



Second Meeting of the Steering Committee
La Paz, Bolivia, 7-8 December 2000

Report of the Chairperson



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CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
REPORT OF THE CHAIRPERSON	1
Principles and rules of the Statistical Conference of the Americas	1
General framework of activities.....	2
Programme of international statistical work for Latin America and the Caribbean 2001-2002	2
Follow-up to the Steering Committee agreements.....	3
Preparations for the second meeting of the Steering Committee	3
Integration of regional and subregional efforts.....	4
Conference Web page	4
Directory of authorities of the decade.....	5
Dissemination of methodologies.....	5

REPORT OF THE CHAIRPERSON

1. Since the first meeting of the Steering Committee, held in Lima on 12 and 13 April 2000, there have been several events which are worthy of attention. Firstly, changes have taken place in the management of several of the national statistical offices represented here and, on a technical level, we have conducted various activities aimed at achieving the established objectives and fulfilling the commitments that have been undertaken.

Principles and rules of the Statistical Conference of the Americas

2. Before mentioning the activities conducted at the technical level over the last nine months, I should like to share some considerations on the following issues, which are, in my view, of great importance for the proper functioning of the Conference:

- The Statistical Conference of the Americas is an organization to which a significant number of countries belong. Because of the nature of its constitution, its member countries comply with agreements and commitments at their discretion.
- This body was created recently and is now undergoing a process of consolidation. In order to contribute to that process, it is necessary to work towards identifying the “rules of the game” and practical principles that will aid in the management of the Conference and the attainment of its objectives while at the same time making it more efficient and responsive.

3. We must validate those practices used thus far that we deem worthy of maintaining. We must also create rules which are appropriate to the circumstances and adapted to our purposes.

4. We should institute, for example, a principle, obligation or code of ethics at the Conference level which would guarantee compliance with the commitments undertaken by each member country in conformity with the expected standards and within the established time frame. This would ensure that the

Programme of International Statistical Work for Latin America and the Caribbean and any other commitments that are assumed are fulfilled as planned.

General framework of activities

5. The objectives of the Conference, the agreements reached at the first meeting of the Steering Committee, and the operating procedures for the Conference, its Steering Committee and its technical secretariat have served as an overall framework for the activities of this Chair.

6. Over the last nine months, activities have been carried out in an effort to disseminate information concerning the role of the Conference and the conclusions of the first meeting of the Steering Committee and to implement the agreements that have been reached.

7. On this basis, work has proceeded on the preparation of a draft programme of international statistical work for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2001-2002, on the follow-up to the agreements reached at the first meeting of the Committee, on the preparations for the second meeting of the Steering Committee, and on the integration of regional and subregional efforts.

Programme of International Statistical Work for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2001-2002

8. One of the tasks that has required the most attention and dedication has been the preparation of a draft programme of international statistical work for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2001-2002, which is to be presented by the technical secretariat. The draft programme incorporates, among other contributions, those made by Mexico concerning national accounts, environmental statistics and agricultural censuses, by Bolivia regarding the dissemination of statistics, by Guatemala with regard to Central American activities, and by Peru in relation to poverty and activities of the Andean Community.

The draft programme thus reflects a joint effort on the part of Governments, other regional and international agencies and, particularly, of ECLAC, which, as technical secretariat, has monitored this work.

Follow-up to the Steering Committee agreements

9. All the commitments that have been made have been fully met except for a few isolated activities which are yet to be completed. One agreement that is pending is the preparation of an electronic-media working proposal for the countries of the Conference, which has been assigned jointly to Mexico and Spain. Another agreement that is yet to be fully implemented is the inclusion of activities in the Caribbean area in the Programme of International Statistical Work for Latin America and the Caribbean. This task has been assigned to the Dominican Republic, and we are confident that it will gradually be accomplished and will be completed before mid-February 2001, when we will need to forward the material that is to be addressed at the first meeting of the Conference in May to all its members.

10. The fulfilment of the agreements is the outcome of the commitment undertaken by each of the countries and of on-going coordination between the Chair and the technical secretariat.

Preparations for the second meeting of the Steering Committee

11. The preparations for the second meeting of the Steering Committee focused on its main objective, which was to organize the first meeting of the Conference.

12. To this end, special emphasis was placed on the substantive issues to be addressed in depth at the Conference. In our view, these deliberations should refer, insofar as possible, to three areas: (1) aspects of organization and spheres within which national statistical offices should operate, (2) new areas of statistical development and (3) new policies and guidelines for national statistical systems.

13. Thus, although at its first meeting the Steering Committee instructed the Chairperson and the technical secretariat to select one or two substantive issues, we felt it was necessary to consult all the member countries. In response, we received proposals regarding 18 substantive issues from six countries and two from ECLAC (see agenda). Given that one of the objectives of the second meeting of the Committee is to evaluate and select the substantive issues to be addressed by the Conference, we will request the countries which are represented at the second meeting and which have proposed a substantive issue or issues to substantiate those proposals.

Integration of regional and subregional efforts

14. We believe that the Conference should draw upon activities and projects being carried out by other regional and subregional integration schemes so that we can join forces and thus enable the member countries of the Conference to achieve greater benefits within a shorter time frame.

15. As a member of the Conference of Iberoamerican Authorities on Informatics (CAIBI), Peru has collaborated actively on the design of a proposal of internationally comparable statistics and basic indicators on information technology which, as Chairperson of the Statistical Conference of the Americas, I have conveyed to the member countries in order to encourage their interest and active participation in the generation of statistics on information technology.

16. As part of this integration of efforts, the programme for the period 2001-2002 incorporates activities and agreements of Mercosur and the Andean Community.

Conference Web page

17. The Web page developed by the Conference has both English- and Spanish-language versions and provides directories, information about meetings, agreements and international technical cooperation, announcements, links to the Web pages of member countries, and so forth.

18. This Web page serves as a major channel of dissemination for the activities of the Conference and could soon become the portal of the Statistical Conference of the Americas. This portal could include virtual panel discussions that would further the work of expert groups on issues of interest at the regional and subregional level.

19. The Web page is currently hosted by the servers of the National Institute of Statistics and Informatics (INEI) of Peru and is linked to ECLAC. It would be helpful for the member countries to link their own Web pages to the Conference's page as well.

Directory of authorities of the decade

20. The current “directory of authorities of the decade” was prepared in order to have information on hand concerning the directors who have supervised the development of official statistics in their countries during recent years. Given their experience in the management and performance of statistical work, these individuals are qualified high-level advisors who are in a position to contribute to future statistical development in the countries of our region and the world. We must make a commitment to keep this directory up to date at all times.

Dissemination of methodologies

21. One of the pillars of the work being done in the field of statistics is the application of methodologies. The countries have not all reached the same level of development in this area, and methodology transfer among them is therefore essential. International agencies have devoted a great deal of effort to the development and dissemination of methodologies. ECLAC has translated some of these methodologies into Spanish and has disseminated them among the countries of the region. Its work in this area has contributed to the harmonization of their statistics.

22. I should like to conclude this brief report by highlighting the commitment and spirit of participation exhibited by the member countries, together with the effort and dedication displayed by the technical secretariat in implementing the Programme of International Statistical Work for Latin America and the Caribbean 1999-2000 and in preparing the proposed programme of work for the period 2001-2002. Without this collaboration on the part of the countries and the technical secretariat, the achievements attained would not have been possible.