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**REVISED DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN OF THE STATISTICAL CONFERENCE
OF THE AMERICAS 2005-2015**

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A. INTRODUCTION

1. The purpose of the strategic plan 2005-2015 is to guide the activities of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in support of the development of official statistics in Latin America and the Caribbean, in accordance with the aims established in resolution 2000/7 of the United Nations Economic and Social Council.
2. This document reassesses the main priorities identified by members of the Conference and its Executive Committee and the trends emerging from various studies. These priorities and trends were taken into account in developing the proposal for the present strategic plan. The mission, vision, strategic objectives, targets and the main lines of action on which the Conference should focus its efforts from now until 2015 are defined in this proposal. The year 2015 was chosen as the reference for the strategic vision on the basis of the timeframe associated with the Millennium Development Goals, which constitute a significant challenge for the region's national statistical systems in terms of the need to develop an appropriate information system to follow-up the Goals. Indeed, this follow-up is one of the three technical challenges facing the Conference in the medium term, with the other two relating to preparations for the 2010 round of censuses and the review of methodology for the System of National Accounts. These joint challenges will give rise to synergies in terms of regional and international cooperation.
3. At the first two meetings of the Conference, the need for the region to have an intergovernmental forum for coordination of the regional programme of work was confirmed, as well as the interest of the member countries in taking an active part in the design and implementation of the programme. Meanwhile, the growing incorporation of multilateral cooperation agencies and organizations also shows the importance of this forum for exchanging information and coordinating work programmes. The Conference should also be a significant forum for discussion of the substantive topics that are of concern to the statistical community in the region.
4. At its third meeting, the Conference recognized that, over the next 10 years, the national statistical systems faced the following priority challenges, which should constitute the guiding principles of the strategic plan: providing information to follow-up progress towards achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration; the 2005-2015 round of censuses; and changes to the System of National Accounts scheduled for 2008.
5. In consideration of the above, the Chairperson of the Executive Committee of the Conference and the secretariat of the Conference (ECLAC) are resolved to give new impetus to the Conference, in fulfilment of its mandate: to be the intergovernmental body that promotes the development of statistics in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. For that reason, it is proposed that the strategic plan 2005-2015 should provide the frame of reference for future biennial plans, in order to facilitate the effective accomplishment of the fundamental goals of the Conference.
6. Furthermore, in the light of discussions at the third meeting and proposals from several members, the strategic plan suggests a structured means of linking the biennial plans of work of the Conference and puts forward concrete measures aimed at improving coordination between biennial plans and the programme of statistical work of the ECLAC system.

7. In the discussions at the previous meetings of the Conference and in various regional studies carried out to assess the current situation, the countries have referred in particular to the need to raise the adequacy, quality and transparency criteria of national statistics to the level of the best international practices and to use them as a basis to promote a reputation of excellence of official statistics among the users, economic stakeholders, social actors and decision-makers. It had also been noted that, in certain cases, the national statistical offices of the region carry out their functions in a precarious institutional and legal framework —without sufficient information technology, human and financial resources— and efforts would have to be made to remedy that situation. Reference was also made to the need to improve the way in which the work of multilateral and subregional organizations is coordinated with national and regional priorities in terms of statistical development.
8. Faced with that situation, the Statistical Conference of the Americas considers it essential to submit to the governments of the region the necessary recommendations to ensure that the national statistical systems reach an adequate institutional level in order to carry out completely the function incumbent upon them in the new millennium, in accordance with the United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. In that respect, it should be emphasized that official statistics are a public good and that the State therefore has the institutional and economic responsibility of ensuring that the processes of production and dissemination are adequate for the needs of society and individuals.
9. It would be necessary in particular to promote more appropriate legal frameworks in order to facilitate the performance and strengthening of the national statistical systems, as well as to define more clearly the role of national statistical offices and other institutions. Similarly, measures should be adopted to improve the technical training of regional statisticians and promote the development of research projects in the area of statistical methodology.
10. In another area, new demands for information are emerging as a result of changes in the economic and social structure accompanying the development process in the countries of the region, and the challenges presented by globalization. In addition, the statistical products of the region must have high levels of quality, timeliness and integrity that are in accordance with the most rigorous standards. In that way, both by the level of development of its statistical capacity and by the emphasis placed on the processes of regional harmonization and integration in Latin America and the Caribbean, the region should set targets based on the best practices available at the international level.
11. Moreover, the Executive Committee acknowledges that the diversity of situations in the member countries of the Statistical Conference of the Americas means that convergence towards that target of regional excellence will take place in stages, while there is a huge potential for making use of the experiences and progress achieved in each of the countries of the region.
12. The Chairperson of the Executive Committee considers that the strategic plan should allow multilateral and subregional organizations to coordinate in the best possible way their activities in the region, around objectives and activities that clearly reflect national and regional priorities in relation to statistical development. These priorities will be specified in a biennial programme of work, the goal of which is to transform into lines of activity and outputs the priorities identified for each of the stages that lead to achieving the strategic targets.

B. PROPOSAL FOR THE STRATEGIC PLAN 2005-2015

1. Mission statement

To be the intergovernmental body that: coordinates promotion of the development of official statistics in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean; fosters the reinforcement of national statistical offices and national statistical systems; encourages enhancement of their technical quality through training and statistical development in each country; and advocates international, regional and bilateral coordination and cooperation and statistical harmonization at the subregional and regional levels.

2. Vision for 2015

The Statistical Conference of the Americas will consolidate its position as a significant source of technical support and international coordination for ensuring consistency between the statistical development processes overseen by international agencies and member countries of the Conference.

Thanks to the work of the Conference, in 2015 the region will be recognized for significantly enhancing national statistical systems, particularly in terms of narrowing gaps in performance between members. The improvement will be based on well-qualified human resources, increased compliance with the highest international standards and greater quality, efficiency and public credibility of its statistics.

All governments in the region will be well informed about the importance of statistics in the design and assessment of public policies. The national statistical offices will have access to common assets in terms of knowledge, methodology and technological developments, which will enable them to respond to the requirements of their authorities in a timely manner.

3. Values

The Statistical Conference of the Americas will be guided by the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, adopted by the United Nations Statistical Commission in a special session held from 11 to 15 April 1994.

4. Strategic goals

The Statistical Conference of the Americas has outlined the following strategic goals:

Goal 1

To strengthen the strategic management practices and organization of national statistical offices and national statistical systems.

This goal encompasses the following targets:

1. Access to a reference stock of best practices in terms of legal frameworks, strategic planning, assessment of national statistical systems and financing;
2. Strengthening the relationship with users and promoting the use of official statistics among governments, economic stakeholders, social actors and other decision-makers in all countries, and
3. Producing a document containing appropriate guidelines for making best use of information and communications technologies.

To achieve them, the following lines of action will need to be adopted:

1. Collect and disseminate the legal frameworks governing national statistical systems and national statistical offices;
2. Compile and disseminate best practices in terms of organization and strategic management;
3. Form networks of legal and administrative experts in the countries of the region;
4. Develop and promote a performance assessment mechanism for national statistical systems;
5. Promote the role of official statistics as a public good in the design, follow-up and assessment of public policies and in their use in the spheres of trade and social issues;
6. Develop indicators for the use of statistical information in the formulation of public policies in the areas of trade and social issues;
7. Implement a system for the Conference to recognize progress made by national statistical systems in the region, and
8. Take advantage of information and communications technologies in order to produce and disseminate statistical information more efficiently.

Goal 2

To promote the training of staff in producing statistical information, managing national statistical systems and carrying out research into statistical methodology.

This goal encompasses the following targets:

1. Maintaining an up-to-date inventory of the institutional needs and work skills required for producing statistical information and management;
2. Defining a model for human resources administration that is relevant for the stages of statistical development in the region;
3. Coordinating training efforts in the region, and

4. Establishing lines of research into significant statistical developments for the region.

To achieve them the following lines of action will need to be adopted:

1. Identify and document the institutional needs and work skills required for the production of statistical information and strategic management;
2. Develop a model for managing staff with expertise in the management and production of statistical information, in various institutional settings;
3. Organize and harmonize face-to-face statistics training programmes by coordinating the activities of training centres within member countries of the Conference;
4. Create a distance-learning model to train staff needed for management and the production of statistical information, by ensuring coordination between the Conference's training centres;
5. Promote statistical research and development;
6. Initiate statistical research projects in the region.

Goal 3

To promote the development of statistical information in the region.

This goal encompasses the following targets:

1. Access to an electronic methodological reference stock including information on best practices and methodological documents useful for the region in terms of worldwide production of statistical information;
2. Strengthening the region's networks of statistical information experts in various spheres;
3. By 2007, drafting a document containing technical, logistic and financing recommendations for producing the population and housing censuses for 2005-2015;
4. Producing a document on alternative methods for developing sociodemographic statistics,
5. Supporting and promoting the implementation of the National System of Accounts in all the countries of the region, in accordance with a regional schedule of stages;
6. Ensuring that all countries, according to their circumstances, have relevant statistics on their natural resources and environment, in addition to a minimum set of common sustainability indicators for the region as a whole, and
7. Guaranteeing that all countries, according to their circumstances, have relevant statistics on science and technology, in addition to a minimum set of common indicators for the region as a whole.

To achieve them, the following lines of action will need to be adopted:

1. Form a methodology reference stock of best practices relating to the production of statistical information by means of censuses, surveys and analysis of administrative records and the System of National Accounts;
2. Automate and disseminate the methodology reference stock;
3. Establish selection criteria for experts in the various fields;
4. Identify and organize the region's experts in each statistical field, strengthen networks and promote said networks in the countries concerned;
5. Support preparations for the region's housing and population censuses through exchanges of experiences;
6. Develop alternative methods incorporating censuses, surveys and administrative records to improve the production of sociodemographic statistics;
7. Take advantage of attention given to the Millennium Development Goals to consolidate sociodemographic statistics;
8. Provide a diagnostic analysis of the development of the System of National Accounts within countries and show how this System ties in technically and institutionally with the production of economic statistics;
9. Define priority stages for implementing the System of National Accounts, including satellite accounts, within the countries of the region;
10. Advocate the development of economic statistics by promoting the development of the System of National Accounts as a framework for economic statistics;
11. Exchange experiences and design appropriate methodology for the development of statistics on natural resources and the environment;
12. Exchange experiences and design appropriate methodology for the development of science and technology statistics.

Goal 4

To promote coordination between the member countries of the Statistical Conference of the Americas and international agencies.

This goal encompasses the following targets:

1. Developing a system for organizing international cooperation initiatives to ensure they are in keeping with the aims of the Conference;

2. Devising an integrated regional programme to coordinate cooperation activities between the Conference, ECLAC and other subregional agencies, taking into account the decisions adopted by the United Nations Statistical Commission, and
3. Formulating a regional programme aimed at harmonizing statistical information.

To achieve these targets the following lines of action will need to be adopted:

1. Draw up an inventory of the activities and projects of international agencies in the region;
2. Ensure that international technical and financial cooperation is used to strengthen countries' institutions rather than being tied to projects defined by donors without taking account of the needs of the countries receiving the assistance;
3. Identify tools for facilitating and monitoring regional progress in terms of inter-agency coordination;
4. Promote ever-greater integration among statistical development programmes and institution-building programmes in the region, reflecting the priorities established by the Conference and the specific needs of each subregion, and
5. Ensure that the terms of reference of the thematic working groups include harmonization in the production, integration and dissemination of relevant statistical data through the regional use and application of the methodologies, guidelines, classifications and procedures approved by the United Nations Statistical Commission.