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Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

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**REPORT ON ACTIVITIES OF THE WORKING GROUPS CREATED AT THE THIRD  
MEETING OF THE STATISTICAL CONFERENCE OF THE AMERICAS OF THE  
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**

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## I. BACKGROUND

1. The third meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) was held in Santiago, Chile, in June 2005. At that meeting, it was agreed that working groups would be established to promote the more active participation of the countries in implementing the programme of regional cooperation of the Conference. The issues covered by the six working groups established are as follows: (i) monitoring of progress towards the Millennium Development Goals; (ii) national accounts; (iii) information and communications technologies (ICT); (iv) population censuses; (v) human resources and training; and (vi) institution-building. The working groups should encourage the sharing of experiences among countries, promote joint activities and initiatives and support activities which they consider of great urgency and priority. Accordingly, they are expected to make a significant contribution to achieving the objectives of the strategic plan of the Conference for 2005-2015.

2. At the fifth meeting of the Executive Committee of the Conference, which took place in Mexico City in November 2005, the Chairperson presented the document “Implementation and monitoring of the programme of regional statistical work, July 2005-June 2007; responsibilities of the Executive Committee of the Statistical Conference of the Americas, and tentative terms of reference of the working groups” (DDR/3). This document offers recommendations for the definition of the terms of reference of the groups, specifies their structure and mode of functioning and also the responsibilities of the countries that act as coordinators of the groups. It also underscores the importance of the groups’ activities, especially those relating to the preparation of statistical project proposals that would help to establish their proper and normal functioning and recommends that each working group should “organize its efforts in light of the initiatives already existing both within and outside the region, and the activities of the other working groups. Measures should also be adopted for the monitoring of progress and the problems encountered by the various working groups.”<sup>1</sup>

3. At that meeting, there was reference to the need for the groups to be informed of the statistical activities of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and other similar bodies such as those of the expert groups, city groups and other international initiatives, in order to avoid duplication of effort and to benefit from the experiences and best practices of those groups and committees. In the same way, during the exchange of opinions of the delegates, there was emphasis on the need to incorporate other actors from national statistical systems and not only from national statistical offices, especially in view of the large quantity and complexity of the proposed activities and projects.

4. The Executive Committee held its sixth meeting in November 2006, in Madrid, to consider the progress of the work in the light of the report on the activities of the working groups (LC/L.2595). This report contains an assessment of their activities, a description of the progress made, the difficulties encountered and pending challenges. It indicates the main conditions required for the groups’ activities in order for them to achieve concrete results that are consistent with their goals, which include the following: to harmonize fully their mandate with the goals of the strategic plan of the Conference; to establish groups with terms of reference that are specific and clear from the outset; to define responsibilities for the members of the groups, in operational terms and in terms of human and financial resources required; to avoid duplication of effort with other similar initiatives carried out by other

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<sup>1</sup> Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Report of the fifth meeting of the Executive Committee of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (LC/L.2505), Santiago, Chile, 24 March 2006.

organizations and make full use of the experiences of other groups and initiatives in the field of statistics in the context of the United Nations.

5. At that same meeting, the Executive Committee also highlighted the extensive and active participation of the countries in most of the working groups; sixteen countries of Latin America and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, two European countries and the United States of America participate in one or more working groups. Nevertheless, in the discussion there was emphasis on the need to promote and ensure greater levels of participation of the countries in the work of the different groups, in view of the absence or low level of participation of a significant number of member countries of the Conference. In particular, the absence of English-speaking Caribbean countries was a cause of concern. One possible explanation was that not all national statistical offices had the human and financial resources necessary to enable them to participate fully in the activities of the Conference and the working groups. Language might also be a barrier.

6. Lastly, in order to enhance the functioning of the groups, the Executive Committee at its sixth meeting agreed to:<sup>2</sup> (i) confirm that Spain was to be responsible for the activities of the Working Group on Human Resource Education and Training, except in respect of its work on education and training in relation to poverty (agreement 3); (ii) incorporate the work in relation to the Millennium Development Goals into the work of the Working Group on the Monitoring of Progress Towards the Millennium Development Goals (agreement 3); (iii) request Argentina to take responsibility for coordinating the Working Group on the Monitoring of Progress Towards the Millennium Development Goals, and to include the activities aimed at updating the methodology for measuring poverty in the region on its agenda (agreement 4); and (iv) adopt the necessary measures to broaden participation by members of the Conference in the working groups' activities (agreement 5).

## II. MAIN PROGRESS AND RESULTS

7. It is very important to note that the six groups have a work programme and some of them come to the fourth Conference with tangible and practical results. In some cases, there are definitive results and completed outputs, while in others, the groups have made progress, achieved preliminary results or are at intermediate stages of the various activities and projects. These results have been possible owing to a combination of factors. On the one hand, the countries leading the groups have made great efforts to include the various countries in the work and to establish a practical and motivating work agenda. Most of the countries that are members of the groups took an active role in the tasks of the groups and made a significant contribution to the results. Lastly, the preparation of four projects and their financing through the programme on regional public goods of the Inter-American Development Bank is a landmark in the groups' work. These projects and the relevant financing represent a valuable support for the work of the groups, as it will allow them to execute the scheduled activities and achieve the goals that have been set.

8. The following section reports on the main activities and results of each group, as well as their recommendations and proposals to be submitted for discussion and adoption by the Conference.

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<sup>2</sup> Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Report of the sixth meeting of the Executive Committee of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (LC/L.2651), Santiago, Chile, 4 January 2007.

## **1. Working Group on Censuses**

9. The Working Group on Censuses defines its activities in accordance with the strategic plan 2005-2015 of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC. Its main objectives are as follows:

- (i) To strengthen the technical and operational census practices of national statistical offices, which are designed to ensure the quality of census products and user satisfaction;
- (ii) To promote training of human resources that are competent in the production of quality statistical information and in documented research into census statistics methodologies;
- (iii) To foster the development of technical and methodological skills for generating quality statistical information in the region.
- (iv) To encourage and promote coordination and cooperation in census-related matters among member countries of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC.

10. The objectives set out above translate into the following targets:

- (i) To promote the use of official census statistics in all countries.
- (ii) To establish lines of research into developments in the field of census statistics that are important for the region.
- (iii) To produce a document on alternative methods for the production of sociodemographic statistics.
- (iv) To draw up a programme for the Working Group on Censuses in the region geared to the harmonization of census statistics so as to coordinate joint cooperation activities.

11. This group implements the project on the dissemination and evaluation of harmonized census statistics for social programmes for sustainable development in MERCOSUR, Bolivia and Chile as well as in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Ecuador and Mexico, which is financed under the programme on regional public goods of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). The work of this group has benefited from the activities that have been carried out by the countries of MERCOSUR, Bolivia and Chile since the end of the 1990s for the harmonization of census data. The group has been able to make use of the results of the three seminars on alternative methods in demographic censuses held in Rio de Janeiro (October 2004 and May 2006) and Mexico City (July 2005), as their discussions have provided a very valuable contribution to future census design and the definition of alternative methodologies which can be assessed through tests in the field, taking into account the individual circumstances of each country.

12. The main activities of the project mentioned above have been as follows:

- (i) The first workshop for dissemination of the joint evaluation of the results of the 2000 census round in the region was held in June 2006, with a view to generating modifications that will apply to the 2010 census round.
- (ii) In November 2006, a joint pilot project was conducted for measuring disability in the censuses of Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay. This is an information harmonization practice in terms of survey application, content of the questions, response capacity and other aspects. Other countries of the group participated in this activity as observers.
- (iii) Argentina and Chile have prepared the document relating to guidelines for methodological development for censuses, which is related to the item on methodological developments for the 2010 census round on the agenda of the Working Group on Censuses. This document

will incorporate contributions from other countries over time and will serve as the basis for conducting a joint workshop prior to the next census round.

- (iv) In June 2007, in compliance with agreement 11 adopted at the sixth meeting of the Executive Committee to organize three thematic meetings within the framework of the preparations for the fourth meeting of the Conference, one of which was to be on the 2010 census round, and as part of the agenda of the Working Group on Censuses, a seminar was held on a harmonized vision of the 2010 census round.

13. A document will be submitted to the Conference on the progress of the group's activities, which cover the following topics: harmonization of information from the 2010 census round, taking into account the new demands for data; the results of the joint pilot project on measurement of disability, and the traditional 2010 census and the possible transition to alternative censuses, with particular reference to the permanent census.

## **2. Working Group on Human Resource Education and Training**

14. The mission of this group is to move forward with the review and implementation of the Programme of regional statistical work for Latin America and the Caribbean, July 2005-June 2007, in its area of competence, in accordance with the guidelines set out in the strategic plan 2005-2015. This implies specifically that the general objective of the studies and projects promoted by the group must be to "coordinate the various initiatives and activities of training centres within member countries of the Conference in order to harmonize face-to-face statistics training programmes". Specifically, the Working Group has set itself the goal of analysing existing requirements in terms of statistical training in the region, and of studying the feasibility of establishing a network for training in official statistics in ECLAC countries. As part of the agreed work project, the Group has worked online using e-mail and has held two face-to-face meetings, financed by the National Institute of Statistics of Spain and the International Foundation for the Public Policies and Administration of Ibero-America (FIIAPP). The main activities have been:

- (i) The design and application of two questionnaires on training needs and on resources available for training (training centres and activities and financing capacity) respectively, which were sent to the member countries of ECLAC.
- (ii) Analysis of the results of both questionnaires and their presentation at the seminar on statistical education and training in Latin America, which was the group's first face-to-face meeting, held in Antigua (Guatemala) from 21 to 23 March 2007.
- (iii) Creation and operation of two study sub-groups. One sub-group is responsible for preparing the training programme and will issue a preliminary report on the current situation of statistical training in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, to make an inventory of existing training centers with the capacity to be included in a network, to establish the basis for a programme of training activities in accordance with the strategic plan 2005-2015 and to assess the advantages of new information technologies and distance learning. The second sub-group will produce a preliminary report on the establishment of a training network in the member countries of ECLAC, defining its possible legal structure and form and identifying various modes of financing.
- (iv) The drafting of intermediate reports by the two sub-groups, which were discussed at the second meeting, held in Madrid from 16 to 18 May 2007. The purpose of this meeting was to consolidate the definitive version of the draft document to be submitted to the fourth meeting of the Conference.

15. As a result of all these activities, this group is submitting to the Conference a proposal for the creation of a knowledge transfer network for training in official statistics in Latin America and the Caribbean and requests the Conference to:

- (i) Approve the proposal for the creation of a knowledge transfer network (KTR) for training in official statistics in Latin America and the Caribbean.<sup>3</sup>
- (ii) If the proposal is approved, proceed to appoint the members of the Council of the KTR.
- (iii) Request the Executive Committee to discuss and adopt, at its sixth meeting, the first KTR biannual training programme.

### **3. Working Group on Institution-building**

16. The purpose of this Group is to develop activities designed to strengthen the organization and strategic management practices of national statistical institutes and national statistical systems. The Working Group on Institution-building will undertake activities designed to:

- (i) Collect and disseminate the legal frameworks on the national statistical systems and national statistical offices.
- (ii) Collect and disseminate best practices in organization and strategic management.
- (iii) Set up legal and administrative networks of experts from countries in the region.
- (iv) Establish and promote a performance evaluation mechanism for national statistical systems.
- (v) Promote the use of official statistics in the formulation and evaluation of public policies, in companies and society.
- (vi) Establish indicators of the use of information in the formulation of public policies, in companies and society.
- (vii) Implement a system for recognition by the Conference of advances in the national statistical systems of the region.
- (viii) Harmonize statistics, and
- (ix) Make use of information and communications technologies in order to achieve a more efficient production and dissemination of statistical information.

17. The activities of this working group have mainly been organized around the project entitled “Integration and harmonization of instruments for social statistics”.<sup>4</sup> Mexico has contributed at no cost to the project budget the methodology and inventory of international standards devised by the National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Informatics (INEGI). The INEGI website may be accessed freely at <http://www2.inegi.gob.mx/estestint/default.asp>. The overall objective of this project is to improve the levels of harmonization in the measuring instruments and statistical information production methodology for social issues, with a view to achieving higher levels of comparability and homogeneity in the region and subregions. After a process of adjustment to comply with the criteria adopted by the Conference for the working groups, identification of specific topics and clear formulation of the statistical outputs as regional public goods, the project was formally initiated on 2 January 2007. The activities of the phase of

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<sup>3</sup> Proposal for the creation of a knowledge transfer network (KTR) for training in official statistics in Latin America and the Caribbean (DDR/1), Santiago, Chile, 2007.

<sup>4</sup> Proyecto integración y armonización de instrumentos para las estadísticas sociales. Informe de gestión INAES (DDR/2), Santiago, Chile, 2007.

effective country participation have been carried out and work is underway on the phase of analysis of the situation of the countries in each subregion. This phase includes the following activities:

- (i) Inventory and refining of the database on standards for specific topics.
- (ii) Design of questionnaires and instructions relating to the labour market, health and education and their application.
- (iii) Receipt, organization and analysis of information collected in electronic format.
- (iv) Preparation of the analysis of consistency of national practices with international standards in the region.
- (v) Preparation of documents on homogeneity and heterogeneity by subregion and specific topic.
- (vi) Review and comments by the countries in relation to the analysis documents.
- (vii) Analysis of the results and proposals made by the countries.
- (viii) Holding of a seminar to discuss and reach agreement on specific topics.

18. As a result of these activities, the group intends to submit a report to the fourth meeting of the Conference which includes the analysis of consistency of national practices with internationally recommended statistical standards for each specific issue and for each subregion, on the basis of international statistical methodology, standards and recommendations.

19. In addition, as part of the group's activities, the region's national statistical offices were able to participate, with financing from the PARIS21 organization, in the meeting of the Ibero-American Network of Ministers of the Presidency or Equivalents (RIMPE), which was held on 12 October 2006 in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia. Taking advantage of the presentation to RIMPE of the strategic information system for the heads of Latin American governments, the national statistical offices had the opportunity to establish links with senior government authorities in order to promote the use of official statistics in the formulation and evaluation of public policies.

#### **4. Working Group on Measurement of Information and Communications Technologies (ICT)**

20. The goal of the Working Group on the Measurement of ICT is to share experiences and design methodologies for the development of statistics and indicators related to information and communications technologies (ICT). The activities reported by the group were implemented in the context of the project for the Observatory of the Information Society in Latin America and the Caribbean (OSILAC),<sup>5</sup> one of whose objectives is to support national statistical offices in the compilation of ICT indicators in the region and in the design of methodologies. In particular, OSILAC supports the activities of this Working Group for making recommendations to the Executive Committee of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC to promote development and harmonization of regional statistics on ICT. The main activities carried out by this group in 2005-2007 have been:

- (i) The preparation of a first version of an information system that includes variables of ICT access and use and social, demographic and economic indicators to measure the digital divide; this information is collected in the household surveys.
- (ii) The promotion and sharing of experiences in the use in censuses and surveys of mobile collection devices (personal digital assistants, digital media centres and others) and other technological tools.

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<sup>5</sup> Created by ECLAC and the Institute for Connectivity in the Americas.



- (iii) The holding of a subregional workshop on measurement of ICT in San José, Costa Rica, in June 2005, with the support of the National Institute of Statistics and Census (INEC) of that country and the Costa Rican Electricity Institute (ICE). The goal was to create capacities in the technical staff of both institutions, as well as in the national statistical offices of the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Mexico, in relation to methodology and techniques for collecting and processing ICT data.
- (iv) The organization of a workshop on regional training and discussion on the methodologies used for the collection of statistical information on ICT in Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic) in October 2005. At this second workshop, there was a review of the list of key questions on ICT proposals made by countries of the region during the first workshop, which was held in Santiago, Chile, on 3 and 4 November 2004.
- (v) The preparation of the first version of a compendium of practices on the inclusion of ICT questions in household and business surveys, which was presented at the workshop held in Panama. In this document, the instruments and questions used by the national statistical offices for measuring ICT are reviewed. It also contains a review of the questionnaires of household and business surveys of countries in the region which have included at least one question on the use of ICT as well as a proposal for constructing indicators based on the questions included.
- (vi) The holding of a third regional workshop on ICT measurement in the region, held in Panama City on 22-24 November 2006. Representatives from 23 countries took part, including 20 from national statistical offices and seven from government agencies responsible for ICT policies, as well as representatives of the private sector, academia and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and eight international organizations. An agreement was reached at this workshop on the list of core indicators for ICT access and use, recommended for inclusion in household and business surveys. This list was subsequently adopted at the thirty-eighth session of the United Nations Statistical Commission.

21. Taking into account the progress achieved in these activities, the ICT group submits the following proposals for the consideration of the Conference:

- (i) To adopt and implement on an annual basis, according to the capacities of each national statistical office, the list of core indicators for ICT access and use in household and business surveys adopted in resolution 38/104 of the United Nations Statistical Commission, which will be updated in accordance with the progress made by the countries.<sup>6</sup>
- (ii) To adopt as a methodological reference the compendium of best practices for the inclusion of ICT questions in household and business surveys.<sup>7</sup>
- (iii) To request the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean to manage, through OSILAC and with the support of national statistical offices, the information system on ICT and social, demographic and economic indicators, and to keep the compendium updated.
- (iv) To request the countries to send to ECLAC on a regular basis the data from their household and business surveys in relation to key indicators of ICT access and use, and also social, demographic and economic variables, together with their respective methodological manuals, in order to keep the information system and the compendium updated.

<sup>6</sup> Core indicators proposal regarding information and communication technologies (ICT). Working group on measuring Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and OSILAC (DDR/5).

<sup>7</sup> Compendio de prácticas sobre implementación de preguntas de TIC en encuesta de hogares y empresas (DDR/6).

### **5. Working Group on National Accounts**

22. The objective of the group is to contribute to the implementation of the System of National Accounts 1993 (1993 SNA) in the region and to promote greater integration between the production of basic economic statistics and national accounts. In particular, the aims are as follows:

- (i) Provide a diagnostic analysis of the development of the System of National Accounts in the countries and its technical and institutional linkages with the production of economic statistics.
- (ii) Define the priority stages for the implementation of the System of National Accounts in all the countries of the region.
- (iii) To support the development of economic statistics by promoting the implementation of the system of national accounts as a guiding framework for economic statistics.

23. At the sixth meeting of the Executive Committee of the Conference, held in Madrid in September 2006, the Working Group on National Accounts agreed to present to the Conference, in July 2007, a report to assess the countries and establish differential strategies in accordance with their progress in implementing 1993 SNA. This document is intended to provide the Conference with the information needed to guide the working strategy to be adopted by the Conference in July 2007 in order to strengthen statistical capacity in relation to national accounts.

24. The Brazilian Geographical and Statistical Institute (IBGE) has prepared a first version of the document mentioned, taking into account the following reports:

- (i) Estado de avance en la implementación del Sistema de Cuentas Nacionales en América Latina y el Caribe al 2006 (DDR/3) [Spanish only].
- (ii) Informe sobre la Observancia de los Códigos y Normas - IOCN en conformidad con el Marco de Evaluación de la Calidad de los Datos (MECAD).<sup>8</sup>

25. This first version of the document served as a basis for discussion at the seminar on the system of national accounts in Latin America and the Caribbean, organized by IBGE, IMF and ECLAC on 5 and 6 June 2007 in Rio de Janeiro. The holding of this seminar also complies with agreement 11 adopted at the sixth meeting of the Executive Committee to organize three thematic meetings within the framework of the preparations for the fourth meeting of the Conference, one of which was to consider the review of the System of National Accounts scheduled for 2008.

### **6. Working Group on the Monitoring of Progress Towards the Millennium Development Goals**

26. The purpose of this group is to support the development of the statistical capacity of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean in order to monitor and analyse the fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goals. This overall objective translates into the following specific goals:

- (i) To improve the quality and relevance of information for monitoring targets by providing support to countries in the development of their capacity to generate, analyse and

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<sup>8</sup> For more information on the Data Quality Assessment Framework (MECAD), consult the website of the International Monetary Fund: <http://dsbb.imf.org/Applications/web/dqrs/dqrsdqaf/>.

disseminate relevant and timely information. To prepare a comparative evaluation of the indicators incorporated in national databases and international organizations and prepare proposals that favour their convergence;

- (ii) To identify and describe more accurately the poverty situation in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean using a methodology that constitutes a regional public good as an indispensable element for the proper design, monitoring and evaluation of poverty reduction strategies;
- (iii) To update information bases and review the methodology applied for the construction of new basic baskets and poverty line values;
- (iv) To promote the improvement of household surveys that measure income in order to produce periodic poverty estimates;
- (v) To study in greater depth the methodologies for generating poverty estimates for small areas;
- (vi) To analyse conceptual and methodological factors linked to the conduct of family budget surveys.

27. At its sixth meeting, the Executive Committee of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC requested Argentina to take responsibility for coordinating the Working Group on the Monitoring of Progress Towards the Millennium Development Goals. It was decided that the group's agenda would include the issue of poverty in general and the project for updating the methodology for measuring poverty in the region, which is part of the IDB programme on regional public goods.

28. This Working Group began its activities by holding a workshop in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in March 2007, on the measurement of poverty in Latin America, poverty lines and multidimensional methods. This meeting also complies with agreement 11 adopted by the Executive Committee at its sixth meeting to organize three thematic meetings within the framework of the preparations for the fourth meeting of the Conference, one of which was to be on monitoring fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goals. Government officials from the area of social development responsible for monitoring progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and the national statistical offices of 20 member countries of the Conference. Officials of IDB, the co-organizer of the Conference, ECLAC and the World Bank also took part in the meeting. Representatives of the Group of Ministerial Focal Points for the Millennium Development Goals and the National Council for the Coordination of Social Policies of the Office of the President and officials of the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INDEC) of Argentina also took part.

29. At the workshop there was also discussion of the situation of poverty measurement and the identification of regional cooperation activities in that area, which will be reported to the Conference. As for the situation in relation to poverty measurement, the following aspects were mentioned:

- (i) In relation to the monetary poverty line method, there was emphasis on expansion of the measurement of income to include social transfers in kind. Another issue was concern to achieve more representative CPI baskets, with a detailed list of non-food items. There was also reference to the recommendation to shorten the periods between surveys owing to the rapid change in consumer patterns under the influence of international trade and changes in relative prices.
- (ii) In relation to the unmet needs and deprivation method, there was emphasis on the greater demand that will come from national statistical offices for the geographical location of shortages. There are parameters that are becoming less important, for example access to durable goods, and there is a need to explore other indicators.

- (iii) There is also a growing interest from national statistical offices around the world to have demographic and social data that is constantly updated from administrative records.

30. As for regional cooperation activities for poverty measurement, there are two areas of work:

- (i) Constitution and general guidelines for the organization of the Conference's working group on the Millennium Development Goals. The workshop established the Working Group on the Monitoring of Progress Towards the Millennium Development Goals. Subsequently, as agreed with the participating countries, a document will be prepared to specify the programme of activities.
- (ii) Thematic priorities of the project for updating the methodology used for poverty measurement in the region. The following priorities were identified: conceptual and methodological aspects of family budget surveys; methodologies for estimates of poverty in small areas; review of the methodology used to construct new CPI baskets and poverty line values; strengthening of household surveys that measure income in order to make periodic estimates of poverty.

#### **7. Project on migration and trends in remittances in Central American countries**

31. The general aim of the project is to generate information on the migration process and its repercussions on family economies and the inclusion of this income in the productive base of each of the countries, in order to estimate the proportion of resources that are contributing to achieve sustainability and growth of the national economies. This project is being implemented as part of the programme on regional public goods of the Inter-American Development Bank and its specific goals are:

- (i) To consider the pattern of migration of the population of each of the Central American countries and to identify the destinations involved.
- (ii) To gain information on remittances of money or goods sent to family members in order to estimate the amount of income received through remittances and to find out how social conditions of individuals are improving and the repercussions that this phenomenon has on the national economy.
- (iii) To measure and gain information on the characteristics of the migrant population that moves to the Central American countries from other Latin American countries and from other continents.
- (iv) To measure the contribution that migrants arriving in Central American countries are making to the economies of the countries of the isthmus and if possible to gain information on the outflow of economic resources to their countries of origin.
- (v) To construct indicators that provide information reflecting the social and economic conditions of each of the countries and to describe the region.

32. The main activities carried out in the context of this project are as follows:

- (i) The first meeting was held on 5 and 6 April 2006 in Tegucigalpa (Honduras) in order to share experiences in data collection. The objective was to establish the basis for the joint work to be carried out by the participating countries. Each country made a presentation on the subject and on national data needs. On this basis, discussion began on the inclusion of questions in the household surveys and the importance of defining the concepts of emigrant and remittances; the characteristics of the respondent, the size of the sample and the

definition of indicators for decision-making. The strategy defined was to create an instrument for inclusion in the household surveys that was user-friendly, had an economic component and could be used to obtain information for establishing basic indicators to describe immigrants and emigrants, households receiving remittances and the people who send them, to study the forms and uses of this income and its effect on the living conditions of the recipients.

- (ii) In June 2006 the first version of the migration and remittances module was presented for consideration in each of the countries. The project consultant produced a manual of the main concepts considered in this instrument.
- (iii) Agreement was reached on the main variables, dissemination workshops were held with different users and interviews conducted with focus groups for the research. This has made it possible to prepare a proposal for the census form and the indicators to be estimated.
- (iv) Honduras has been the pilot country for implementation of the module. It was applied in one urban area and one rural area. Lastly, there was an evaluation of each question and a new field research tool was designed accordingly.
- (v) The National Institute of Statistics of Honduras included the topics of return migration, emigration and remittances in its thirty-third Permanent Multi-purpose Household Survey in September 2006.<sup>9</sup> At present, in May 2007, a report of the country's results has already been presented and published, and is currently available. At present, a report is being prepared that includes estimates of macroeconomic indicators such as those observed by the Institute on these topics.
- (vi) The National Institute of Information for Development of Nicaragua<sup>10</sup> included the topic of remittances in its employment survey for the last quarter of 2006, with the new proposed indicators; it is currently at the data screening stage.
- (vii) The other countries have a consensus-based questionnaire on the migration and remittances module to be included in their respective household surveys on dates specified in each country.
- (viii) In June 2007 the second meeting of the project for harmonized study of international migration and remittances in Central America and the Caribbean will be held in Panama City. At this meeting, Honduras will present the results of the research carried out.

33. A document entitled "Proyecto migración y el comportamiento de las remesas en los países centroamericanos. Experiencia del INE de Honduras en levantamiento de la investigación de migración y remesas" (DDR/4) will be presented at the fourth meeting of the Statistical Conference.

## **8. Final notes**

34. It is recommended that the Conference emphasize the fact that the establishment of working groups on specific topics of interest to the region has been a very positive landmark in the efforts to meet the goals of the Conference and that the Conference urge countries and international organizations to continue to provide enhanced and effective support for their functioning. It is therefore recommended that the mandate of the six groups be approved, that the efforts to support their work be continued and that the new Executive Committee be entrusted with the task of evaluating their achievements and proposing

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<sup>9</sup> Migration and remittances has been a subject of research in Honduras since 2001, with six-monthly Permanent Multi-purpose Household Surveys and the National Survey of Living Conditions (ENCOVI), 2004.

<sup>10</sup> Formerly the National Institute of Statistics and Census of Nicaragua.

possible measures to enhance their functioning. This does not prevent the Conference from examining the original topics at the present meeting or from expanding or adjusting their terms of reference.

35. There is great interest in increasing the participation of those countries which, for various reasons, have not yet been able to participate in the work of the groups and the Executive Committee is urged to consider this situation at its seventh meeting and propose measures to resolve it in the shortest possible time.

36. It is proposed that the Conference adopt the proposals presented by the working groups on human resource education and training and on ICTs and that it take note of the progress reports of the other groups.