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Eighth meeting of the Executive Committee of the
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**REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE WORKING GROUP ON THE MONITORING
OF PROGRESS TOWARDS THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS ***

* Report prepared by ECLAC.

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A. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Working Group on the Monitoring of Progress towards the Millennium Development Goals are as follows:

- To support and promote the active participation of national statistical offices in the preparation and dissemination of national reports on the Millennium Development Goals in each country.
- To analyse discrepancies between the data produced by the countries and those used by international bodies in monitoring the Goals, and to develop an agenda of measures to facilitate inter-agency coordination and harmonization of national statistics at the domestic level as well as with statistics produced by international bodies.
- To broaden and improve sources of statistical data and the methodological bases used in the preparation of indicators for monitoring progress towards achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.¹

B. PROGRAMME OF WORK

At its seventh meeting, the Executive Committee of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) decided to revise the programme of work of this group in order to focus its activities initially on the second Millennium Development Goal. Accordingly, the project for update of the poverty measurement methodology used in Latin America and the Caribbean, which originally fell within the group's mandate, will be conducted by a different body.

C. ACTIVITIES

The Statistics and Economic Projections Division of ECLAC, together with the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, has developed various capacity-building measures for the official statistical and other sectoral bodies, in order to improve the monitoring and follow-up of progress towards the Millennium Development Goals.

The international community and the countries in the region in particular have been concerned that the values of the indicators of the Millennium Development Goals published by countries in their national reports show discrepancies compared with those published by international bodies. In recent years, ECLAC has sought to identify the root causes of these statistical discrepancies and of the information gaps that still exist in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.

¹ Objective reworded in accordance with a decision taken at the seventh meeting of the Executive Committee of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC.

ECLAC has produced two documents (Cecchini and Azócar, 2007 and Quiroga and Azócar, 2008) which contain a detailed description of the problem of statistical discrepancies and deficiencies, consider the apparent causes and put forward possible courses of action for solving both problems.²

At the regional seminar on statistical and institutional challenges for monitoring progress towards the Millennium Development Goals in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean (Bogotá, 27 and 28 November 2007), ECLAC brought together for the first time the directors of the national statistical offices in the region, the national rapporteurs responsible for reporting on such progress and the representatives of international bodies, thereby creating a forum for dialogue in which all the actors involved in preparing statistics relating to the Goals could participate.

Currently, ECLAC is drawing up a regional agenda on statistical harmonization whose aim is to set up common methodological guidelines for the production of statistics relating to the Goals, promote the creation of institutional coordination forums in the different levels and provide support for the construction of technical capacities for the appropriate follow-up and monitoring of progress towards the Goals. A series of activities have been conducted in this regard in order to establish benchmarks and define best practices for statistical production in the region, in terms of methodology and inter-agency coordination at the national and international levels.

The main activities being developed are the following:

- A pilot exercise for the preparation of a regional agenda for statistical harmonization relating to the Millennium Development Goals. Seven countries in the region – Brazil, Chile, Cuba, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay and the Dominican Republic – were asked to report on the practices they were using to produce the 21 measurement indicators. Two technical questionnaires, a form on methodology and another on inter-agency coordination were prepared for the countries to fill out. Similar questionnaires are being sent out to the international agencies working to develop pilot indicators in the region, in order to obtain information on the relevant management process. The results of the analysis carried out on the basis of the pilot exercise will be incorporated in the document entitled “Towards a regional strategy for statistical harmonization for monitoring progress towards achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean”, which will be presented at the regional seminar to be held in Santo Domingo in October 2008.
- Translation into Spanish of the United Nations *Millennium Development Goals Report 2008* for dissemination in Spanish-speaking countries.
- Update of the ECLAC Millennium Development Goals website, which will serve as a platform for the development of networks relating to the Goals in Latin America and the Caribbean. The new site presents up-to-date information on the activities being pursued in this area by ECLAC and other organizations. It also provides access to national reports and statistical information for monitoring progress towards the Goals and to summary reports (currently being prepared) on advances made in the region in this area. The site is being translated into English.

² Simone Cecchini and Irene Azócar, “Indicadores de los objetivos de desarrollo del Milenio en América Latina y el Caribe: una comparación entre datos nacionales e internacionales”, *Estudios estadísticos y prospectivos series*, No. 53 (LC/L.2767-P), Santiago, Chile, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). United Nations publication, Sales No. S.07.II.G.103; Rayén Quiroga and Irene Azócar, “Calculando indicadores de los objetivos de desarrollo del Milenio en países de América Latina y el Caribe: vacíos de información y discrepancias estadísticas entre fuentes nacionales e internacionales”, 2008, unpublished.