



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

Final Report



Economic Commission for
Latin America and the Caribbean



Office of the Chairperson of the
Statistical Conference of the Americas

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I. ORGANIZATION OF WORK

Place, date and purpose of meeting

1. The second meeting of the Steering Committee of the Statistical Conference of the Americas was held at the offices of the National Institute of Statistics of Bolivia in La Paz from 7 to 8 December 2000.
2. The meeting was held in accordance with the agreements adopted at the first meeting of the Steering Committee for the purposes set out below:
 - (a) To organize the first meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas, to be held at the headquarters of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in Santiago, Chile from 27 to 29 March 2001;
 - (b) To consider the draft report on the activities held within the framework of the Programme of International Statistical Work for Latin America and the Caribbean, 1999-2000;
 - (c) To adopt the programme of international statistical work for Latin America and the Caribbean proposed for 2001-2002, and
 - (d) To select the substantive issues to be treated in depth at the first meeting of the Conference.

Attendance¹

3. The meeting was attended by the following:
 - (a) Members of the Steering Committee of the Statistical Conference of the Americas: the heads of the national statistical institutes of Argentina, Bolivia, Peru and Spain and representatives of the national statistical institutes of Mexico and Guatemala;
 - (b) Secretariat: the Director, the Deputy Director and the Chief of the Section of Social Statistics in the Statistics and Economic Projections Division and the Legal Assistant of ECLAC, and
 - (c) Observers and special guests: heads of the national statistical institutes of Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Honduras, Panama and Uruguay and the Director of the International and Professional Relations Division of Statistics Canada.

Organization of discussions

4. The meeting was chaired by Felix Murillo, Chief of the National Institute of Statistics and Informatics of Peru. Participants requested ECLAC to perform the duties of rapporteur of the meeting.

Agenda and documentation

5. Participants had before them the documents listed in annex 3 and the following agenda:

¹ See annex 2: List of participants.

AGENDA

Opening session and adoption of the agenda

Report of the Chairperson (Document CD-CEA-05)

- Agenda item I:** Consideration of the report on the implementation of the Programme of International Statistical Work for Latin America and the Caribbean, 1999-2000, which will be presented at the first meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas (Document CD-CEA-01)
- A. Report of ECLAC on the activities carried out under its biennial programme, 1999-2000
 - B. Discussion and adoption of the report.
- Agenda item II:** Performance report on the proposed Programme of international statistical work for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2001-2002 for presentation at the first meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas (Document CD-CEA-02)
- A. Presentation of the proposed Programme
 - B. Discussion and adoption of the Programme
- Agenda item III:** Presentation of topics for discussion at the first meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas
- A. Evaluation and selection of substantive items (see annex 1)
 - Defence of proposals by their authors
 - B. Proposed agenda
- Agenda item IV:** Other items relating to the first meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas
- Consolidation of the Conference
 - Time-limits and guidelines for the preparation of documents for presentation at the first meeting of the Conference (languages, sequential order, other.)
- Agenda item V:** Consideration and adoption of the Final Report of the second meeting of the Steering Committee.

Opening session

6. The meeting was declared open by Carlos Garáfulic, Executive Director of the National Institute of Statistics of Bolivia, who, on behalf of the Government of Bolivia and the staff of the Institute, warmly welcomed participants to Bolivia. He said that it was a source of great satisfaction for the Institute to have them as guests on the occasion of the second meeting of the Steering Committee of the Statistical Conference of the Americas. The national statistical offices had always wished to have a

forum of continental scope within a suitable institutional framework, such as the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, and thereby to promote development and the improvement of national statistics, to advance towards comparability of international statistics and to promote cooperation between statistical offices.

7. He recalled the steps taken by the Directors of Statistics towards the establishment within the framework of ECLAC of a statistical forum which would not only assume the functions previously assured by the Inter-American Statistical Conference but which would also be stronger and, fundamentally, the sustainability required to fulfill the objectives identified by countries with respect to statistical matters.

8. He reported that, at a meeting at ECLAC headquarters in Santiago, Chile, some months later, the Directors of Statistics of the Americas had formulated proposed guidelines for a new forum designated the Statistical Conference of the Americas; those guidelines were transmitted to the member Governments of ECLAC; in April 2000, they had learnt with satisfaction that the guidelines had been approved and that the forum would therefore become a part of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. It was an achievement of great significance and would be welcomed by all concerned.

9. The Conference did not then have the legal status it had since acquired, but had, nevertheless, prepared a work plan for the period 1999-2000, the implementation of which would be assessed at the current meeting. The fundamental purpose of the meeting was the preparation of the Programme of work for the biennium 2001-2002 for consideration by government representatives at the first meeting of the Conference, scheduled to be held in Santiago, Chile, in 2001; in view of the new legal status of this forum, the programme would be binding on Governments and any decisions adopted there and approved by the countries would be considered as government commitments.

10. Lastly, the meeting should assess and select the substantive issues proposed by the countries as items to be addressed at the forthcoming meeting of the Conference. At the start of a new century, dominated by the market economy, technological revolution and constant change in the living environment, there can be no doubt as to the importance of information in our society. Thus, this new framework, the information produced by statistical offices had a strategic value, and, for that reason, should show great responsibility and be prepared to respond appropriately to the new challenges which made it fundamental for statistical bodies in countries of the region to maintain close links with each other.

11. In concluding, he thanked delegations for their participation in the meeting and at the inaugural ceremony of the newly modernized National Institute of Statistics in Bolivia, after which he declared open the second meeting of the Steering Committee of the Statistical Conference of the Americas.

12. Félix Murillo, Economist and Head of the National Institute of Statistics and Informatics of Peru and Chairperson of the Steering Committee of the Conference then took the floor and, on behalf of the Directors of Statistics, cordially greeted the Executive Director of the National Institute of Statistics of Bolivia and expressed special thanks for the organization of the meeting and the hospitality extended to participants.

13. He then greeted the Directors of Statistics, who were attending either as guests or as members of the Steering Committee, of whom, six out of a total of seven were present; He welcomed the, new

incumbents appointed to head the statistical institutes in some of the countries represented on the Steering Committee, mentioning specifically Osvaldo Luis Kacef, Director of the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INDEC) of Argentina, Carmen Alcaide Guindo, President of the National Statistical Office of Spain; Luis Hernández Martí, National Director of the National Statistical Office of the Dominican Republic and Enrique Ordaz, incoming Director of the Statistics and Economic Projections Division of ECLAC.

14. He also expressed special appreciation to the representatives of the member countries of the Conference who were attending the second meeting of the Steering Committee as observers and drew attention to Máximo Aguilera Reyes, National Director of the National Institute of Statistics of Chile, María Eulalia Arteta Manrique, Director of the National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE) of Colombia; Gloria María Palcios Zelaya and Ingrid Belinda Díaz de Lara of the Presidential Committee for Modernization of Honduras; Johny Cevallos Muñoz, Director General of the National Statistics and Census Institute (INEC) of Ecuador; Luis Quesada of the Statistics and Census Office of Panama and Orual Andina, Head of the National Institute of Statistics of Uruguay.

15. He also drew attention to the presence of Béla Prigly, the representative of Statistics Canada, who, although not a member of the Steering Committee had, since the first meeting, collaborated in a very constructive way in the latter's tasks, along with the actual members. He expressed the hope that the spirit of cooperation would be maintained for a long time to come.

16. The Steering Committee would be concentrating on three important points during its meeting: the first was to revise and approve the Proposed programme of international statistical work for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2001-2002 and the agenda of the forthcoming meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas, scheduled to be held at ECLAC headquarters in Santiago, Chile, in 2001. The second was the inaugural ceremony for the institutional reform of the National Institute of Statistics of Bolivia and the third, the seminar on modernization of national statistical systems.

17. With respect to the presentation of the Proposed programme of international statistical work for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2001-2002, and the agenda for the forthcoming meeting, the Chairperson of the Committee and the ECLAC secretariat would welcome any comments and suggestions from participating Directors. The following is the report of the Chairperson.

II. REPORT OF THE CHAIRPERSON

18. The Chairperson pointed out that since the first meeting of the Steering Committee, changes had been made at the head of various of the national statistical offices represented at the meeting and steps had been taken to implement the objectives and commitments undertaken.

19. Before referring to the activities realized at the technical level during the previous nine months, he made some reflections on issues relating to the principles and rules of the Statistical Conference of the Americas, which he considered vital for its proper functioning; in this regard, he pointed out that:

- The Conference, as an organization, brought together a significant number of countries and, by virtue of its constitution, fulfilment of the agreements and commitments adopted thereunder was left to the discretion of member countries.
- Since it had been recently established and was only then being consolidated, the practical rules and procedures for administration of the Conference and pursuit of its objectives would have to be worked out gradually with a view to ensuring that it operated more and more smoothly and successfully

20. He suggested validating those practices applied to date and which deserved to be maintained. It would also be appropriate to establish rules, depending on the circumstances and relevance to the purpose of the Conference.

21. It would be necessary, for example, to establish a principle, requirement or code of ethics at the level of the Conference to guarantee fulfilment, with the desired quality and within the established time-limit, of the commitments that each member country would assume, with special attention to the need to implement the Programme of international statistical work and any other commitment in accordance with the provisions.

22. He then referred to the strides made with respect to the guidelines for activities to be undertaken under the Programme of international statistical work for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2001-2002, to the follow-up to the agreements of the Steering Committee, to the preparation of the second meeting of the Steering Committee, to the integration of regional and subregional efforts, to the Web page of the Conference, to the directory of authorities of the decade and to the diffusion of methodologies.

23. Lastly, he underscored the commitment and participation shown by member countries as well as the work and dedication of the secretariat in supporting the implementation of the Biennial programme, 1999-2000, and the preparation of the Proposed programme of International Statistical Work for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2001-2002².

² See Report of the Chairperson (CD-CEA 05).

III. MAIN CONCLUSIONS

24. The Chairperson presented the agenda to participants for their consideration. The delegation of Mexico requested and was granted a slot for presenting to participants the proposed Web site designed for the Statistical Conference of the Americas.

25. Under agenda item I, the Committee approved the performance report on the Programme of International Statistical Work for Latin America and the Caribbean, 1999-2000, which would need to be supplemented with the contributions referred to in the presentation. It also established the following:

- The report on implementation of the Programme was the fruit of a collaborative effort between countries and international organizations which had contributed to its implementation, and this collaboration was fully appreciated.
- In view of the foregoing, it was suggested that notes of thanks would be dispatched to the countries.
- The Commission's support and participation was of special significance in the results obtained.

26. With respect to agenda item II,

- The Chairperson suggested that the proposed programme could be improved through additional contributions which countries could make within the time limit.
- It would be necessary to decide on a procedure to determine the inclusion of new activities in the Programme. For example, ECLAC and the country making the suggestion could consider the options for carrying out the proposed activities. Participants agreed to this proposal and considered the following suggestions:

The National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Information (INEGI) of Mexico:

Subprogramme 1:

- The representative of INEGI, considered that, since the objective was to implement the System of National Accounts (SNA) 1993, it was advisable to include in the programme of work an item entitled "Generation of statistics on capital stocks", these being fundamental for the preparation of the statement of assets in institutional accounting.
- reported that his proposal to include four meetings on agricultural censuses had been considered in the draft programme and suggested holding a regional seminar to enable countries to draw on their experience with economic censuses.
- proposed that, in order to assist with implementation of 1993 SNA, a seminar should be held on the advances made in calculating accounts for institutional sectors. This would be an opportunity for participating countries to share experiences. Moreover, the seminar could be financed jointly by INEGI (using the infrastructure at its disposal at its offices in Aguascalientes and which includes a centre for accommodation, an auditorium for the seminar and equipment for duplication of documents, among others), and another agency or country, and efforts should be made to obtain the participation of outstanding experts in the field.

Subprogramme 2

- Made available to countries of the region Mexico's experience in generating statistics on science and technology with the participation of the National Council for Science and Technology of Mexico.
- suggested that in addition to the application in 2001 of the joint INEGI/ECLAC questionnaire for the analysis of environmental statistics and progress report on their use, a programme of work should be undertaken which would consider environmental data under four headings:
 - Geographic information system
 - Environmental statistics
 - Indicators of sustainability
 - Economic environmental accounts

In this regard, he stated that the creation of a Working group on environmental information to work out such a system and determine the activities for developing the suggested sections would enable them to establish a process for continuous and gradual progress. He considered that important and positive progress towards the development of such a system could be achieved by including organizations, and public and private institutes that generate and require information in the Working group.

Subprogramme 3

- He proposed limiting poverty studies to levels of well-being and suggested including longitudinal surveys in the programme of work;
- Announced that INEGI and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) would be organizing a joint seminar on international migration in the first quarter of 2001 at INEGI and that as soon as the content and date were established, countries in the region would be invited to participate.

Subprogramme 4

- Proposed that a regional meeting of those responsible for dissemination of products prepared by the national statistical institutes should be convened to share experiences and learn from the successes achieved in some countries. Each country would present the procedures it was using to disseminate its products and as a result could dispose of a document with recommendations on the issue.

Groups of cities:

- He suggested giving greater recognition to the role of groups of cities in the programme of work and having one country undertake to follow up on each group and to appoint a coordinator who would be responsible for disseminating the results in the region.

National Institute of Statistics of Chile:

The representative of the National Institute of Chile:

- Requested that the work under subprogramme 2 for promoting the establishment of systems of environmental statistics should be geared to the needs of users.
- Proposed, under subprogramme 3, that, in addition to poverty measurement, an assessment of quality of life should also be gradually introduced. He also highlighted the need to address the follow up of emerging issues, such as drugs, violence among young people, and use of time.

National Statistical Office of Spain

- The delegation of Spain proposed a series of activities on training and sharing experiences which could take place in the region in 2001 and suggested that delegations select six issues. Having discussed the matter, participants agreed on the following:
 - Seminar on consumer price indices
 - Seminar on quarterly accounts
 - Seminar on statistics relating to education, training and employment
 - Seminar on the organization and functioning of national statistical offices
 - Seminar on services statistics
 - Workshop on systems organized in an HTML environment.

In view of the preference of delegations for the issue “Modernizing statistical systems” and the difficulties in defining the areas or issues that needed to be addressed, he proposed regrouping all the issues relating to the following four sub-items:

- Institutional organization, which could include its linkages with central administration, the regional and subregional grouping and other issues;
- Modern management of national statistical institutes including use of meetings, training programmes.
- Modernization of structure and methodology: directories, application of new technologies, others;
- Dissemination policies: links with users, statistical confidentiality, marketing.

All these issues would be considered from the point of view of modernization to meet the challenges posed by the new economy and technological development.

The representative also suggested adding under paragraph 38 of the proposed programme of international statistical work, the following: “ECLAC, with cooperation from the World Tourism Organization, the State Secretariat of Commerce, Tourism and of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises and the International Statistical Office of Spain”.
 “The first seminar will be conducted in September 2001 at ECLAC headquarters and the second in the year 2002.

National Institute of Statistics and Informatics of Peru (INEI):

The representative of INEI proposed incorporating under Element 1.2:

- The organization of a seminar/workshop on modernization of procedures for collecting information for economic statistics;
- The holding of a seminar/workshop on the preparation of health satellite accounts as a starting point for the design and development of a regional programme with technical and financial assistance from international organizations.
- The organization of a seminar/workshop on preparation of a social accounting matrix, as the first step in the design and development of a regional programme

Under Element 1.3:

- The organization of a seminar/workshop on application of input-output tables.

Under Element 1.5:

- INEI of Peru, commenting on the design of a Web page for the Statistical Conference of the Americas in English and Spanish, which provided background information on various aspects of the Conference, directories of officers of statistical institutes, information on meetings, agreements, international technical cooperation, invitations to new meetings and links with member countries' Web pages, among others, suggested that member countries should create links between this page and their related Web pages.

Under Element 2.1:

- At the end of paragraph 58, add: "The directories will be evaluated by member countries. This information will be incorporated in the Web page of the Conference".
- In the following paragraph, add: "ECLAC will promote the development of methodologies and procedures for incorporating and/or improving measurement systems associated with the growth and impact of information technologies and communications".

Under Element 3.1:

- Incorporate, in the background to the Programme for the Improvement of Surveys and the Measurement of Living conditions in Latin America and the Caribbean (MECOVI), a paragraph on the promotion of training activities in the use of data bases for household surveys and for facilitating public access to these bases.
- In paragraph 66, "Conducting regional workshops on gender".
- In paragraph 78, the following commitment:

"ECLAC should, at the beginning of the year, extend its offer of technical assistance to all member countries in order to structure joint programmes with them".

Under Element 3.4:

- A paragraph covering agreement no. 4 of the tenth meeting of the Andean Committee on Statistics:

- “Statistical offices that use the MECOVI programme shall promote at the community level, measures for harmonizing concepts, statistical methods and standard-of-living and poverty indicators, even with countries that have still not adopted the MECOVI programme”.

Under Element 4.1:

- “ECLAC will encourage participation by member countries in the Statistical Conference of the Americas and the Mercosur statistical portal project. To that end, ECLAC will seek international support”.

27. Countries expressed their support for the measures taken by the ECLAC secretariat through the Population Division of ECLAC – Latin American and Caribbean Demographic Centre (CELADE), for the implementation of a regional project on “Promoting dissemination and use of population and household censuses in the first decade of the twenty-first century”, with funding from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB).

28. With respect to agenda item III,

- The Chairperson proposed treating the issue in two parts: one to identify the issues which will be analysed in depth and the other for identifying countries that could act as commentators and additional speakers. The latter would have to be done through the secretariat, since it implied consulting all countries.
- In order to implement the first part, ideas were exchanged on the characteristics and possible content of the following issues proposed by:

BOLIVIA:

- Modernization of national statistical systems

BRAZIL:

- Confidentiality of statistical information

COLOMBIA:

- Foreign trade indices
- Migratory flows in the Americas
- Strengthening statistical institutes in the Americas
- Assessment of the parallel economy within the national accounts
- Indicators of information and telecommunications technology
- The spatial component in the statistical agenda.

MEXICO:

- International economic classifications
- Directories of companies and establishments
- Training

PARAGUAY AND PERU

- Organization of statistical offices. Outlook and framework within which statistical institutes must operate

URUGUAY:

- Harmonization of standards and procedures for the transfer of statistical outputs:
 - Pricing policy
 - Safeguarding the confidentiality of statistical information
 - Barriers for avoiding unauthorized transfers to third parties

ECLAC:

- Measuring economic activity in the services sector – One possible strategy
- Statistics on science and technology in Latin America and the Caribbean.

29. Lastly, participants have selected an issue for in-depth analysis at the Statistical Conference of the Americas:

“Challenges and trends for modernizing national statistical systems”, including the following sub-items:

1. Institutional organization
2. Modern management of national statistical institutes
3. Modernization of structures and methodologies
4. Policies for dissemination and marketing

The following countries offered to present papers on the various sub-items:

Sub-item 1: Bolivia and Spain

Sub-item 2: Bolivia and Chile

Sub-item 3: Chile

Sub-item 4: Spain, Mexico, Peru and Uruguay.

30. It was also decided that once the proposed programme of international statistical work for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2001-2002 had been presented, the countries concerned should prepare specific documents to analyse in greater depth the following issues:

- Classifications and nomenclatures
- Statistics on services
- Directories of firms and establishments.

On the basis of offers made by participants, responsibility for the following issues will be assigned as follows:

- Classifications and nomenclatures: Canada and Mexico
- Statistics on services: ECLAC
- Directories of firms and establishments: Spain and Mexico.

31. Delegations, to whom the provisional agenda had been submitted for their consideration, made various comments relating to the time allocated and the title of the substantive issue. As the agenda was still provisional, the secretariat took note of them for inclusion in their next version.

32. Following the secretariat's explanation of the rationale for including various issues on the agenda, participants exchanged views and requested copies of the rules of procedures governing the subsidiary bodies of the Commission.

33. As regards the time when the Steering Committee of the Conference would be elected, the secretariat undertook to seek a solution which would respond to the concerns of Directors, bearing in mind the proposal by delegations that the Steering Committee should be elected at the end of the Conference, in keeping with the practice observed by the Conference of European Statisticians.

34. It was agreed that the first session of the Conference would be postponed to 25-27 April 2001 and that ECLAC would confirm whether a conference room would be available for the purpose.

35. The Mexican delegation presented the Web page prepared for the Conference. It was agreed that that page, together with the version prepared by the National Institute of Statistics and Informatics of Peru, would be handed over to the ECLAC secretariat for incorporation into a single version under its direction.

36. The delegations were unanimous in their appreciation for the highly successful meeting organized by the National Institute of Statistics of Bolivia and thanked their hosts for the kindness extended to them.

PROPOSALS FOR SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

BOLIVIA:

- Modernization of national statistical systems

BRAZIL:

- Confidentiality of statistical information

COLOMBIA:

- Foreign trade indices on prices
- Migratory flows in the Americas
- Strengthening statistical institutes in the Americas
- Assessment of the parallel economy within the national accounts
- The spatial component in the statistical agenda.

MEXICO:

- International economic classifications:
 - North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) and its convergence with the General Industrial Classification of Economic Activities within the European Communities (NACE).
- Participation in groups of cities under the United Nations Statistical Commission:
 - Expert Group on Household Income Statistics (Canberra Group) (Mexican report)
 - Canberra group on capital formation
 - Expert Group on Informal Sector Statistics (Delhi Group) (Mexican report)
 - **London Group:** environment
 - **Ottawa Group** on Consumer Price Statistics
 - Paris Group on Labour and Compensation
 - Permanent Mechanism for Consultation and Concerted Political Action (**Rio Group**): Poverty (Report of Brazil)
 - Siena Group for social statistics
 - Vooburg Group: services
 - Round table on sampling frames for businesses (Report of Mexico)
- Environment statistics
 - System of information on the environment. The case of Mexico.

- Services statistics
 - Directories of firms and establishments
 - National accounting
 - Accounts by institutional sector. The case of Mexico.
 - Satellite accounts. The case of Mexico
 - Current economic indicators. The case of Mexico
-
- Population and housing census, 2000 round of censuses
 - Preliminary and timely results of Mexico
 - International training
 - INEGI training programme

PARAGUAY AND PERU:

- Organization of statistical offices. Outlook and framework within which statistical institutes must operate.

URUGUAY:

- Harmonization of standards and procedures for the transfer of statistical outputs:
 - Pricing policy
 - Safeguarding the confidentiality of statistical information
 - Barriers for avoiding unauthorized transfers to third parties

ECLAC:

- Measuring economic activity in the services sector – One possible strategy (Jacob Ryten)
- Statistics on science and technology in Latin America and the Caribbean (José Luis Cervera).

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- "Parte A. Estadísticas e indicadores de ciencia, tecnología e innovación en América Latina y el Caribe" (CD-CEA 04), 30 de octubre de 2000
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