

**UNITED NATIONS**

**ECONOMIC COMMISSION  
FOR LATIN AMERICA  
AND THE CARIBBEAN - ECLAC**



Distr.  
LIMITED

LC/L.2215  
8 November 2004

ENGLISH  
ORIGINAL: SPANISH

---

Statistical Conference of the Americas of the Economic  
Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

Dallas, United States, 30 November and 1 December 2004

**REFLECTIONS ON THE MEETING OF THE STATISTICAL CONFERENCE OF  
THE AMERICAS OF THE ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR  
LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**

## **1. Background**

The third meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean will be held in June 2005 and will be devoted to the preparation and adoption of the medium- and long-term programme of work.

The participants in the first two meetings of the Conference confirmed the need for a regional intergovernmental forum to coordinate the regional programme of work, and attested to the member States' interest in participating actively in programmed activities. The growing participation of multilateral organizations also demonstrates the importance of this meeting as a mechanism for the exchange of information and the coordination of programmes of work. Moreover, the Conference should serve as a forum for the analysis of substantive issues of concern to the statistical community in the region.

Both the Chairperson of the Executive Committee of the Conference and ECLAC, in its capacity as technical secretariat, are committed to building on the achievements of the first two meetings to ensure that the Conference has a clearly defined mandate as the intergovernmental body that guides and directs the production of statistics in the Latin American and Caribbean countries.

The achievement of this objective is contingent on the application of a broader technical and institutional approach and the formulation of a plan of action to serve as a frame of reference for regional statistical activities.

To this end, the Executive Committee needs to work out long-term strategic guidelines, for the period up to 2015, on the production and consolidation of statistics to meet the countries' requirements in the light of economic and social change, as well as the commitments undertaken by Governments vis-à-vis their citizens and the international community.

## **2. Charting a new course**

The countries have identified the need to enhance the credibility of national statistics among users, economic agents and decision-makers. The transformation of economic and social structures as a result of the development process and the challenges posed by globalization are constantly generating new demands for information. Regional statistics must therefore meet international standards of quality, timeliness and completeness.

Bearing in mind both the level of development of the region's statistical capacity and the importance attached to the processes of harmonization and integration in Latin America and the Caribbean, the region should set goals that are similar to those established for new members of the European Union and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

The establishment of long-term goals involves defining a strategy, determining the activities to be carried out and identifying the necessary resources. Consequently, the Statistical Conference of the Americas should formulate a medium-term plan to provide ongoing training to professionals and technical experts in order to enhance the quality of statistics through the use of appropriate

methodological instruments. Specifically, the Conference should adopt a plan of action for training sufficient numbers of professional and technical experts in basic and summary statistics.

The institutional framework for the member States' official statistical entities is another issue that should be examined, since the level of development of these structures is not the same in all countries of the region. In some cases, the entities or institutions responsible for the production and dissemination of statistics are fully integrated into the State's organizational structure and perform their functions efficiently. Other countries are in an intermediate position because the coordination of their national statistical system is only partial or is more difficult in some areas than in others. There are also cases where statisticians work within a precarious institutional and legal framework, without sufficient support in terms of human and financial resources and information technology.

The Statistical Conference of the Americas should therefore provide the region's Governments with recommendations on how to place national statistical systems on a sound institutional footing so that they will be able to play the role incumbent on them in the new millennium, in accordance with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics adopted by the United Nations Statistical Commission. Emphasis should be placed on the fact that statistics are a public good and that, in general, both the production and dissemination of statistics should be financed from the national budget.

Accordingly, the legal framework for national statistical systems must be modernized; the role of national statistical institutes and other public and private entities working in this field must be defined; and budgetary, professional and information resources must be allocated for the production, processing, analysis and dissemination of basic and summary statistics.

ECLAC and regional organizations have a vital role to play as facilitators of a debate that will further the achievement of the above-mentioned objectives. In addition, multilateral and horizontal cooperation with countries that have modernized their statistical systems can help the countries of the region to achieve these goals. Multilateral institutions and developed-country Governments could share their experiences with the countries of the region and give them financial support for the implementation of the plan of action to be adopted by the participants in the next meeting of the Conference. In this respect, it should be recalled that the Conference is an official United Nations body and, as such, has all the status of an international forum and the full support of its member Governments.

### **3. Modus operandi**

In accordance with the basic principles of the Conference and of similar forums, particularly the mechanisms adopted by the Conference of European Statisticians, the decisions and activities of the Statistical Conference of the Americas emanate from its member countries. At its next meeting, therefore, the Conference should set up working groups made up of representatives of member countries to analyse points of common interest and draw up proposals or recommendations for joint activities.

The participants in the next meeting of the Conference will need to be brought up to date on the initiatives agreed upon in the different subregions in order to avoid duplication of effort, give support to such initiatives and bring them into line with the region-wide objectives laid down in the plan of action.

Furthermore, the Chairperson considers that the plan of action, by setting out objectives and activities that reflect national and regional priorities in terms of the production of statistics, will enable multilateral and subregional institutions to improve the coordination of activities in the region.

In this connection, the Chairperson advocates a stronger role for ECLAC in providing technical assistance to the Conference and in coordinating international activities, and hopes that the countries will participate actively in the initiatives agreed upon and in the implementation of the recommendations formulated by the Conference.