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Fifth meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of the
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**PROPOSAL BY THE INITIATIVE GROUP FOR THE CREATION OF THE WORKING
GROUP ON ENVIRONMENTAL STATISTICS ***

* This document was prepared by the Initiative Group, which comprises the Chair of the Executive Committee, the secretariat of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the following countries: Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, Mexico and Panama.

A. BACKGROUND

At the eighth meeting of the Executive Committee of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, preliminary approval was given for the report, terms of reference and programme of work¹ of the initiative group for the creation of the working group on environmental statistics and the Committee recommended that these documents be approved definitively at the fifth meeting of the Conference.

The general objective of the working group on environmental statistics is 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.

During the period covered by this report, the initiative group identified a coordinating country and expanded the brief programme of work by specifying the activities that the working group would undertake once it was officially established.

B. MODE OF OPERATIONS

It was proposed that Mexico coordinate the working group and that the Statistics and Economic Projections Division of ECLAC act as secretariat. Member countries should include those countries which demonstrate significant progress in creating a national system of environmental statistics and are willing to appoint an expert from the relevant office to act as focal point for the group and to allocate sufficient human resources for the group to function and achieve its goals.

The joint participation of national statistical offices (NSOs) and ministries or departments responsible for environmental policy and natural resources should be encouraged.

Furthermore, when defining its plan of action, the working group should use the directives contained in the United Nations Statistical Commission's decisions and resolutions pertaining to environmental statistics as a general frame of reference.

C. ACTIVITIES PROPOSED FOR 2009-2010

A number of activities selected from the general work plan proposed by the initiative group, and which could be the working group's first tasks, are set out below. The definition of the group's agenda and the specification of deadlines are tasks that will have to be carried out once the working group is officially established.

¹ See the *Activities report of the initiative group of the working group on environmental statistics* (LC/L.2948(CE.8/18)).

1. General activities

- Confirm the working group's member countries and organizations.
- Conduct the first meeting of the working group via teleconferencing.

2. Specific activities

- Create, with the support of ECLAC, an electronic forum to facilitate communication among the working group's national focal points and the exchange of experiences.
- Establish alliances and mechanisms for coordinating 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 the environmental commissions of the subregions (the Andean Community (CAN), the Central American Commission on Environment and Development (CCAD), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), and the South American Common Market (MERCOSUR), among others)
- Establish a sub-group to formulate a project on climate change or water resources and seek funding for the project.
- Develop a proposal to create a basic set of environmental statistics which are relevant to the region.
- Develop a common format for national and regional metadata to facilitate the comparison of variables and eventual harmonization.

D. DECISIONS FOR THE STATISTICAL CONFERENCE OF THE AMERICAS

The Statistical Conference of the Americas is invited to consider the following decisions:

- Approve the creation of the working group on environmental statistics.
- Appoint Mexico as the group's coordinating country.
- Invite countries and international organizations interested in joining the group to advise the Chair of their interest within 30 days and ask them to indicate how they can support the group's activities and participate in implementing the plan of work.