

First Meeting of the Steering Committee
Lima, Peru, 12 - 13 April 2000

Final Report

INSTITUTO NACIONAL DE
ESTADÍSTICAS E INFORMÁTICA
PERÚ

**Office of the Chairperson of the
Statistical Conference of the Americas**

This report appears as annex 15 (CEA/15/2000) in the list of documents distributed during the meeting.

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A. BACKGROUND

1. The Meeting of Directors of Statistics of the Americas held from 24 to 26 March 1999 in Santiago, Chile, agreed to present the twenty-eighth session of ECLAC with a proposal for the creation of the Statistical Conference of the Americas drawn up by Canada, Mexico, Peru and the ECLAC Secretariat.
2. At the twenty-eighth session of ECLAC, held in Mexico City between 3 and 7 April 2000, the resolution creating the ECLAC Statistical Conference of the Americas as a subsidiary body of ECLAC was passed, and it was ordered that this resolution be conveyed to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations for approval.
3. The Conference has a Steering Committee composed of a Chairperson and six members. Peru currently holds the chairmanship and the six members are Argentina, Bolivia, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Mexico and Spain. ECLAC acts as the Technical Secretariat of the Conference and of its Steering Committee.

B. ORGANIZATION OF WORK

Place and date

4. The First Meeting of the Steering Committee of the Statistical Conference of the Americas was held at the offices of the Peruvian National Institute of Statistic and Informative (INEI) in Lima, on 12 and 13 April 2000.

Attendance

5. The Meeting was attended by the Heads of Statistics of the National Offices of Statistics of the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Mexico, Peru and Spain, and by the Deputy Director of the National Institute of Statistics of Bolivia, the Director of the International and Professional Relations Division Statistics of Canada, the Director of International Relations of Spain's National Institute of Statistics, the Director General and the Coordinator of Advisers of the National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Informatics (INEGI) of Mexico, the Minister Councillor heading the OAS Department – Office of Political and Security Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Peru and the Director and Assistant Director of the Statistics and Economic Projections Division of ECLAC in its capacity as the Technical Secretariat.

Agenda and documentation

6. The participants had before them the documents listed in the Annexes of this document, and approved the following agenda:

- Item I: Evaluation of the implementation of the Programme of International Statistical Work for Latin America and the Caribbean, 1999-2000 in 1999
 - A. Report of the Chairperson
 - B. ECLAC report on the activities of the 1999-2000 biennial programme in 1999
 - C. Report of Spain's National Institute of Statistics
 - D. Report of INEGI - Mexico

- Item II: New regional cooperation initiatives and experiences
 - A. Co-operation programmes between the Andean Community and Central America and the European Union
 - B. Programme for the institutional development of statistics in the Andean Community
 - C. Report of Peru

- Item III: Organization of the work of the Steering Committee and deciding on the location and date of the First Meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas
 - A. The experience of the European Steering Committee
 - Report of Canada
 - Report of Spain
 - B. Debate
 - C. Agreements

- Item IV: Preparation of the Programme of International Statistical Work for Latin America and the Caribbean for the period 2001-2002
 - A. Activities involved in preparing the programme and allocating responsibilities

Opening session

7. The Chairperson of the Conference Steering Committee, Félix Murillo Alfaro, welcomed the participants and passed on apologies for the absence of the Argentinean representative. He stressed the importance of the meeting and submitted the Provisional Agenda for the consideration of participants. This was approved without amendments.¹

¹ See List of Participants in annex 1 and Agenda in annex 2.

8. He then read out the document received from Reynaldo F. Bajraj, Assistant Executive Secretary of ECLAC, which reported that the resolution creating the ECLAC Statistical Conference of the Americas as a subsidiary body of ECLAC had been passed at the twenty-eighth session of ECLAC, held in Mexico City between 3 and 7 April 2000. This resolution will be conveyed to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC) for approval.

9. The Technical Secretariat then announced that the Resolution for the creation of SCA had been passed as proposed in the original proposal, with two amendments to the effect that, firstly, the representatives to SCA are the Governments of the member countries and, secondly, the Technical Secretariat is operated by ECLAC. It also expressed the satisfaction of the Executive Secretariat of ECLAC with the creation of SCA, and offered to do all it could to support and make available the resources it provided for, so that its objectives could be achieved.

10. Then, in accordance with what had been agreed at the Meeting of Directors of Statistics of the Americas held in Santiago, Chile, in March 1999, the chairperson's office reported on the negotiations it had conducted with IDB so that the countries of the Region could obtain loans in order to hold population censuses. In this sense, the chairperson read out a communication from Nohra Rey de Marulanda, as the representative of the President of IDB, confirming the willingness of this body to consider opening a line of credit for the financing of national population and housing censuses, for which purpose it was suggested that the countries interested should submit their loan applications through official government channels, as part of the planning process that the Bank carries out in each country. This letter has been made available to the Directors of Statistics of the region's countries.

Item I: Evaluation of the implementation of the Programme of International Statistical Work for Latin America and the Caribbean, 1999-2000 in 1999

A. Report of the Chairperson

11. First of all the Chairperson of the Steering Committee of SCA submitted the document CEA/003/2000 "Report of the Chairperson", which is attached to this report. He specified areas in which his office believed there was scope for cooperation activities. These are:

Promotion of the Development and Improvement of National Statistics and International Comparability of these; Support for International, Regional and Bilateral Cooperation between National Offices of Statistics and International and Regional Bodies; Enhancement of the Institutional Capabilities of the National Offices of Statistics of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. The Development of Special Mechanisms and Procedures to ensure active, ongoing participation by the countries in the design, development and evaluation of the International Statistical Working Programme of SCA. Application of the lessons learnt from international experiences in other countries and regions of the world in specific fields, and

participation by the SCA Chairperson's Office in the Statistical Commission of the United Nations.

As he analysed each of these activities, he suggested the establishment of mechanisms to assist the workings of SCA and its Steering Committee, emphasizing the main lines of action that should be considered by the Conference. These proposals and other suggestions made regarding the same subjects during the course of the meeting are summarized in paragraphs 52 to 55.

12. The Chairperson of INEGI congratulated the Steering Committee on its report and proposed that it should concentrate its efforts on very specific projects, such as the 2000 national census round, encouraging the introduction of improvements already approved by the United Nations, such as georeferencing. He also proposed encouraging the countries to hasten the work of adopting SNA 1993 and to adopt the System of National Accounts by Institutional Sectors, and moving on to stage 4 or 5 of the United Nations classifications. He added that, in the medium term, the countries should be encouraged to join the Groups of Experts of the United Nations Statistical Commission, to follow up each of the agreements adopted.

B. ECLAC report on the activities of the 1999-2000 biennial programme in 1999

13. The Technical Secretariat carried out a detailed analysis to March 2000 of the extent to which there had been implementation of each of the four subprogrammes relating to Basic Statistics and National Accounts, Environment, Social Statistics and Dissemination of Statistics, which make up the "Programme of International Statistical Work for Latin America and the Caribbean, 1999-2000" approved at the Meeting of Directors of Statistics of the Americas held in March 1999.

14. To this end, it submitted the document "Summary of the Statistical Activities carried out by ECLAC, in accordance with agreements adopted during the Meeting of Directors of Statistics of the Americas" (documents CEA/04.a/2000 and CEA/04.b/2000), which is attached to this document. It was explained that in the area of National Accounts, efforts had been concentrated on improving the Basic Statistics that underpin SNA 1993. Priority had been given to transferring technical material and holding workshops to establish the new system in the region. Among the many activities involved, particular mention was made of the translations into Spanish of the inflation accounting. A manual on National Accounting under conditions of high inflation, the Handbook on Quarterly National Accounts and the Manual on Tables of the General Government related with the Regional Accounts had been completed between the end of 1999 and the first quarter of 2000. The compact disc of SNA 1993 in Spanish had been prepared, and the Directory of National Accounts experts in the Latin American and Caribbean countries had been updated to January 2000. A document containing an in-depth analysis of the progress made in implementing SNA 1993 in the region during the period 1998-99 had been completed and made available to the Statistical Commission of the United Nations at its last meeting in March 2000.

15. The Delegations expressed their satisfaction with the progress of the work. In particular, the Mexican Delegation reiterated its proposal for the adoption of the 1993 System of National Accounts, and furthermore proposed that efforts be made to coordinate the work of the Central Banks and Offices of Statistics in this area, an effort in which CEMLA could be invited to participate. The Guatemalan Delegation supported this initiative.

16. The Peruvian Delegation drew attention to how behind the region is in terms of the year used as the basis for the National Accounts, and proposed that a joint effort be made to bring this basis up to date. It highlighted the usefulness of the Directories prepared by ECLAC and the need to incorporate the social matrices included in SNA 1993, so that the economic analysis can be integrated with the social one. It applauded the production of the Handbook on Quarterly National Accounts in Spanish, given the need to have timely figures in this area.

17. The Spanish Delegation advised that the National Institute of Statistics had just published a document called Analysis and Application of Product Input Matrices, and it put this at the disposal of any countries in the region that may require it.

18. In the area of environmental statistics, the Technical Secretariat set out the challenges being faced. The Spanish Delegation stated that similar difficulties were being faced in Europe, particularly because of the large number of national bodies that collected information in this area and many of which no knowledge was available. It proposed that experiences should be exchanged and mechanisms established to facilitate the identification of environmental statistics.

19. The Delegations of the Dominican Republic and Mexico recounted successes that had been achieved in their countries, and offered the benefits of their experience to the other countries.

20. The Technical Secretariat drew attention to the extent to which the programme had been implemented in the area of Social Statistics, to regional cooperation activities and to the major contribution made by the region in international groups such as those of Delhi, Canberra and Rio. It noted that a great deal of information was currently based on data from household surveys, and that there was still much to be done in the area of administrative records. In this respect, the Bolivian Delegation suggested there was a need to strengthen cooperation activities, so as to improve the integration of a system that is based on censuses, surveys and records. Then the Secretariat drew attention to the increasing importance of statistics on the informal sector; only a few countries carry out special surveys to investigate this area. The Delegation of Mexico explained the latest advances that the country had made in this field, including the preparation of a satellite account that conforms to the provisions of SNA 1993. Observations were also made about the significance of the MECOVI Project, in which a number of the region's countries are participating, and which Guatemala has recently joined.

21. The Technical Secretariat also remarked on the progress made in the statistical dissemination activities provided by the Programme. The main area of progress is the ever-increasing use being made of electronic media in spreading information over the Internet. The

Delegations reported on the progress made in their respective countries and reiterated the need to carry on with these activities.

C. Report of Spain's National Institute of Statistics

22. The Spanish Delegation presented a report on its cooperation activities (Document CEA/06/2000), which is attached. Among these, it stressed its role among the Presiding Officers of the Statistical Conference of the Americas as a representative of the European countries, and touched on the efforts that had been made to transfer successful European practices to Latin America. It mentioned the European Union-Mercosur project, the planned extension of activities to the Andean Community and Central America and the efforts being made to bring in other donors such as the Spanish Cooperation Agency and IDB.

D. Report of INEGI - Mexico

23. The Mexican Delegation set out its cooperation activities, which now cover 60 countries. (Document CEA/07/2000, attached). It stressed the role played by Mexico in most of the Groups of Cities, touching on the high costs involved, and suggested that there was a need to distribute responsibilities among the countries of the region, to ensure there was a regional presence in most of these groups, and to find a mechanism for transferring the progress made in each of these in an efficient way. It listed the main activities covered by its training programmes: Poverty, Gender, Training of Instructors, Census Research, MECOVI Workshops, Socio-economic Spatial Management, Digital Processing of Satellite Images, Digital Cartography, Environment and Longitudinal Surveys.

24. The Peruvian Delegation proposed that the prospects for training via Internet be explored, as is already happening in some training centres. The Dominican Republic Delegation drew attention to the need to provide teaching of the capabilities and use of statistics in schools.

Item II: New regional cooperation initiatives and experiences

A. Cooperation programmes between the Andean Community and Central America and the European Union

25. The Spanish Delegation reported on the efforts being made to extend the cooperation experience of the European Union with Mercosur plus Chile to the Andean Community and the Central American countries. To this end, a meeting had been held with the Andean countries in Cartagena de Indias in March of this year. A report has been produced, including an analysis of the institutional situation, a problem tree, an objective tree and a planning matrix for a programme to strengthen the capabilities of the Andean Regional Statistical System so that it can respond to the statistical information needs of users (see Document CEA/08/2000).

26. It announced that a similar meeting would shortly be held for the Central American countries and Panama. This contribution gave rise to a debate in which emphasis was laid on the political status of National Offices of Statistics and financing needs, characteristics and opportunities.

27. On the one hand, the effectiveness of ambitious presentations as a way of obtaining resources was questioned, as was the role that could be played by laws giving autonomy to statistical bodies. For some of these, at the present time, the international situation is creating conditions that are most favourable to National Offices of Statistics, in terms of raising their political status and providing them with access to resources. Others suggested that, unless conditions were extremely favourable, it was up to National Offices of Statistics to create political will, which is sustained by the successful implementation of a range of high-priority statistical activities that, at the outset, are tailored to fit the resources available. Stress was also placed on the need to take advantage of favourable political circumstances to obtain resources to cater to high-priority demands of the political system. The advantages of collaboration between producers and users were alluded to in this respect.

B. Programme for the institutional development of statistics in the Andean Community

28. The representative of Peru, submitted document CEA/09/2000 on the “Programme for the Institutional Development of Statistics in the Andean Community”, which is attached. The Chairperson’s Office explained that the Programme provides for the reactivation of the Subregional Statistical Information System of the Andean Community, which was resumed after eight years. The objective of the Andean Statistics Committee is to work towards improvements in economic, social, demographic and environmental statistics, and to harmonize concepts, definitions, minimum contents, methodologies and the their presentation, so that the statistics of the Andean Community countries are sufficiently comparable with those of the rest of the world.

29. The Committee is composed of the highest authorities of the governing bodies of the National Statistical Systems of the Andean Community member countries. The Committee is currently chaired by INEI of Peru.

30. He reported that the following agreements had been adopted at the meeting:

1. Approval of its internal regulations.
2. Presentation of the Draft Community Statistical Programme 2000-2004, to enable member countries to submit comments and observations.
3. Approval of the French Cooperation Programme in support of the Harmonization and Reactivation of the Subregional Statistics System 2000-2003.
4. Recommend to the General Secretariat that the projects with some statistical component should be discussed with the Andean Statistics Committee.

31. The Technical Secretariat proposed that SCA coordinate its working plan with that of other regional bodies, to avoid duplicating efforts and discouraging international support. It expressed the desire of SCA to incorporate subregional programmes into the regional programme.

32. The Peruvian representative said that the countries should inform the SCA Chairperson's Office and the Technical Secretariat about current or future projects involving external financing, so that they could be coordinated and overlaps avoided. It proposed that a cooperation map should be designed.

C. Report of Peru: New regional cooperation initiatives and experiences among the member countries of the Statistical Conference of the Americas

33. The Chairperson submitted document CEA/10/2000, which is attached. In addition, by virtue of the agreement adopted at the last Meeting of Directors of Statistics of the Americas, INEI of Peru presented the Horizontal Cooperation between the Member Countries of SCA Web page, with a link on the ECLAC Web page, which gives information on offers of horizontal technical cooperation from National Offices of Statistics in the region.

34. The Technical Secretariat suggested that it would be useful for the Web page to include information on the availability of financing, conditions and time limits for offers of cooperation.

35. The Spanish Delegation suggested that there should be access to the cooperation on offer by subject area, that links should be established with the methodologies and events offered by the countries, and that the document on Good Practice in International Cooperation produced by the Statistical Commission of the United Nations should be included.

36. The Mexican Delegation proposed that the countries offering technical cooperation should hold a meeting to coordinate and rationalize their provision.

37. The Canadian Delegation stated that Canada had a large cooperation portfolio, which could be channelled directly through the Embassies of Canada in the different countries.

Item III: Organization the work of the Steering Committee and deciding on the location and date of the First Meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas

A. The experience of the European Steering Committee

• **Report of Canada**

38. The report of the Canadian representative stated that the Conference of the Statisticians was a subsidiary body of the United Nations that met once a year in plenary session, in rather the same way as ECLAC. Its functions are:

- to approve the working programme for the Conference, and
- to select a specific issue for in-depth treatment.

39. The current working programme provides up to ten technical meetings, during June 1999 and June 2000, on a range of issues such as National Accounts, Dissemination, ENAHO and others, with specialists from National Offices of Statistics in attendance. Each meeting lasts a week. The Conference is quite large, being made up of 55 members. The issues to be dealt with at these meetings are chosen at the June plenary session.

40. In Europe the Steering Committee meets twice a year, in October and November. For its October meetings the Secretariat prepares and distributes the documentation at least two weeks in advance to enable participants to familiarize themselves thoroughly with what is being proposed. Generally speaking, by June the Europeans already have the documents for the October meeting on the Internet. The Conference discusses the selected subject in depth for an entire day.

41. It also stated that the documentation and technical material produced for the purposes of the Conference of European Statisticians was unrestricted, and was therefore available to all the countries in the area. ECLAC receives some of this material regularly.

42. The Technical Secretariat emphasized the scope of the activities of the European Conference and the need to adapt this model to the circumstances and resources of Latin America. It is essential to take full advantage of the potential of the countries and combine this with the activities of the Secretariat and of other regional and international bodies. In particular, the Steering Committee has to organize its work so that it can deal with certain issues in depth and ensure that this effort, yields substantive and worthwhile documents that can be submitted to the Conference for its debates.

43. The Chairperson, addressing the members of the Steering Committee, requested that the work of the Conference follow this model in its most important aspects, as noted by the Technical Secretariat.

44. The Mexican representative suggested that the Technical Secretariat or Chairperson's Office draft a document containing proposals for working procedures and submit it for the

consideration of the member countries so that they could acquaint themselves with it and make their own suggestions.

- **Report of Spain**

45. The representative of Spain reported that the Conference of European Statisticians had made a major contribution to the harmonization and enhancement of European statistics. He pointed out that in Europe there were international bodies, national bodies (countries) and supranational bodies such as Eurostat.

46. He stressed that the Secretariat of the Conference worked efficiently, set dates for meetings as much as a year in advance, distributed documents well in advance and had a document translation service for the different languages.

47. He also pointed out that the main features of the activities of the European Conference were integrated work, the selection of specific subjects for around ten Technical Meetings and the setting aside of an entire day of the Conference for discussion of a selected subject.

48. Furthermore, he stated that there are experiences that could be taken advantage of in this region, such as the coordination between international bodies promoted and fostered by the Conference and the specific subjects, which are selected and then put in the charge of one of the members of the Steering Committee to be worked on. The countries can participate because the subjects are open; the substantive subject is presented by international experts and member countries.

49. He also referred to the work of Eurostat. He explained that before taking a decision that would normally entail commitments for the member countries, one “sherpa”² per country was appointed for each subject so that each country could take responsibility for and inform itself about the economic and political possibilities and thus be enabled to meet the commitments provided by the proposals. These meet once or twice a year, but are constantly holding electronic consultations. This working procedure facilitates the decision-making process.

50. Lastly, the representative of Spain suggested that the Conference adopt the working procedure used in Europe and examine the advantages of using “sherpas” for the work of SCA.

B. Debate

51. Bearing in mind the reports on the workings of the Conference of European Statisticians and its Steering Committee, the participants debated what operating procedures should be adopted by the Steering Committee of the Statistical Conference of the Americas.

52. Representations were made about the need to take into account the degree to which statistics were developed in the region, the role that should be played by horizontal cooperation in the region, the need to maintain and increase the links with the Statistical

² A “sherpa” is an official with full knowledge of the budgetary and technical capacity of the institution.

Commission of the United Nations and the Group of Cities and the benefits of capitalizing on the activities of regional and subregional bodies.

53. It was proposed that, in the task of drafting the biennial working programme, the Steering Committee should learn from the European experience, select at least two issues to be analysed in depth at each of its meetings and benefit from the contribution that could be made by the countries, including the information they had available on bilateral, multilateral and international cooperation activities.

54. Specific proposals were made on different issues contained in the working programme, and the Technical Secretariat took note of these so that they could be taken into account when the working programme was prepared.

C. Agreements

55. The following agreements were concluded:

- The First Statistical Conference of the Americas will be held in Santiago, Chile, at the headquarters of ECLAC, ideally from 27 to 29 March 2001, or alternatively in April. ECLAC will advise the Chairperson within the next two weeks of the availability of rooms and logistical support for the meeting.
- The Second Meeting of the SCA Steering Committee will be held in Bolivia on 7 and 8 December 2000. Mexico was named as an alternative location.
- Spain and Mexico will jointly prepare an electronic working proposal among the SCA countries. Mexico will be in charge of implementing this working procedure.
- The Chairperson's and Technical Secretariat will draw up a draft agenda for the next Meeting of the Steering Committee, identifying one or two substantive issues that could be dealt with in depth by SCA.

Item IV: Preparation of the Programme of International Statistical Work for Latin America and the Caribbean for the period 2001-2002

A. Activities involved in preparing the programme and allocating responsibilities

56. The following activities and responsibilities were agreed on:

1. The Technical Secretariat will prepare a draft Programme of International Statistical Work for Latin America and the Caribbean for the period 2001-2002 which will contain the following subject areas and will be supported by the countries shown:
 - National Accounts, Environmental Statistics and Agricultural Censuses, with the support of Mexico.
 - Poverty, with the support of Peru.
 - Dissemination of Statistics, with the support of Bolivia.

- Central American activities will be included, with the support of Guatemala.
 - Activities in the Caribbean area will be included, with the support of the Dominican Republic.
 - The activities of the Andean Community will be included, with the support of the SCA Chairperson's Office.
 - Canada will review the programme proposed and suggest what other activities might be included.
2. The Chairperson will invite member countries that wish to assist in preparing the subjects mentioned above.
 3. Mexico will make available to the Conference the document "2000 Statistical Rounds".

Acknowledgement

57. It was agreed that gratitude should be expressed for the excellent work of INEI in Peru, in organizing the First Meeting of the SCA Steering Committee, noting particularly its hospitality and the facilities provided to those attending.

Annexes**DOCUMENTS DISTRIBUTED**

- Annex 1 CEA/01/2000
Record of Participants
- Annex 2 CEA/02/2000
Agenda
- Annex 3 CEA/03/2000
Report of the Chairperson
- Annex 4 CEA/04.a/2000
Resumen de las Actividades Estadísticas Realizadas por la CEPAL,
siguiendo los acuerdos adoptados en la Reunión de Directores de
Estadística de las Américas
- CEA/04.b/2000
Summary of the Statistical Activities carried out by ECLAC, in
accordance with agreements adopted during the Meeting of Directors
of Statistics of the Americas
- Annex 5 CEA/05/2000
Progress in the Process of Implementing the 1993 System of National
Accounts (SNA 1993) in Latin America and the Caribbean
- Annex 6 CEA/06/2000
Report of the National Institute of Statistics, Spain
- Annex 7 CEA/07/2000
Report of Mexico
- Annex 8 CEA/08/2000
Programmes of Cooperation between the Andean Community and
Central America and the European Union
- Annex 9 CEA/09/2000
Programme for the Institutional Development of Statistics in the
Andean Community

- Annex 10 CEA/10/2000
Report of Peru: New Initiatives and Experiences in Regional
Cooperation between the Member Countries of the Statistical
Conference of the Americas
- Annex 11 CEA/11/2000
Directory of the Steering Committee
- Annex 12 CEA/12/2000
SCA Statute and Regulations of the Steering Committee
- Annex 14 CEA/14/2000
International Statistical Working Programmes in the EEC Region,
1999/2000 and 2000/2001: An integrated presentation. National
Institute of Statistics, Spain
- Annex 15 CEA/15/2000
Final Report