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**REPORT OF THE SECRETARIAT ON THE PROPOSED GENDER OBSERVATORY
FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN***

* Report prepared by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

2008-560

A. BACKGROUND AND MANDATES

At the tenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean (Quito, Ecuador, 6-9 August 2007), the member countries of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) approved the Quito Consensus, which requests the Commission, together with other organizations in the United Nations system, to “collaborate with member States that request them to do so in following up on the fulfilment of the agreements that have been adopted through the creation of an equality observatory that will help strengthen national gender mechanisms.” The Quito Consensus recognizes “that parity is one of the key driving forces of democracy, that its aim is to achieve equality in the exercise of power, in decision-making, in mechanisms of social and political participation and representation, in diverse types of family relations, and in social, economic, political and cultural relations, and that it constitutes a goal for the eradication of women’s structural exclusion.”

In addition, the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC, at its fourth meeting (Santiago, Chile, 25-27 July 2007), agreed to include among its strategic objectives the promotion and development of gender statistics, assigning ECLAC the role of technical secretariat in a new working group on gender statistics, coordinated by Mexico and created “to encourage efforts to systematize national statistical information with a gender perspective (...) and the systematic and regular submission to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean of the relevant statistical information for the monitoring of progress towards the Millennium Development Goals.”¹ As the technical secretariat of both the Regional Conference on Women and the Statistical Conference, ECLAC has subscribed to two mandates to facilitate the observatory’s role as a bridge between users and producers of statistical data on gender.

The Quito Consensus was endorsed in the Programme of Action adopted at the seventeenth Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government (Santiago, Chile, 8-10 November 2007), which instructs the Ibero-American Secretariat (SEGIB), pursuant to section 2 of the Quito Consensus, to collaborate with organizations in the United Nations system, and coordinate closely with member States, in order to create, in countries that request it, an equality observatory that will help to strengthen national gender machineries, and to monitor and support policies promoting equality.

In the context of the forty-first meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) and SEGIB ratified their resolve to provide financial support for the observatory’s activities.

B. ECLAC FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES UNDER THE QUITO CONSENSUS

In response to the mandate of the Quito Consensus, ECLAC has carried out a number of preparatory activities for the implementation of the observatory, including reviewing other, similar experiences, creating an inter-institutional working group with other United Nations organizations, seeking funding, and preparing and presenting a proposal for the forty-first meeting of the Presiding Officers.

¹ See *Report of the fourth meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC (LC/L.2795)*, Santiago, Chile, October 2007, paragraph 11.

1. Review of similar experiences

An exhaustive review of existing observatories in the region revealed that there is, at present, no tool to articulate critical areas of gender inequality in the region and analyse relevant current public policy. The existing observatories are highly diverse and generally limited to a specific area of concern, issue or country.

It is this circumstance that has led to the proposal for an observatory to monitor change in the core areas of inequality in the region's countries through a limited but significant set of indicators compatible with the monitoring of the Millennium Development Goals, while at the same time monitoring compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women. The indicators are designed to give a comprehensive, comparative view of gender equality achievements and obstacles in the countries, in order to provide guidelines for public policy regarding gender. The observatory will also provide information on relevant studies and will identify good practices implemented in the different spheres examined.

2. Creation of an inter-agency working group

The group initially included the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and ECLAC. The group met in Quito during the tenth session of the Regional Conference on Women and was responsible for formulating the initial proposal. In early 2008, the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) joined the group, and on 17 March 2008 it held a videoconference to organize preparatory work for the gender observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean. The proposed tasks were submitted for approval to the fifteenth Meeting of Specialized Agencies and Other Bodies of the United Nations System on the Advancement of Women in Latin America and the Caribbean (Bogotá, 23 April 2008), where it was resolved:

1. *To welcome* the proposal for the gender equality observatory prepared by ECLAC with UNFPA and UNIFEM;

2. *To support* the creation of an inter-institutional working group to include UNFPA, UNIFEM, PAHO and INSTRAW, which will be responsible, along with donor organizations, for contributing to the observatory's annual work plan to be presented by the Division for Gender Affairs of ECLAC, which serves as the observatory's technical secretariat;

3. *To support* a preparatory meeting for the observatory with national mechanisms for the advancement of women in the Caribbean;

4. *To make* a detailed review of the proposal for the observatory in order to evaluate it and promptly advise ECLAC of possibilities for substantive, technical and financial contributions by the institutions concerned, after which a memorandum of understanding will be signed by ECLAC and interested organizations;

5. That ECLAC *has agreed* to review the proposed indicators for monitoring by the observatory, in light of the comments received by the organizations attending the meeting;

That ECLAC has committed itself to holding a meeting of experts to establish a common concept of “good practices” in order to ensure consistency in identifying such practices, to be incorporated in the observatory’s database.

3. Seeking funding

In collaboration with UNFPA and UNIFEM, ECLAC prepared an initial proposal offering technical cooperation for the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. Pursuant to conversations with AECID, the proposal was sent to the latter on 31 October 2007. Negotiations were undertaken by AECID and the office of the Executive Secretary of ECLAC, with the Ibero-American Secretariat (SEGIB) joining the process in late January 2008. The Trust Fund of the Government of France joined the list of donor organizations interested in the initiative and funded the start-up activities, including a meeting of experts on observatories in the region, which was held during the forty-first meeting of the Presiding Officers, in Bogotá.

On 23 April 2008, in Bogotá, the inter-institutional working group met with the Trust Fund of the Government of France, AECID and SEGIB, donor organizations that had joined the inter-institutional working group. During the forty-first meeting of Presiding Officers, AECID and SEGIB reaffirmed their commitment to provide financial support for the observatory.

4. Presentation of the gender observatory proposal at the meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean

The observatory proposal was submitted for consideration by the countries at the forty-first meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean (Bogotá, 24-25 April 2008). Following discussion, the participants resolved to:

1. *Welcome with satisfaction* the implementation of the proposal presented by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean for the establishment of what will provisionally be entitled a gender observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean in fulfilment of the Quito Consensus and the declaration of the first Ibero-American Conference on Gender: Gender and Social Cohesion, held within the framework of the seventeenth Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government;

2. *Request* the Governments to convey their comments regarding the proposal for the establishment of such an observatory and ask the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean to convene a technical meeting to define the indicators for the observatory and to determine what functions each of its components will perform, for subsequent approval by the Presiding Officers;

3. *Establish* that one of the items on the agenda for the next meeting of the Presiding Officers will be an in-depth examination of the role of the Presiding Officers as it relates to the observatory;

4. *Request* the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean to organize a meeting to serve as a briefing session and an opportunity for substantive exchanges for the Caribbean countries with a view to the implementation of the observatory in the subregion, in consideration of the particular features of the latter;

5. *Request* the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean to make every effort to provide the observatory's website in Spanish, French, English and Portuguese, and thank the Government of Brazil for its offer to furnish support for the observatory website's translation into Portuguese.

C. PROPOSAL

1. Background

In many countries, public policy-making has become a matter of social concern and an object of institutional reforms to promote informed participation by citizens in decision-making, to anticipate risks through timely analysis of social processes, and to strengthen confidence in public institutions. In the area of gender policy, a number of countries have combined the need for the gender perspective to be mainstreamed with efforts to create systems for accountability and transparency in policy execution.

Although the region's observatories employ many different modalities, it is clear that one of the conditions for their effectiveness is credibility, which results from efficient and rigorous management of information and knowledge. While the experiences studied differ in their objectives and the areas of concern that they emphasize, they all recognize the importance of effective use of information and of strengthening users' analytical capacities. One of the experiences studied was the Gender Parity Observatory of the Government of France which, since its creation in 1995, has systematically monitored the presence of women in the legislative branch, as well as reviewing all proposed legislation. Other notable experiences are Mexico's Gender and Poverty Observatory and National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy (CONEVAL). The former is a joint project of the Colegio de México (COLMEX), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the Secretariat of Social Development (SEDESOL), the National Institute for Social Development (INDESOL) and the National Women's Institute (INMUJERES), in which an autonomous research entity, the Colegio de México, plays a central role in using official data to analyse poverty from a gender perspective. In addition, CONEVAL, as a public autonomous entity created by the General Law on Social Development and entrusted not only with measuring poverty and other marginalization indicators, but also with conducting independent assessment of the federal Government's social programmes, represents a trend towards greater accountability, and provides a valuable experience to be considered. A final reference case is Colombia's Gender Affairs Observatory, designed to construct a system of indicators, analytical categories and monitoring mechanisms, in order to nurture critical reflection on policy, planning, programmes, standards, jurisprudence and quantitative and qualitative information relevant to improving the status of women and enhancing gender equity in Colombia, and to improve the management of policies and programmes of the Presidential Council for Women's Equity.

2. Mission and objectives

The gender observatory is conceived as a tool to support governments in analysing regional realities, monitoring gender policy and international agreements, and providing technical support and training to national mechanisms for the advancement of women and to national statistical agencies in countries that request such aid. Its principal objectives will be:

(a) To analyse the fulfilment of gender equality goals and targets in the region and increase their visibility

The observatory is an effort to follow up the agenda of the Quito Consensus and, as such, is a tool to be regarded as complementary to other existing tools adopted by the international community.

The principal issues of concern to the observatory are:

- Paid and unpaid work, time use and poverty;
- Access to decision-making and political representation;
- Gender-based violence;
- Reproductive health and rights (a cross-cutting issue).

While the issues addressed by the observatory clearly do not cover the entire agenda of the Beijing and Cairo conferences or the Millennium Development Goals, they do intersect with these, attempting to highlight common areas of concern. Similarly, the issues addressed relate to those covered by the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, without claiming to deal with all of the dimensions that it addresses. Thus, the gender observatory is to be understood in the context of other tools and information sources available at ECLAC and other United Nations bodies;² it is a tool that can be developed and modified in light of the first annual evaluation scheduled by the Presiding Officers.

In brief, the observatory will fulfil this mission by:

- Making available to governments gender indicators and analytical tools for policymaking;
- Providing ongoing monitoring on issues that are important in improving gender equality and policy;
- Providing a technological platform offering easy access to systematically organized information through an online portal.

(b) To supply technical support and training

In countries that request it, producers and users of official statistics, including both national mechanisms for the advancement of women and national statistical agencies, may solicit technical support and training for the collection, processing, analysis and use of statistical data, and for generating the observatory's indicators.

Technical assistance is one of the principal activities assigned to the observatory. Such assistance will seek to strengthen relations between national statistical agencies, national mechanisms for the

² ECLAC, for example, has developed a website devoted to gender statistics, along with a proposal for complementary gender statistics for monitoring the Millennium Development Goals and a proposal for indicators to monitor the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (see www.cepal.org/mujer).

advancement of women and other public entities involved in gender equality policies. This effort emerges from a number of years of inter-agency work designed to improve dialogue between the producers and users of information—in this case, in the context of collaboration between the Regional Conference on Women and the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC.

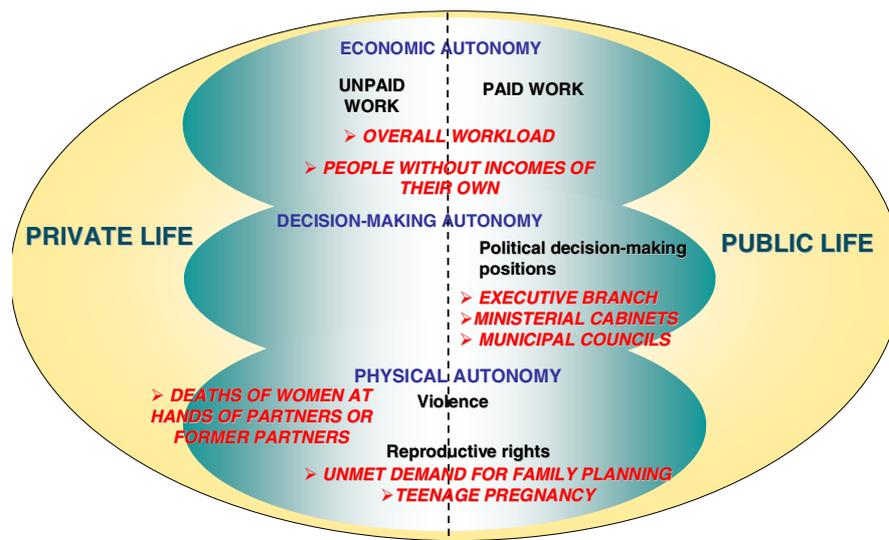
(c) To assess gender inequalities

On 8 March of each year (International Women’s Day), the observatory will release a report analysing changes in the indicators that it monitors and focusing on one specific issue designated each year by the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference. The report will cover and analyse current policy in areas relating to the Quito agenda.

3. Conceptual basis: three cross-cutting areas affecting private and public life

The observatory is designed to communicate an approach in which different issues and indicators reflect the horizontal regional agenda set forth in the Quito Consensus, which is concerned with the public and private lives of men and women. Women’s autonomy is the organizing concept for three specific areas of concern: physical autonomy, economic autonomy and decision-making autonomy. The observatory’s central issues lie within these areas, and critical inequalities in each of them are monitored by indicators. The observatory does not attempt to cover all the dimensions of gender inequality, but it does aim to address areas in which overcoming inequality is a major challenge for the region, from the perspective of the two major issues that emerged from the Quito Conference: political participation and gender parity in decision-making processes at all levels, and women’s contribution to the economy and to social protection.

Diagram 1
AUTONOMY IN INTERRELATED AREAS OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE LIFE



The observatory's indicators have been organized so as to facilitate study of the obstacles to economic, physical and decision-making autonomy faced by women. The driving idea behind this is that women's autonomy is a fundamental factor in ensuring their human rights within a context of full equality. Control over their own bodies (physical autonomy), generation of their own income and resources (economic autonomy) and full participation in decisions that affect their lives individually and collectively (decision-making autonomy) are three pillars for constructing greater gender equality in the region.

The website's preliminary design is based on this conception, and will offer users various ways of accessing information, indicators, best practices and institutional links for each of the areas of concern, for each indicator and for each country or subregion. Beginning at any point of entry, users can move to the other areas of concern and indicators, thus reinforcing the idea of the integral and complementary nature of the observatory's issues and areas of concern.

Finally, the gradual collection of best practices for each area of concern will be based on the definition of discrimination against women,³ this being any action whose object or results prove detrimental to women's rights. Accordingly, the observatory will emphasize the results of policy in terms of its ability to reduce specific gender gaps that it targets. The observatory does not claim to be able to produce universally valid solutions, since it conceives public policymaking as a technical and political process of construction, in which multiple actors and interests participate in differing contexts. Thus, the observatory must be understood as a tool for organizing the knowledge available at a given point in time, and a guide for thinking, analysis and decision-making.

4. Indicators: significant but few in numbers

Some of the initial indicators that have been proposed are already available at ECLAC and other United Nations bodies that have committed themselves to maintaining updated data on some observatory indicators.⁴ Others, such as total workload and women's deaths at the hands of partners or former partners, will require collecting data over time in collaboration with the countries and their national mechanisms for the advancement of women.

Indicators in this context are those that reflect some aspect of the policy agenda approved in Quito, in which equality as a democratic objective and the importance of unpaid work in social protection policy are central. Such indicators are important owing to their ability to shed light on inequality and discrimination, either because they show the final results of systemic processes of discrimination (for example, the proportion of women with no income of their own is an indicator of women's lack of economic autonomy and their difficulty in gaining access to paid activities) or because they are an extreme and visible manifestation of a phenomenon (the number of women who die at the hands of partners or former partners is an indicator of violence against women) and offer an opening into wide-ranging discussions of the deep-rooted causes of gender inequality.

³ Article 1 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women defines discrimination against women as "any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of marital status, on the basis of equality between men and women, of human rights or fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil, or any other field."

⁴ PAHO has committed itself to providing and maintaining updated information on the teenage pregnancy indicator; UNFPA has made a similar commitment with regard to the unmet demand for family planning indicator; INSTRAW will collaborate on generating the information needed to compile information on the proportion of female mayors.

The proposed indicators will produce an overall profile of the countries and the region in terms of the status of, and changes in, inequality between men and women in key areas. Based on this set of key indicators, each specific issue will be associated with links to other indicators that are important for the monitoring of the Millennium Development Goals, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Platform for Action and elements of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. The observatory's indicators are intended to be a point of entry to, as well as a link with, other issues and indicators.

One of the first activities to be implemented at the observatory is validation of this group of indicators, which is intended to provide an overview of the selected issues. It is important to note that the indicators have been chosen on the basis of extensive cooperation among the members of the inter-agency gender group (principally ECLAC, UNFPA and UNIFEM). In light of the work of the last five years, the following initial indicators have been proposed. Following is a detailed description of the indicators (see also the annex).

Table 1
PROPOSED INDICATORS

Area of concern	Proposed indicator	Definition
Economic autonomy	People without incomes of their own	In percentages of total female or male population 15 years of age and over, this indicator shows the proportion of men and women who have no income of their own (wages, pensions, remittances, business income or income from productive activity)
	Time devoted to paid activities and to unpaid domestic activities (total workload)	Total number of hours per day (or week) of paid and unpaid work, disaggregated by sex, for persons 15 years of age and over
Physical autonomy	Teenage pregnancy	Percentage of adolescent girls 15 to 19 years old who are mothers or are pregnant for the first time
	Women's deaths at the hands of partners or former partners	Number of women per year who die at the hands of a partner
	Unmet demand for family planning	Expresses the number of women in couples (married or not) who do not wish to have more children, or who would postpone the next birth, but who are not using a method of family planning
Decision-making autonomy	Proportion of women in national legislative bodies	Proportion of women in the main national legislature (national chamber of deputies or parliament)
	Proportion of women in ministerial cabinets	Proportion of ministries headed by women
	Proportion of female elected mayors	Proportion of mayors who are women
	Countries that have approved and ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (online)	Qualitative indicator regarding the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Table 1 (concluded)

Area of concern	Proposed indicator	Definition
	Level within the government hierarchy of national mechanisms for the advancement of women	Qualitative indicator that classifies each national machinery for the advancement of women on a scale spanning four levels: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ministries, entities attached to the Office of the President and other heads of entities with full cabinet participation 2. Entities attached to the Office of the President, and other heads of entities with access to the social or extended cabinet 3. Vice-ministries or national institutes headed by persons who lack cabinet standing 4. Posts of Director-General and other government entities.

(a) People without incomes of their own (economic autonomy)

By showing the proportion of men and women with no income (wages, pensions, remittances, business income or income from productive activities) and reflecting recognizable gender gaps, this indicator provides an approximation of women's lack of economic autonomy—a problem that exists in all socioeconomic strata, although more pronounced in the lower strata, and in general is a vulnerability factor. This indicator provides an overall reflection of the barriers and difficulties that women face in gaining access to income-generating activities in the labour market, as well as to property, other assets, and credit. The traditional measures of poverty tend to emphasize per capita household income, assuming equal distribution of income within the household and concealing the lack of economic autonomy on the part of some household members, who are generally dependent on the income-receiving members. The proposed indicator provides a broader view, since the lack of individual incomes among women is frequently associated with unpaid reproductive activity within the home, which limits their time and opportunities for development and makes them particularly vulnerable to poverty in cases of family break-up or widowhood.

(b) Total workload, or time devoted to paid activities and unpaid domestic activities (economic autonomy)

By highlighting differences in the number of hours devoted to paid and unpaid work, this indicator not only makes visible the existence of a double workday for women and the phenomenon of unequal distribution of unpaid domestic work between men and women, but also shows the difficulty that women face in harmonizing economic activity and working life with reproductive obligations, because men generally do not play a significant role in domestic activity and unpaid care. This indicator clearly shows the tenuous border between the public and private spheres and between paid and unpaid work for men and women. Total workload is proposed as an indicator in order to recognize and highlight the fact that domestic and reproductive work, although unpaid, should be fully considered as work. Total workload is calculated as the sum of unpaid domestic work and paid work. It must be calculated in terms of both female and male participation rates, and in terms of the time devoted to it. It is designed to reflect hours devoted to caregiving, an important form of unpaid work most often performed exclusively by women.

(c) Teenage pregnancy (physical autonomy)

Teenage pregnancy is one instance of reproductive risk whose incidence has increased in many countries over the last several years. This indicator shows that, even if teenagers now live in societies with higher educational levels and greater access to information and knowledge, and despite the fact that many countries have significantly reduced maternal mortality through improved access to health policies, adolescent girls have received insufficient attention. Thus, teenage pregnancy is a reflection of insufficient access to reproductive health services, and of the persistence of patriarchal practices and values that prevent adolescent girls from exercising control over their bodies. Moreover, it is associated with complications in pregnancy and birth which increase maternal mortality rates. This problem is aggravated by the fact that adolescent girls generally do not seek or receive appropriate prenatal care. Teenage pregnancy can be devastating, and young mothers are often forced to abandon their studies, thus limiting their personal and social development, their future economic advancement and their progress as citizens.

PAHO has proposed this indicator as a key to reproductive health, and has committed itself to sharing its databases with the observatory.

(d) Deaths of women at the hands of partners or former partners (physical autonomy)

Women's deaths at the hands of partners or former partners are one of the most extreme expressions of gender violence and inequality between men and women. In general, violence against women is not measured in the region, and sources of information regarding this matter are diverse and of poor quality. There is an awareness of the need for better measurement of physical and sexual violence within and outside the home, the definition that prevails in the scarce data available from demographic and health surveys. In conjunction with other United Nations bodies, ECLAC has prepared a proposal that has been submitted for consideration to the United Nations Statistical Commission. A response is expected during the fifty-third session (March 2009) of the Commission on the Status of Women. This indicator makes it possible to focus on a very serious phenomenon. Data are available in the countries principally through administrative (mainly judicial and police) records, which should facilitate collecting the necessary information. In this area, the observatory will need to collaborate with national mechanisms for the advancement of women and with national statistical agencies.

(e) Unmet demand for family planning (physical autonomy)

The concept of unmet demand for family planning applies to women who, when interviewed, state that they do not wish to have another child in the next two years, if at all, but who are not using any method of birth control. This unmet need for family planning results from increased demand, limitations in the availability of reproductive health services, lack of support from communities and spouses, lack of relevant information, financial costs and transport constraints. The International Conference on Population and Development assigned priority to reducing this unmet demand, viewing it as a guiding principle to ensure that births are the result of voluntary, well-founded choice. This indicator has recently been incorporated in the monitoring of the Millennium Development Goals.

For the foregoing reasons, UNFPA considers this to be a key indicator, and has proposed to monitor it and committed itself to sharing its own relevant databases.

(f) Proportion of women in national legislative bodies (decision-making autonomy)

This indicator reflects the level and changing status of women's access to decision-making positions at the highest level of the legislative branch of government. It provides an approximation of women's participation in the legislative process and their integration in the political-party system.

(g) Proportion of women in ministerial cabinets (decision-making autonomy)

This indicator reflects the level of, and change in, women's access to decision-making processes at the highest level of the executive branch of government. It reflects women's role in government departments and indicates the types of ministries headed by women.

(h) Proportion of elected mayors who are female (decision-making autonomy)

This indicator reflects the level of change in women's access to decision-making positions at the highest level of local government. Its importance lies in the fact that it helps gauge the presence of women in decision-making positions, typically in the areas of government closest to the population and to community life.

(i) Countries that have approved and ratified the Optional Protocol to CEDAW (decision-making autonomy)

Ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women is undoubtedly the most accurate indicator of the political resolve of States in fully enforcing the Convention. The efforts of the international community, the international human rights movement and women's organizations have come together in promoting the Protocol, which states that persons or groups of persons under the jurisdiction of the signatory States who allege that they are victims of a violation by the State in whose jurisdiction they are located may lodge complaints with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. This indicator provides an approximation of States' level of commitment to the Convention.

(j) Level within the government hierarchy of national mechanisms for the advancement of women (decision-making autonomy)

According to the studies conducted, this indicator reflects the importance that governments assign to gender equality policies. Four levels of governmental hierarchy have been defined: (i) ministries and entities attached to the Office of the President or whose heads participate fully in cabinet discussions; (ii) entities attached to the Office of the President or whose heads have access to the social or extended cabinet; (iii) deputy ministers, offices or national institutes headed by persons who lack cabinet standing; (iv) positions of director-general and other government entities.

5. Working mechanisms

The observatory's operations will centre around the following bodies: the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean; the working group on gender statistics of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC; an inter-institutional working group; and a technical secretariat.

(a) Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean

The Presiding Officers, representing the most important intergovernmental organ on gender policy, will be the observatory's policy arm, and will be charged with:

- Defining the observatory's priorities and issuing guidelines;
- Analysing and approving the annual work plan submitted by the technical secretariat in consultation with the working group on gender statistics of the Statistical Conference of the Americas;
- Assessing the performance of the observatory's activities and products;
- Transmitting suggestions and comments, where it deems appropriate, regarding the gender observatory's activities;
- Receiving periodic information on the observatory's development and activities;
- Exchanging statistical, documentary and programme information with the region's national statistical agencies, in order to generate data for, and update, the observatory's indicators, good practices and areas of concern.

(b) Working group on gender statistics of the Statistical Conference of the Americas⁵

As a key entity involved in producing gender statistics in the region, working group on gender statistics of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC will:

- Serve as a consultative technical group for the observatory, in order to improve the statistical quality of the indicators by assessing their technical and methodological rigour;
- Issue recommendations on the observatory's work plan as regards the nature and processing of the indicators;
- Be an important forum for technical consultation and cooperation between the national statistical agencies and national mechanisms for the advancement of women.

(c) Inter-institutional working group

This group, made up of the United Nations bodies involved in the gender observatory's activities, plus the donor organizations (AECID, SEGIB and the Trust Fund of the Government of France), will meet at least once a year to:

⁵ The working group is directed by Mexico's National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Informatics (INEGI), coordinated by ECLAC, and composed of the national statistical agencies of Argentina, Bolivia, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama and Uruguay.

- Contribute to the implementation of the work plan approved by the Presiding Officers and to assist in implementing the recommendations of the SCA working group on gender statistics;
- Conduct technical review and analysis of a report by the observatory's technical secretariat regarding its progress and activities;
- Make proposals for appropriate implementation of the work plan, based on suggestions from the participating organizations.

(d) Technical secretariat

Through its Division for Gender Affairs, ECLAC will function as the observatory's technical secretariat and will be responsible for the execution of the project, in coordination with the ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean. The responsibilities of the technical secretariat will include:

- Coordinating activities and contributions of various types, pursuant to the work plan;
- Maintaining ongoing technical cooperation and collaboration with governments, United Nations agencies and participating donor entities;
- Processing the observatory's information and data;
- Requesting information and data for the observatory from governments and relevant international bodies;
- Coordinating the contributions of other United Nations bodies (funds, research, inputs of data, technical advisory services to countries requesting it) either directly or through experts in the region;
- Designing, updating and providing information through the observatory's website;
- Reporting to the Presiding Officers on activities carried out, submitting an annual work plan to them and coordinating with United Nations bodies and donor entities, in the context of the inter-institutional group, to further the implementation of the plan;
- Managing the project's funds, in accordance with United Nations administrative and financial rules.

6. Recent activities

(a) Technical meeting of experts on the observatory's indicators

Pursuant to the agreements concluded at the forty-first meeting of the Presiding Officers, and under the auspices of the SCA working group on gender statistics, the technical secretariat held a technical meeting to examine the proposed indicators for the observatory. Professional staff from the national statistical agencies and personnel responsible for gender statistics in national mechanisms for the advancement of women participated substantively.

The objective of the meeting was to determine the methodological consistency and relevance of the indicators, assess the availability of data sources and also make recommendations to both the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC and the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean. On the basis of these contributions, ECLAC will present a consolidated proposal at the next meeting of the Presiding Officers.

The technical meeting was held in Aguascalientes, Mexico on 2 and 3 October 2008, in the context of the activities of the Working group on gender statistics of the Statistical Conference of the Americas.

(b) The preparatory meeting with Caribbean national mechanisms for the advancement of women on the proposed observatory

As requested during the forty-first meeting of the Presiding Officers, ECLAC held a meeting with national mechanisms for the advancement of women, in order to present the observatory proposal and report on the steps taken to implement it. The discussions focused in particular on the specific challenges involved in the Caribbean area in generating statistical information for the observatory's indicators, as well as discussion of actions to implement the observatory.

This meeting was held on 6 and 7 October in Port of Spain.

The participants at these two technical meetings agreed that the proposed conceptual framework would be a useful starting point and that the indicators were socially relevant, especially those concerning the follow-up to the Quito Consensus and the programme of work of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC. They recognized that a number of sources were available for calculating and working out several of the indicators.

They would seek to ensure that the national statistical institutes and, in particular, the members of the working group on gender statistics, worked to harmonize gender statistics in order to enhance their comparability, particularly as regards the selected indicators for the observatory.

The participants also stressed the need to strengthen ties between users and producers of gender statistics, to reinforce the regulatory role of national statistical institutes in the framework of statistical information as well as the policy-making role of machineries for the advancement of women. In particular, they recommended that tripartite agreements should be concluded between national statistical institutes, national machineries for the advancement of women and other bodies (electoral registration offices, the judiciary, the police and the courts) which were essential for the generation of indicators for the observatory.

(c) Forty-second meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean

This meeting will be held in Santiago on 4 and 5 December 2008. The agenda will include the following items:

- The Presiding Officers' role in relation to the observatory;
- The proposed indicators for the observatory;
- The observatory's initial annual work plan.

Annex

TECHNICAL NOTE ON THE PROPOSED INDICATORS

Area of concern	Proposed indicator	Information source	Definition and method of calculation	Unit of measurement	Reference period	Geographic coverage
Economic autonomy	People without incomes of their own	ECLAC, based on countries' household surveys	Percentages of total female/male population 15 years of age and over, to show the proportion of men and women who have no incomes of their own (wages, pensions, remittances, business income and income from productive activities)	Percentage	Annual (and depending on periodicity of countries' household surveys)	Urban, rural or national
	Time devoted to paid activities and unpaid domestic activities (total workload)	ECLAC, based on time-use surveys	Total number of hours per day (or week) of paid work and unpaid work, disaggregated by sex, for persons 15 years of age and over	Number of hours per week or month	Annual (and depending on availability of time use surveys)	Urban, rural or national
Physical autonomy	Teenage pregnancy	PAHO, based on surveys of demographics, health, etc.	Percentage of adolescent girls aged 15-19 who are mothers, or are pregnant for the first time	Percentage	To be determined according to periodicity of countries' demographic and health surveys	Urban, rural or national
	Women's deaths at hands of partners or former partners	National mechanisms for the advancement of women (based on administrative, police and judicial records)	Women's deaths at the hands of partners or former partners	Absolute number of women and number per 100,000 women	Annual	National
	Unmet demand for family planning	UNFPA, based on demographic, health and other surveys	Shows the number of women living with a partner (whether married or not) who do not wish to have more children, or wish to postpone the next birth, but who are using no family planning method	Percentage of all women living with a partner	To be determined according to periodicity of countries' demographic and health surveys	National

Annex (concluded)

Area of concern	Proposed indicator	Information source	Definition and method of calculation	Unit of measurement	Reference period	Geographic coverage
Decision-making autonomy	Proportion of women in national legislative bodies	ECLAC, based on data from the Inter-Parliamentary Union	Proportion of women in the main national legislative body (national chamber of deputies or parliament)	Percentage	Annual	National
	Proportion of women in ministerial cabinets	ECLAC, based on information provided by mechanisms for the advancement of women	Proportion of ministries headed by women	Percentage	Annual	National
	Proportion of female elected mayors	ECLAC, with support from INSTRAW and countries	Proportion of elected mayors who are female	Percentage	Annual	National
	Countries that have approved and ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (online)	ECLAC, based on the Convention's website	Qualitative indicator regarding ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women	Yes/No	Annual	National
	Level within governmental hierarchy of national mechanisms for the advancement of women	ECLAC, based on information provided by mechanisms for the advancement of women	Qualitative indicator that classifies each national machinery for the advancement of women on a scale of four levels	Absolute level on a scale of four levels of government hierarchy: 1. Ministries, entities attached to the Office of the President and other heads of entities with full cabinet participation 2. Entities attached to the Office of the President, and other heads of entities with access to the social or extended cabinet 3. Vice-ministries or national institutes headed by persons who lack cabinet standing 4. Positions of Director-General and other government entities	Annual	National