources

2. Triannual progress reports of the working groups

The progress report of each group shall be submitted electronically and must include, for each four-month period, information on the percentage of progress achieved under each activity and subactivity, together with any eventual observations in that regard.

Activity	Subactivity	Expected level of progress *(percentage)*	Implementation progress *(percentage)*	Observations
In line with the programme of work as adopted	In line with the programme of work as adopted			Information on activities undertaken may be given here

3. Performance report (at the end of the biennium)

At the end of the biennium, the working groups will present a report outlining the activities undertaken during the biennium and the progress achieved. This report will summarize information concerning the working group's members and objectives, and will detail the results achieved under each of the proposed activities and what percentage of each activity was actually carried out. The report should also mention any challenges encountered when implementing the programme activities and offer possible recommendations to improve the working groups' operations.

Activity	Subactivity	Implementation progress *(percentage)*	Results achieved	Observations