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Seventh meeting of the Executive Committee of the
Statistical Conference of the Americas of the
Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

Bogotá, Colombia, 29 and 30 November 2007

**REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE WORKING GROUP ON
NATIONAL ACCOUNTS ***

* Report prepared by the Brazilian Geographical and Statistical Institute (IBGE).

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1. Main objectives

The purpose of the group is to promote the use of the System of National Accounts in the region in order to achieve greater integration of the production of basic economic statistics and that of national accounts.

The first agreement reached was to evaluate the current status of basic statistics with a view to the adoption by the Conference of a work strategy for enhancing statistical capacity.

To this end, a seminar on the use of the System of National Accounts in Latin America and the Caribbean was organized by the Brazilian Geographical and Statistical Institute (IBGE), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and ECLAC and held on 5 and 6 June 2007 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. At the seminar, IBGE presented a document which had previously been sent to the national statistical institutes and central banks of the countries of the region for their evaluation.

The representatives of member States concurred that an amelioration of the system of accounts was contingent on the improvement of basic statistics; they agreed to fill out a questionnaire to identify the major shortcomings existing in their statistical systems.

The results of the questionnaire were presented at the fourth meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC.¹ Its analysis was based on the responses of 15 countries: Argentina, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay.

2. Activities completed and programmed activities

During the preparation of the assessment, the Working Group mobilized the partner agencies interested in promoting the improvement of the economic statistics that were the sources of information for national accounts. In addition to support from ECLAC, the Working Group received backing from IMF, the United Nations Statistics Division, the national statistical institutes of Canada and Spain, and the secretariat of the East Asia Expert Meeting on Manufacturing Industry Statistics (EAMS), whose headquarters are in Japan.

Seminars are being held to launch a similar industry statistics programme among the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean with a view to working towards improvement of the quality of economic statistics and adoption of international recommendations.

To that end, the United Nations Statistics Division, in collaboration with IBGE, organized a workshop on industry statistics, which was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 24 to 26 September 2007.² This event, which was attended by representatives of 12 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, two experts from the United Nations Statistics Division and three international experts, was convened to present and discuss the new international recommendations on industry statistics, especially the

¹ Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), "Informe de avance de las actividades del grupo de trabajo sobre cuentas nacionales" (DDR/13), a document presented at the fourth meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas, Santiago, Chile, 25-27 July 2007.

² The documents of the seminar are available at: [<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/industry/meetings/eclac2007/eclac07-3.ASP>]

International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC), Rev. 4, and Central Product Classification (CPC). See 2.0.

Participants at the workshop looked carefully at industry statistics in the countries of the region with a view to planning future activities. The aim was to secure an agreement by the countries to implement a work plan for the adoption of the recommendations and for the harmonized transition to ISIC Rev.4.

The representatives of countries recognized that it was essential to move forward with a common industry statistics programme in Latin America, establishing guidelines for the work of the national statistical institutes. The United Nations Statistics Division was in favour of adopting a programme similar to that followed by the Asian States and headed by the EAMS secretariat, whereby one country was responsible for organizing the meetings and for defining the work agenda of the members. Participants also agreed that the first step towards development of a common industry statistics programme was to seek to achieve common harmonized classification of industrial activities in the countries of the region and the application of ISIC Rev.4 was the opportunity for doing this. In this regard, they could rely on the support of the United Nations Statistics Division, which would propose at the seventh meeting of the Executive Committee that these activities should be fully incorporated into the terms of reference of the Working Group on National Accounts.

In 2008, a seminar will be held on the sources and methodologies relating to the services sector in the national accounts in order to define a strategy similar to that being worked out for industry statistics.

3. Final outputs

The Working Group is seeking to promote initiatives that will facilitate the execution of the work plan outlined at the workshop on industry statistics, held in September, since it is vital to take advantage of the support of the United Nations Statistics Division in the area of industry statistics.

The same should occur in the case of the economic statistics of the services segment.

The Working Group is counting on the support of the Executive Committee of the Statistical Conference to promote these activities, which will undoubtedly help to upgrade basic statistics, hence, national accounts.