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Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

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**REPORT ON THE PROGRESS MADE IN IMPLEMENTING THE PROGRAMME
OF WORK OF THE WORKING GROUP ON INTERNATIONAL CLASSIFICATIONS**

1. **Coordinating country:** Mexico
2. **Member countries:** Barbados, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Plurinational State of Bolivia, Saint Lucia, Uruguay.
3. **Technical secretariat and advisory bodies:** the Statistics and Economic Projections Division of ECLAC acts as the technical secretariat and the United Nations Statistics Division and the Andean Community fulfil the role of advisory bodies.
4. **Programme of work 2012-2013:** The overall objective of the Working Group on International Classifications is to support the countries in the region in adopting or adapting the new versions of international classifications in order to contribute to the development of official statistics in the various statistical programmes.

Specific objective 1

Identify and promote regional and subregional cooperation activities to boost the capacity of the member countries in the processes of adopting and adapting international classifications

Specific objective 2

Exchange and document experiences, knowledge and good practices in relation to the implementation of international classifications

Specific objective 3

Provide regular updates on the progress made in terms of new revisions to international classifications, particularly with a view to conducting economic and population censuses and changing the base year for national accounts in the countries of the region, as well as ensuring the proper management of directories of businesses and establishments

Specific objective 4

Promote the creation of inter-agency platforms for collaboration in, and coordination and integration of, regional initiatives on international classifications among blocks of countries

Specific objective 5

Prioritize the translation into Spanish of texts on international classifications to enable their timely adoption by the countries of the region

Specific objective 6

Make the arrangements necessary to hold meetings of the Working Group on International Classifications, with a view to promoting the use and dissemination of economic and social classifications

Specific objective 7

Promote the establishment of a network of experts on international classifications to provide countries with mechanisms for communication and updating classifications and nomenclature

- (a) Description of objectives:** The activities related to each specific objective are outlined below.

Activities related to specific objective No. 1

Identify and promote regional and subregional cooperation activities to boost the capacity of the member countries in the processes of adopting and adapting international classifications

- (a) Draft a diagnostic questionnaire (survey on international classification in Latin America and the Caribbean) on the adoption or adaptation of international classifications in the countries of the region.
- (b) Draft and disseminate among the Working Group a summary and analysis of the conclusions drawn from the results of the diagnostic questionnaire.
- (c) Identify the statistics offices of each country in the region and other organizations responsible for the development, maintenance, adoption or adaptation of the different classifications with a view to establishing horizontal cooperation.
- (d) Identify the international agencies that could cooperate in the adoption or adaptation of international classifications.
- (e) Rank the countries that require support in relation to the adoption or adaptation of classifications by order of priority.
- (f) Design a training programme on classifications that establishes the country or organization in charge of providing the training, the countries to receive the training, the topics to be covered and the course dates in accordance with the outcomes of the diagnosis.
- (g) Select the training programme coordinator: one country responsible for promoting the delivery of the programme, evaluating the course and making any adjustments necessary in the light of the feedback received.

Activities related to specific objective 2

Exchange and document experiences, knowledge and good practices in relation to the implementation of international classifications

- (a) Establish, with the support of ECLAC, an online forum to facilitate communication among the members of the Working Group on International Classifications, with a view to exchanging experiences on classifications (queries, opinions, proposals, good practices, documents and updates, for example).

- (b) Promote the use of the online forum to keep the members informed of revisions to the international classifications.
- (c) Offer training on the use of the online forum for all members of the Working Group.
- (d) Draft documents on good practices and guidelines for the adoption, adaptation and updating of classifications within the national statistics systems of the countries of the region, using the international recommendations in this regard as a reference.
- (e) Hold face-to-face meetings to share experiences and good practices on classifications.
- (f) Hold face-to-face meetings to evaluate the Group's work (functioning of the online forum, identification of frequently asked questions and common problems, support provided to countries for the adoption or adaptation of classifications, evaluation of face-to-face working meetings, evaluation of the usefulness of the documents made available and identification of opportunities).
- (g) Share experiences to implement assisted classification systems.
- (h) Draft reports on the meetings held and make them available to the members of the Working Group on the online forum.
- (i) Strengthen the use and implementation of international classifications in the national statistics systems in the region, with a view to improving the comparability of the information produced.

Activities related to specific objective No. 3

Provide regular updates on the progress made in terms of new revisions to international classifications, particularly with a view to conducting economic and population censuses and changing the base year for national accounts in the countries of the region, as well as ensuring the proper management of directories of businesses and establishments

- (a) Review periodically the websites of the United Nations and of other custodians of the international classifications to check for documents, recommendations and information on international classifications to be brought to the attention of the members of the Working Group through the online forum.
- (b) Circulate the general plan for incorporating the classifications into the different statistical programmes of each country with a view to informing countries of the details of the updates.
- (c) Design a format by which the members of the Working Group can record plans for incorporating the different classifications.

Activities related to specific objective No. 4

Promote the creation of inter-agency platforms for collaboration in, and coordination and integration of, regional initiatives on international classifications among blocks of countries

- (a) Establish mechanisms for communication among the following international organizations that are custodians of international classifications: United Nations, World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), World Customs Organization (WCO), International Labour Organization (ILO) and World Health Organization (WHO).
- (b) Identify agencies that have developed or that are developing regional classifications.
- (c) Establish mechanisms for communication and coordination with the agencies that have developed or that are developing regional classifications, such as the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR).

Activities related to specific objective No. 5

Prioritize the translation into Spanish of texts on international classifications to enable their timely adoption by the countries of the region

- (a) Contact the international organizations which are custodians of classifications and have created documents for the adoption, adaptation or updating of classifications. Investigate whether they already have Spanish versions available and, if not, offer assistance in translating these documents.
- (b) Identify common terminology used in the texts to ensure consistency in the translations.
- (c) Coordinate a preliminary translation into Spanish of the published documents that the members of the Working Group consider to be of interest.
- (d) Coordinate with the countries or organizations that produced the documents in English to clarify any queries regarding concepts or terminology in order to validate the Spanish translation.
- (e) Make the preliminary translations, and subsequently the final translations, available on the online forum.
- (f) Evaluate the usefulness of the translations in supporting the work of the Group.

Activities related to specific objective No. 6

Make the arrangements necessary to hold meetings of the Working Group on International Classifications, with a view to promoting the use and dissemination of economic and social classifications

- (a) Obtain financing from international organizations that are willing to support the activities of the Group's programme of work, such as the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), World Bank and United Nations. Financing will be requested for essential activities, such as meetings, training and technical assistance.
- (b) Keep the international organizations that are supporting the Group's work informed of the distribution of the resources and the progress made on the programme of work.

Activities related to specific objective No. 7

Promote the establishment of a network of experts on international classifications to provide countries with mechanisms for communication and updating classifications and nomenclature

- (a) Identify experts in international classifications from the member countries of the Working Group, using the Knowledge Transfer Network.
- (b) Coordinate the work of the Group with that of the Expert Group on International Classifications of the United Nations.
- (c) Coordinate the work of the Working Group with that of other organizations that have developed or that are developing regional classifications.
- (d) Compile and submit to the Expert Group on International Classifications the concerns and proposals regarding classifications in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.
- (e) Strengthen the exchange of information among the countries in Latin America and the Caribbean that have trade agreements.

(b) Main activities proposed for 2012-2013

The following activities are proposed for 2012:

- Draft documents on good practices and guidelines for the adoption, adaptation and updating of classifications within the national statistics systems of the countries of the region, using the international recommendations in this regard as a reference.
- Draw up a list of problems or obstacles to the implementation of the new classifications in countries, which will serve as a basis for the future work of the Working Group.
- Strengthen the use and implementation of international classifications in the national statistics systems in the region, with a view to improving the comparability of the information produced.
- Establish mechanisms for communication among the following international organizations that are custodians of international classifications: United Nations, World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), World Customs Organization (WCO), International Labour Organization (ILO) and World Health Organization (WHO).
- Coordinate the work of the Group with that of the Expert Group on International
- Classifications of the United Nations.
- The specific activities for 2013 will be decided at the meeting to be held in September 2012.

(c) Expected outcomes for the seventh meeting of the Statistical Conference to be held in November 2013

To have supported the countries in the region in adopting or adapting the new versions of the international classifications and therefore contributed to the development of official statistics in the various statistical programmes.

5. Progress to date

- A diagnostic questionnaire (survey on international classification in Latin America and the Caribbean) was created on the adoption or adaptation of international classifications in the countries of the region.
- A summary and analysis of the conclusions drawn from the results of the diagnostic questionnaire was drafted and disseminated among the Working Group.
- As coordinator of the Working Group, Mexico prepared a message to be sent to the national statistical offices in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean inviting them to participate in the Working Group and submit their comments on the action plan and timetable.
- The statistics offices of each country in the region and other organizations responsible for the development, maintenance, adoption or adaptation of the different classifications have been identified with a view to establishing horizontal cooperation.
- A directory of representatives appointed by national statistical offices to participate in the Working Group has been created.
- The following international agencies have been identified as bodies which could cooperate in the adoption or adaptation of international classifications: United Nations, World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), World Customs Organization (WCO), International Labour Organization (ILO) and World Health Organization (WHO).
- With the support of ECLAC, an online forum has been established to facilitate communication among the members of the Working Group with a view to exchanging experiences on classifications (queries, opinions, proposals, good practices, documents and updates, for example).
- Use of the online forum has been promoted in order to keep members informed of revisions to the international classifications.
- A format has been designed which enables Working Group members to record plans for incorporating the different classifications.
- A draft agenda has been prepared for the first meeting of the Working Group, which will be held in Santiago on 10-14 September 2012, taking into account the main points raised by countries in their replies to the survey on international classifications in Latin America and the Caribbean.

- A timetable of work for the period 2012-2013 was drawn up but subsequently amended given that the first meeting of the Working Group will be held on 10-14 September 2012. The updated version of the timetable is attached to this report.
- It has been arranged that the United Nations Statistics Division will provide financial support for the face-to-face meeting mentioned above. The United Nations and ECLAC are coordinating the logistical preparations.
- The Working Group coordinator and ECLAC will request financing for the meetings planned for 2013 from international organizations that are willing to support the activities included in the Group's programme of work, such as the World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and United Nations. In addition, the National Institute of Statistics and Geography of Mexico will investigate the possibility of requesting financing from the ministries of foreign affairs in the countries of Central America and the Caribbean. Financing will be requested for priority activities in line with the Group's programme of work.