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FOR LATIN AMERICA  
AND THE CARIBBEAN - ECLAC**



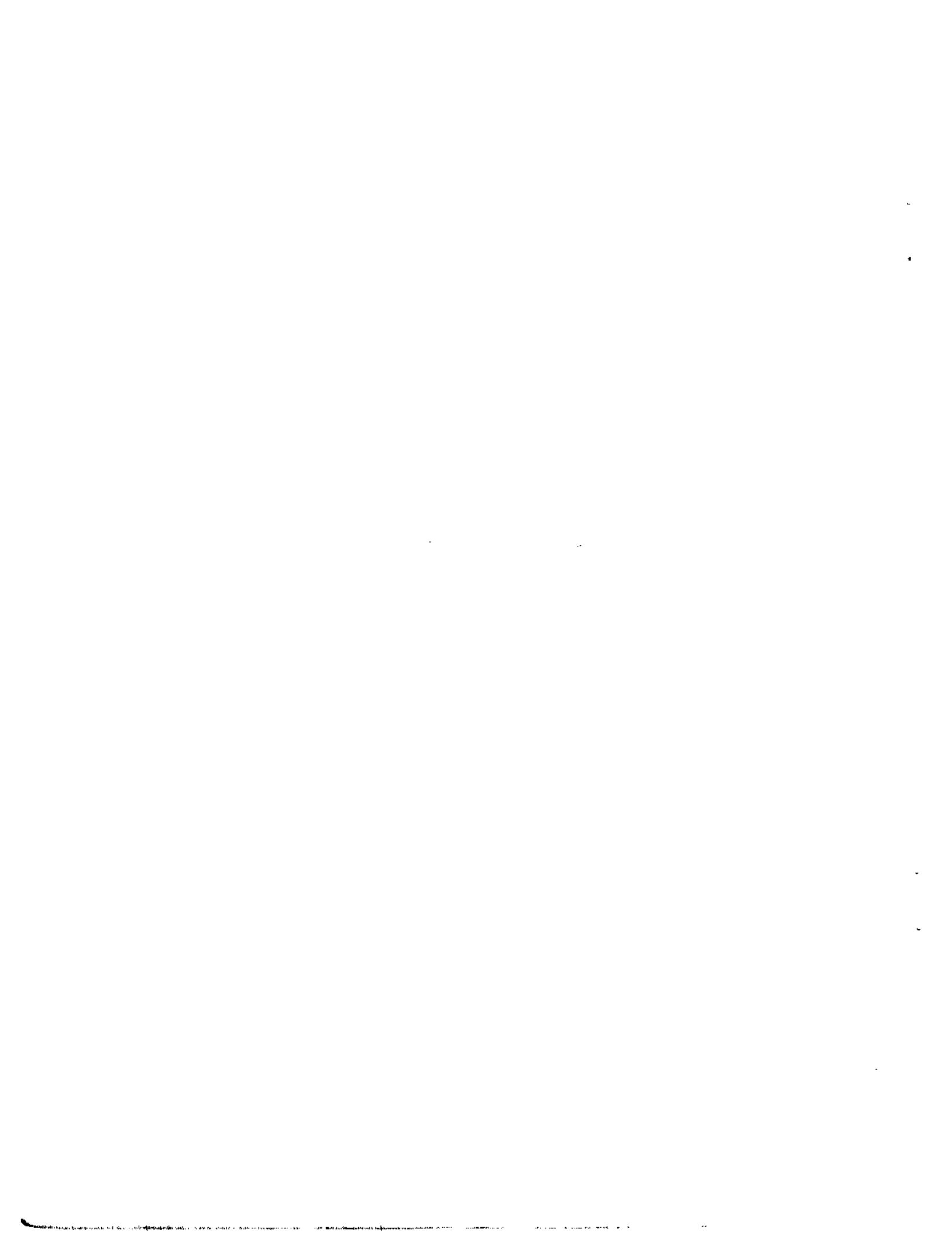
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**REPORT OF THE MEETING OF DIRECTORS OF  
STATISTICS OF THE AMERICAS**

**(Santiago, 23-25 September 1987)**

**87-10-1511**



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## I. ORGANIZATION OF WORK

### 1. Place, date and purpose of the meeting

1. The Meeting of Directors of Statistics of the Americas was held at the headquarters of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in Santiago, Chile, from 23 to 25 September 1987.

2. In response to the request made by the Directors of Statistics of the Americas during the Ninth Inter-American Statistical Conference (CIE) held in Rio de Janeiro in September 1986, ECLAC convened the meeting in order to evaluate the progress of the regional co-operation programmes under way and to identify a set of further activities of mutual interest, and draw up other programmes around them. In this respect, it was proposed to discuss activities associated with the census of the 1990s; the necessary modernization of the infrastructure and technical training in order to take advantage of the introduction of computers, and to review methodologies in fields such as short-term indicators together with economic censuses and registers of economic units.

### 2. Participants \*/

3. Representatives of the following member countries of ECLAC attended the meeting: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Spain, United States of America, Uruguay and Venezuela.

4. Representatives of the following institutions also attended by special invitation: United Nations Statistical Office (UNSO), International Labour Organisation (ILO), Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), Board of the Cartagena Agreement (JUNAC), Organization of American States (OAS), Inter-American Statistical Institute (IASI) and Inter-American Statistical Training Centre (CIENES). The meeting was also attended by technicians taking part in the projects run by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on the integral treatment of poverty (RLA/86/004) and strengthening the Mexican statistical system (MEX/87/001).

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\*/ See the list of participants in annex 1.

### 3. Appointment of Chairman

5. The Secretariat of ECLAC suggested that it was desirable for Mexico to be appointed to chair the meeting as it chairs the Inter-American Statistical Conference (CIE). This proposal was approved by the participants.

### 4. Agenda and documents

6. The documents listed in annex 2 were distributed to the participants and the following agenda was approved:

1. The participation of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean in the United Nations Statistical Commission
  - Report on the participation of countries in the twenty-fourth session of the United Nations Statistical Commission
  - Proposed issues for the Commission's Working Party.
2. Overall aspects of population and housing censuses which require decisions at the level of Directors of Statistics
  - Synthesis of the conclusions of the Seminars held in Argentina and Mexico
  - Activities of CELADE during the 1990 Census Round
  - Design of questionnaires in line with sectoral requirements: a representative example
  - The retrieval of census data for small areas by microcomputer (REDATAM) and experience of its use
  - The experience of the National Institute of Statistics of Chile in applying REDATAM to the 1982 Population and Housing Census
  - Census-data services providing geographically broken-down data for the public and private sectors
  - Management considerations and measures taken in the planning phases for the 1990 censuses
  - Conclusions regarding global aspects of censuses.
3. Evaluation of the activities agreed upon at the Ninth Inter-American Statistical Conference
  - Statistical Computation Systems Project
  - Seminar on income and expenditure surveys in Costa Rica
  - Regional co-operation activities in respect of National Accounts
  - Report on the Seminar on Consumer Price Indicators
  - Report on training
  - Report on technical co-operation between multilateral agencies.
4. Programme of activities for the 1987-1988 period
  - Dissemination of statistics
  - Short-term indicators
  - Evaluation of the activities of the statistical systems of the region

- Economic censuses and registers of economic units
- Household surveys
- Project on the integral treatment of poverty
- Observations with regard to regional co-operation.

### 5. Inaugural session

7. The Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Mr. Norberto González, inaugurated the meeting by extending a welcome to the Directors of Statistics of the Americas and the representatives of the international agencies present.

8. In his address he stated that from its beginnings ECLAC had established a tight link between its task of stimulating economic and social development and those related to the strengthening of statistical systems. He further mentioned that statistics had a major role to play in the organization of development and that on the other hand it was a vital requirement for the assessment of problems and formulation of policies.

9. After a brief review of the most significant features of the region's insertion into the world economic environment, he mentioned major areas of action within which the statistical system needed to be reinforced as a means of facilitating the adoption of decisions connected to the major structural transformations which had to be performed. He laid stress on issues such as the problem of the high level of external indebtedness; forms of external financing; the rate of technological change and employment policies; the problems of social development and the inequality thereof, as well as the role of the State in the various spheres of action. He indicated that in all of these areas greater knowledge was necessary, either to adopt policies designed to correct distortions, or to acquire criteria so as to be able to negotiate on equal terms --at least in respect of information-- with the developed countries.

10. The Executive Secretary of ECLAC said that the agenda of the meeting of the Directors of Statistics corresponded to the needs of the region. He considered that population and housing censuses continued to be the main source of statistics in relation to households, and economic censuses the cornerstone of the System of National Accounts. He highlighted the emergence of a growing concern with short-term indicators as an illustration of the strengthening of the link between medium- and short-term statistics. He also referred to the interest which existed in the possibilities offered by computers for the development of statistics in the region, and focused attention on the support provided by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in transferring highly useful computer systems to the region.

11. Finally, he stated that ECLAC had shown an enthusiastic response to the request to convene and organize the meeting, and that within the sphere of international organizations, and in particular within OAS, CELADE, CIENES and ECLAC everything possible was being done to co-ordinate efforts, particularly in order to pinpoint the possibilities for co-operation and integration between the countries of the region and to effectively tackle their grave economic and social problems.

12. The chairman of the Meeting expressed his gratitude for his appointment, and went on to first of all draw attention to the methodology of work underlying the programme for the meeting. He stated that the Directors of Statistics had in the past shown their interest in discussing topics of relevance to their level of responsibility and in seeking means of promoting regional co-operation activities. With regard to the agenda, he stressed that a government or international agency had assumed responsibility for organizing some activity in respect of each topic, and that in every case documents had been drawn up to allow the items on the agenda to be efficiently debated. Finally, he said that the activities agreed upon at the last meeting of CIE had been carried out as programmed, and that others had even been included. He pointed out moreover that five new topics would be presented at the Meeting, which would certainly provide an opportunity to establish new ways of allowing countries of the region to complement their efforts.

## II. SUMMARY OF DEBATES

### Overall aspects of Population and Housing Censuses which require decisions at the level of Directors of Statistics (item 2 of the agenda)

13. The Mexican delegation provided a review of activities carried out in the region in connection with population and housing censuses. In this respect, the delegation mentioned that in preparation for the 1990 census round, a workshop to analyse and evaluate the 1980 population censuses (Buenos Aires, 1985) had been held, organized by the Latin American Demographic Centre (CELADE) and the National Institute of Statistics of Argentina (INDEC). In addition, the Inter-American Workshop on the Evaluation of Population and Housing Statistics had been organized by INDEC (Argentina) and the Institute of Statistics, Geography and Information Science (Mexico) with financial support from CELADE and United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA). Finally, he mentioned that Mexico had organized an Inter-American Workshop on the Planning of Population and Housing Censuses which had taken place the previous June.

14. In respect of the above seminars, the delegation analysed the problems associated with census planning and the initial decisions, and emphasized that it was during this phase that a programme of basic action had to be drawn up so as to provide criteria in order to make fundamental choices. He then addressed the type of census, and recalled that whether a census was de facto or de jure, or a combination of both, involved consequences which had to be borne in mind. He also attributed considerable importance to the census reference date, as well as to the period at which the censuses were carried out. After emphasizing the importance of the method of interview and the use of sampling during the different phases of the census, he directed his attention to the contents and design of the census schedules, to the choice of technology to process information as well as to the major decisions with regard to interinstitutional co-operation.

15. To conclude, he put forward a set of actions bearing on basic policy for planning the 1990 census round. He pointed out that although recommendations did exist in respect of the execution of the censuses, there was a



considerable void regarding the specific methods of initiating the census programmes and the concrete methodologies in respect of planning. He also mentioned that proposals had been made to organize seminars on the topic, and that consultations were under way in this respect between his organization, ECLAC and CELADE. He also mentioned that other major topics were the object of concern on the part of Statistical Offices, such as the processing of census data and cartography, in respect of which no definitions as yet existed. Finally, he added that training constituted another highly significant feature of censuses. With regard to this, he mentioned that a workshop on planning techniques for population and housing censuses was to be held in Mexico next November.

16. At the beginning of the general debate, the Director of the Statistics and Projections Division of ECLAC recalled that during previous meetings of the Inter-American Statistical Conference and of its Permanent Executive Committee (COM/CIE), governments had expressed their interest in the region's Statistical Offices obtaining greater access to the resources of the international agencies which provide funding for regional co-operation activities. He then provided information on the approaches made to the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) to obtain the organization's support for activities involving regional co-operation in the field of statistics in association with the execution of the population and housing censuses of the 1990s.

17. He also stated that after having held conversations with the Division for Latin America of UNFPA, the Secretariat of ECLAC had prepared a draft project for the implementation of activities involving co-operation between the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean during the period 1988-1989. Each activity provided for the organization of a seminar, together with missions involving technicians from countries possessing the greatest experience on the topic in order to advise others requiring such experience. These missions were to be financed by contributions from the government providing the technician, which would defray his salary; from the recipient government, which would meet the expenses involved during his stay, and from the project, which would finance the travel together with a bonus in the region of US\$1 000 per month for the technical advisor. ECLAC undertook to submit the contents of the draft project to the Directors of Statistics in order to allow priorities to be established in respect of the activities. On the basis of this decision and of the commentaries and observations made, ECLAC would submit a definitive version of the project and transmit it to UNFPA for consideration.

18. Before taking any decisions as to which activities were to be considered of priority, a number of general observations were made. One delegate mentioned that the considerable importance attached to the preparation of censuses made it impossible to devote funds to other activities which were also important. Consequently, he expressed his view that censuses should be linked to the national statistical system, in order to draw maximum benefit, by which he meant that the census should facilitate the preparation of a varied range of economic and social statistics. In this respect a number of participants pointed out that in view of the limitations on resources, it was necessary to draw up a set of priorities.

19. In addition, it was observed that considerable resources were required to carry out censuses in the countries of the region, and that this probably accounted for it being the only project capable of arousing interest at the national level. Consequently, the Directors were urged to give consideration to ways in which the census could be of benefit to other activities or elements within the statistical system.

20. Another delegation suggested that an item be included relating to the evaluation of post-census activities, reflecting its conviction that the recapitulation of experience was singularly useful in drawing up criteria, particularly for the execution of future censuses.

21. Moreover, attention was drawn to the fact that updating the cartography was one of the most expensive items in a census. Consequently, and in view of the strategic role thereof, it was considered necessary to seek means of ensuring that census cartography was kept up to date.

22. Stress was laid on the fact that in designing their censuses few countries in the region bore in mind that they constitute the most suitable sampling frame for other forms of research, in particular for household surveys. This was a serious shortcoming, in view of the high cost involved in censuses, and delegates were consequently encouraged to direct their attention to the topic. In confirmation of this opinion, a delegate stated that censuses should indeed provide sampling frames, and stressed that this was of particular value during the intercensal period as it would thereby allow a harmonious sampling system to be established.

23. At the conclusion of this general debate there was agreement over the need to more tightly link census activities with the production of economic and social statistics. However, emphasis was placed on the need to draw up priorities so as to ensure coherence among the relevant objectives.

24. In the light of the presentation made by the Mexican delegation, the opinions expressed during the general debate and the presentation made by the Director of the Statistics and Projections Division of ECLAC, a wide-ranging debate took place among the participants covering the major areas in which it was necessary to set up regional co-operation activities. In this respect eight issues were identified as deserving priority. A seminar on each of these will be organized under the responsibility of a country or an international organization. An agenda for the meetings was also drawn up, and it was emphasized that they should only be attended by technical officers responsible for the respective census activities. The only exception to this rule would be the meeting on the management organization and strategies of censuses, which it was hoped would be attended by the Census Director or the Director of the National Office of Statistics. The need for national agencies to make the necessary budgetary provisions well in advance in order to ensure their attendance at these meetings was also underscored.

25. The list of topics on which it was agreed to organize seminars is given below, together with the relevant agenda, the country responsible for the organization and the approximate date at which it will be held.

## 1. Management organization and strategy of a census

- a) Agenda
  - i) Organization and institutional management of a census. Alternatives
  - ii) Institutional links between the National Office of Statistics and public and private agencies
  - iii) Planning and supervision of activities
  - iv) The National Statistical System and its relationship with population and housing censuses
  - v) Required legislation
  - vi) Funding
  - vii) Administrative infrastructure.
- b) Organizing country: Peru, with the collaboration of Argentina, Panama and Uruguay.
- c) Approximate date: April 1988.

## 2. Contents and design of the census schedule

- a) Agenda
  - i) Comparability over time
  - ii) Regional and international comparability
  - iii) Experience in respect of questions included in previous censuses
  - iv) Balance between demographic, social and economic issues
  - v) Definitions, manuals and tabulation programmes
  - vi) Experience in the use of short and extensive schedules Advantages and drawbacks.
- b) Organizing country: Brazil, with support from Chile, ECLAC and CELADE.
- c) Approximate date: second quarter of 1988.

## 3. The use of sampling in the preparatory phases and the utilization of census data

- a) Agenda
  - i) The potential use of censuses and the consequences of the methods of gathering data using a single extensive schedule, or a brief general schedule together with extensive schedules based on the samples
  - ii) Sampling for the purposes of validation and quality control
  - iii) Sampling in order to obtain advance census data
  - iv) Construction of sampling frames
  - v) Sampling for other purposes.

- b) Organizing country: Argentina, with the collaboration of Chile, CELADE and the United Nations Statistical Office.
- c) Date: third quarter of 1988.

#### 4. Cartography

- a) Agenda
  - i) Cartographical up-dating
  - ii) Modern technologies and their possible applications
  - iii) The use of complementary indicators to achieve a more satisfactory workload assignment.
- b) Organizing country: Costa Rica, with support from Colombia, Chile, the United States and Panama.
- c) Approximate date: fourth quarter of 1988.

26. The seminars listed below (topics 5 to 8) will for the most part be held during 1989. The dates thereof will be confirmed at the forthcoming meetings of the Permanent Executive Committee of CIE.

#### 5. Training personnel for activities in the field

Two meetings are planned, the first of these, organized by Mexico, will be held in November 1987. The agenda has been put out by the organizing country. The second is outlined below:

- a) Agenda
  - i) Choice of methods and procedure
  - ii) Preparation of instruction manuals
  - iii) Training centres.
- b) Organizing country: Panama.
- c) Date: during 1989.

#### 6. Data processing by computer. Choice of technologies

Two meetings are planned, the first of which, organized by the United States will be held in February 1988. The agenda has been put out by the organizing country. The second is outlined below:

- a) Agenda
  - i) Data reading
  - ii) Guidelines for data cleaning. Automatic cleaning and attribution

- iii) Creation of data banks
  - iv) Preparation of tabulations.
- b) Organizing country: Panama, with the collaboration of Uruguay and CELADE.
  - c) Date: during 1989.

#### 7. Computer systems providing user access to data

- a) Agenda
  - i) Use of data banks and creation of specific-purpose data banks
  - ii) The use of geographically disaggregated data
  - iii) Statistical secrecy and the use of census data. The level of disaggregation of computer files
  - iv) Publication and dissemination.
- b) Organized by ECLAC and CELADE, with the collaboration of Chile.
- c) Date: during 1989.

#### 8. Post-census evaluation and use of master samples

- a) Agenda
  - i) Post-census evaluation
  - ii) Use of mater samples
  - iii) Publication of results.
- b) Organizing country: Colombia, with the collaboration of the United States, CELADE and the United Nations Statistical Office.
- c) Date: during 1989.

27. Specific observations were made when each topic was examined individually, and the Chair was requested to place these on record in the report. Thus, in respect of topic 1. vi) "Funding", a delegation requested that, in the name of the Directors of Statistics of the region, the United Nations be consulted as to the possibilities of financial support being provided for the organization of censuses. Furthermore, with regard to topic 2. vi) "Experience of the use of short and extensive schedules. Advantages and drawbacks", another delegation pointed out that it was essential that this topic be dealt with immediately, since a number of countries were facing the need to take decisions thereupon. He also requested that CELADE should as soon as possible issue a publication setting out the experience which exists in this respect in the region. In the same respect, another delegation requested that this document should be sent well in advance of the seminar in order to thus allow participants to prepare. In respect of

topic 4, a clarification was requested as to whether item 1 included aspects linked to the methodology for up-dating cartography; it was recommended that the country responsible should give consideration to this preoccupation. With regard to topics 5 to 8, the remarks made bore upon the incorporation or change of topics and the respective agendas have been collected.

28. In addition to the collaboration which each country responsible for organizing the seminars will receive from other countries and organizations, a number of these proposed to present working documents. Thus, CELADE will present documents on topics 6 and 8; CIENES on topics 3, 6 and 7; the United States on topic 8; the United Nations Statistical Office on topics 3 and 8 and Uruguay on topic 6.

29. A number of delegations expressed their desire that the Seminar to be held in the United States on topic 6, "Data processing by computer: choice of technologies", should not duplicate the subjects covered by the other seven seminars. It was also requested that the title of the seminar be changed to "Planning for computer processing of census data". In this respect, the United States delegate stated that every effort would be made to ensure that this was the case, and, that, in the case of cartography, for example, which is a subject which will be analysed at the seminar to be held in Costa Rica (topic 4), he will put forward an amendment to ensure the coherence of the respective agendas. He also stated that the responses sent by the Directors of Statistics to the School of Applied Statistics and Computer Techniques (ESAYDEC) will be taken into account.

30. The delegations expressed their unanimous support for the draft project presented by ECLAC to UNFPA for preliminary examination. They requested that the Secretariat of ECLAC should submit to the Fund a definitive version of the project including the preliminary activities and the preliminary timetable agreed upon at the meeting. It was also agreed that a request should be made to the Chairman of the Permanent Executive Committee of CIE to inform the Director of UNFPA of the unanimous support given to the project.

31. The debate over item 2 of the agenda, relating to global features of population and housing censuses requiring decisions at the level of Directors of Statistics, continued with presentations by CELADE on its activities in connection with the 1990 Census Round, as well as an example of the application of data from the population census used as inputs in drawing up policies at the sectoral level, and on the REDATAM system.

32. The Director of CELADE stated that the Centre, in its capacity as technical body of ECLAC in the field of population, is linked to statistical activities in the region through the work it carries out with the national users of statistical data. He highlighted his concern and interest with the forthcoming 1990 censuses, an area in which CELADE is prepared to collaborate with countries, in close collaboration with other United Nations agencies. Finally, he stressed the importance of housing and population censuses which, albeit not the sole source of data, constitute one of the most important sources in the countries of the region, in view of which they will be essential for the population studies required in order to formulate realistic strategies and implement global, sectoral and regional development policies.

33. A concrete example of the application of data from the population census as demographic inputs for planning in the health sector was then presented. It was emphasized that the census made it possible to identify the population benefiting from health services, to locate it geographically, to formulate a diagnosis (mortality, fertility rates, etc.) and to establish among others, data such as the level of education and type of dwelling. It was stressed that while censuses should be simplified, they should not be simplistic, and that the questions included on the questionnaire should be of value to other sectors of national life.

34. The Latin American Demographic Centre (CELADE) provided a demonstration of the REDATAM system, which stores microdata from population and housing censuses (or from surveys) in a microcomputer and allows users to obtain statistical tables for geographical areas of interest to them. The National Institute of Statistics of Chile demonstrated the manner in which this system had been used, in conjunction with the corresponding maps, in order to satisfy the demand from a number of municipal councils and other users. In the course of the presentation stress was laid on the facility with which REDATAM could be used to define those areas which have to be constituted on the basis of smaller zones such as blocks. At the same time, a brief review was given of the use of the REDATAM system in Costa Rica, Guyana and Saint Lucia.

35. During the debates mention was made of the need to preserve the confidentiality of data, and also to extend their use. In addition, it was recommended that the user be properly informed as to the degree of reliability of the information set at his disposal, since it is planned to use sampling techniques in the course of the 1990 censuses, which will clearly alter the validity of the results. The United States delegate said that his country possessed a department in which users defined their specific areas of interest and were given standardized tables. A number of delegates expressed their interest in adopting this system, and the possibility of using it with data from other sources was raised.

36. The concluding debates on the REDATAM system focused on the implications of its use for the censuses of the 1990s, and stress was laid on the need to plan for the provision of disaggregated data services during the preparatory phases of the censuses. Once again emphasis was placed on the importance of possessing the appropriate cartography, if possible in computerized form, and comparable up to a determined level with previous censuses. A number of delegates also raised the problems of quality control over data during the collection phase, since errors have increasingly serious consequences as the level of disaggregation of data increases.

37. The background information and results of the seminar-workshop on surveys into household income and expenditure, held in San José, Costa Rica between 10 and 13 March 1987 were presented. The details of this are to be found in Reference Document No. 12. The presentation underscored the broad participation on the part of the governments of the region together with the main results achieved, particularly in the field of measuring net income from agricultural units, those produced by the activities of micro-enterprises, as well as those received in kind and those from production for self-consumption and self-supply.

38. It was pointed out that experience in the region had revealed the need for a backup questionnaire to reconstruct the production account in order to achieve a satisfactory measurement of the net income from agricultural units in households. Similar observations were made in respect of the measurement of household income from activities associated with micro-enterprises, which are of increasing importance in the region.

39. In respect of quantification of expenditure, it was acknowledged that the criterion most commonly adopted was that of "acquired consumption", which, although compatible with the concept of national accounts, does not gather information on all expenditure which corresponds to the definition of "paid consumption" for categories of groups and subgroups of goods and services.

Evaluation of the Activities agreed upon at the  
Ninth Inter-American Statistical Conference  
(item 3 of the agenda)

40. The Secretariat of ECLAC presented the activities underway in the field of computerized statistical systems. Particular reference was made to the inception of the project "Statistics for the Development of Latin America and the Caribbean", funded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). A fairly detailed analysis of the background to this is to be found in the document entitled "Report on the Activities of the Computerized Statistical System Project" (Reference Document No. 3), presented by the Secretariat. In particular, it was mentioned that the project provides for the organization of workshops during 1988 and 1989, at which technicians from the region will be trained in the use of computerized statistical systems, and for the installation of the systems in a number of countries in the region.

41. The Directors expressed their satisfaction at the inception of the project's activities, and their particular interest that it should undertake new tasks in connection with the use of microcomputer systems. In this respect, they pointed out that the rapid development of such equipment and of the respective systems for statistical processing would compel computer centres in the statistical institutes to adopt them, for reasons of cost and to ensure the dissemination of the available statistical data.

42. The Secretariat then went on to highlight the support provided by UNDP for this project, and undertook to inform the agency of the interest expressed by countries in the extension of its coverage of microcomputer activities. In this respect, it should be mentioned that the second phase of the project "Statistical Computing Project" (SCP) in Europe has begun to work in this field, and it will consequently be possible to draw on the progress made therein.

43. In respect of regional co-operation in the field of national accounts, the Secretariat of ECLAC first of all drew attention to the action under way as part of the programme to review the SNA. He also mentioned the regional meetings which had either been held or were forthcoming, and stressed the importance of the countries of the region attending the second seminar on the topic, which is to be held next November in Santiago, Chile. He stated that the meeting would provide countries with an opportunity to express their



opinion on the proposed modifications to the system prepared over the past two years, which will shortly be analysed by the editing commissions of the manual which will contain the new revised SNA.

44. With regard to this topic, a brief description was given of the main activities in which ECLAC had participated, and the most important projects in which it had been involved either as an associate or executing agency were mentioned, in particular those under way in Brazil, Guatemala and Venezuela.

45. The Argentine delegation provided a summary of the conclusions of the first regional workshop of technicians responsible for drawing up the consumer price index, which was held in Buenos Aires from 19 to 22 May 1987, and which was organized in conjunction with the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INDEC) of Argentina and ILO, with financial support from these institutions and from UNDP. It was emphasized that 26 countries had participated, 18 of which were from the region, together with a number of international agencies and representatives from Italy, Spain and France. Details are given in Reference Document No. 11.

46. As far as the conclusions of the regional workshop were concerned, it was acknowledged that itemization of the CPI depended on the users to which the country gave priority, and that there were differences among the countries of the region in respect of definitions of the reference population. A number of suggestions were put forward for the treatment of seasonal goods, and attention was drawn to the disadvantage of the lack of flexibility of adjusted flows in the case of prices which were not seasonally adjusted. The importance of weightings for goods and services being as detailed as possible was acknowledged, and it was pointed out that in order to preserve the specific nature of those which make up the basic shopping basket, it was desirable to replace those which cease to be essential. The fundamental importance of expenditure on own or rented housing, to which suitable weightings should be given in calculating the CPI was stressed.

47. Emphasis was placed on the utilization of sampling to prepare the index in order to ensure its representativity from one revision to the next. Finally, it was stated that it was desirable that rates of interest and other variables which do not constitute the prices of goods and services should not be taken into account.

48. The delegate of CIENES provided a description of the training activities of his institution during the 1988-1989 period, details of which are to be found in Reference Document No. 10. In this respect, he underscored the importance of statistics for decision-making and for evaluating policies, programmes and projects bearing on the development of countries; it is for this reason that international agencies run support programmes for the efforts made by the various countries to improve this discipline. He informed delegates that more than eight thousand officials from almost all the countries of the region had taken part in a large number of courses, seminars and workshops organized by CIENES. He then went on to give a detailed review of the training activities programmed for the period in question, both at the inter-American level and in the form of direct technical assistance to member countries, and also gave details of the financial assistance provided by CIENES for participants in courses and seminars. Finally, he added that the

document submitted included data on the most pressing needs in respect of statistical training, which had been provided by 18 countries in the region.

49. The United States delegation gave a summary of the training and technical assistance programmes offered by the International Statistics Programme Center of the United States Office of the Census for the 1990 round of population censuses, within which two modular courses of two and three months were taught. He placed particular emphasis on the almost perfect congruency of the training programmes of the School of Applied Statistics and Computer Techniques (ESAYTEC) with the different national programmes organized by countries with a view to the future census round, and enumerated the different courses taught in Washington, Boca Raton and Latin America during 1987 and 1988. In addition, he presented Reference Document No. 19 on International Training Programmes in Labor Statistics organized by the United States Department of Labor.

50. For its part, the Spanish delegation stated that the National Institute of Statistics (INE) had been carrying out a permanent programme of co-operation with the countries of Latin America since 1979, through two annual courses and two seminars. He also stated that at the beginning of September 1987 a seminar on external trade statistics had been held in Mexico, under the co-sponsorship of INE and ECLAC. Part of the funds had been contributed by the European Economic Community. He went on to provide a brief review of the various activities in which his country had participated, and stated that as a result of its entry into the European Economic Community (EEC) it was hoped that increased funds would be available for training activities, from Community sources. In this respect, he encouraged the different countries to express their needs in the statistical sphere, in order to facilitate examination of the possibilities of providing this type of assistance in specific areas.

51. A report on technical co-operation between international agencies in the sphere of statistics, which had been jointly prepared by OAS and ECLAC, and which appears in detail in Reference Document No. 5, was presented. With respect to the assistance provided by the different organisms of the United Nations system, the Secretariat informed delegates that between 1983 and 1986 expenditure thereupon had increased by 31% and that in 1986 a tendency to focus assistance on the spheres of demographic and social statistics, data processing and national account had emerged. It was clearly apparent that Latin America and the Caribbean was the region which received the greatest proportion of technical assistance funds from the United Nations system, in comparison with the assistance provided to other regions of the world.

52. With regard to the assistance provided by the World Bank in the sphere of statistics, it was emphasized that this was generally part of the loans granted to specific sectors, and only represented a small proportion of the total technical assistance assigned to a project. The process began with a visiting mission, which made recommendations for the approval of a loan which might or might not include an item for statistical assistance, depending on the opinion formed as to the information existing in the sphere in which the project was to take place.

53. For its part, between 1980 and 1986 the Inter-American Development Bank provided approximately US\$1.3 million worth of technical assistance to the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean in respect of projects in the sphere of statistics. Of this amount, 60% corresponded to two projects designed to prepare household surveys. The remainder was devoted to subregional integration agencies, such as the Andean Group, the Permanent Secretariat of the General Treaty for Central American Economic Integration (SIECA) and the Latin American Integration Association (ALADI).

54. The delegate of OAS provided information on the present state of the institution's funding for horizontal co-operation activities in support of the Regional Programme for Population and Housing Censuses, in accordance with resolution CIE/1 of the Inter-American Statistical Conference. He said that the General Secretariat had included a specific sum for this purpose in the 1988-1989 Programme-Budget of the Organization, which would be administered by CIENES. He also informed delegates that the Subcommittee for the Programme-Budget of the Permanent Executive Committee of the Inter-American Economic and Social Council (CEPCIES) had recently taken the decision to increase the amount proposed by the General Secretariat. Final consideration of the 1988-1989 draft Programme-Budget would take place during the General Assembly of OAS, which is to be held in the United States at the beginning of November next. Finally, he said that the Ninth Inter-American Statistical Conference had entrusted the Permanent Executive Committee of CIE with responsibility for orienting the Regional Programme, for defining its specific activities, establishing priorities and managing complementary funds.

55. The delegate of the Board of the Cartagena Agreement provided a brief review of the work carried out within the organization in the field of data. In this respect, she drew particular attention to the form of organization adopted in respect of the centralization of data of general use which was shared in the relational data base system, and to the decentralization or sharing-out of the processing thereof, by on-line access made available to users through personal computers. She emphasized that this type of organization provides the data available with a high degree of coherence, and reminded delegates that information originating from five countries was involved, relating to different fields of economic and social activity. She also stated that redundant data was thereby avoided, as data was centrally handled, up-dated and managed and made available to users without any danger of its being lost or altered.

56. With regard to the method of collecting data, she highlighted the work carried out as part of the Subregional System of Statistical Information, the Programme to Harmonize National Accounts as well as in the sphere of documentary informatics. After mentioning projects designed to reinforce and improve the national production of statistics on agriculture and food, on services and conjunctural statistics, which give precedence to methodological research and the exchange of experience as part of the programme of horizontal co-operation, she announced the forthcoming initiation of an intra-subregional network of data transmission.

Participation of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean  
in the twenty-fourth session of the United Nations Statistical  
Commission and proposed topics for the working group  
(item 1 of the agenda)

57. The Argentine delegate stated that his delegation had adopted two fundamental positions at the twenty-fourth session of the United Nations Statistical Commission: the first of these was its insistence that the countries of Latin America be allowed to participate more fully in the activities of the Commission through ECLAC; and the second emphasized the need to devote constant attention to improving the quality of basic data. He also emphasized that his delegation had proposed that the United Nations Statistical Office takes the necessary steps to define the criteria which should be taken into account by those countries which desire to organize integral vertical classifications.

58. Moreover, in connection with the forthcoming meeting of the Working Group of the Commission, to take place in October 1987, he put forward a set of topics to which Argentina attached varying priority, and which are set out in Reference Document No. 13. In this respect he requested governments to send as soon as possible their viewpoints to the Argentine delegation in order that it might present them at the meeting. A number of delegations expressed their interest in the topic of services, both with regard to their output and the international trade therein. Other delegations requested that the topic of the methodologies necessary to satisfactorily measure economic variables in periods of high inflation be incorporated.

Programme of Activities for the 1987/1988 period  
(item 4 of the agenda)

59. The topic of the dissemination of statistical data was presented by the Statistics and Projections Division of ECLAC, which submitted Reference Document No. 2, containing a detailed analysis of the topic. The topic involved an examination both of the new methods of disseminating statistical information in the economic and social field and of the changes which these new methods may involve for the processes of compiling, storing and retrieving data.

60. Emphasis was placed on the analysis of three aspects. The first of these concerned the channels of distribution, and for the purposes of presentation was grouped into: a) publications, microfiches, tapes and disks; b) disks using laser technology, and c) direct access systems, and the possibility of setting up "multi-media distribution" systems was suggested. The second aspect concerned the institutional organization of the distribution of statistical information; this involves establishing links between the roles of the public and private sectors, and it was pointed out that there had been little development of this topic in the region. The third raised a number of questions concerning regional co-operation in relation to the introduction of new techniques, which open up opportunities for defining policies for the exchange of information, for co-ordination or for joint negotiation to acquire access to or purchase systems.

61. A number of Directors underscored the importance of the topic, and raised the possibility of drawing up co-ordinated policies at the regional level, in order to facilitate the tasks of dissemination and achieve greater efficiency in the use of resources. They attached particular importance to the role which ECLAC should play in this area, in view of the contacts which the institution maintains with other agencies and working groups of the Organization which work in close collaboration with the developed countries. The Secretariat of ECLAC stated that it would as far as possible, and in close connection with other activities which it was carrying out in the sphere of computer systems, do its utmost to obtain access to resources which would allow it to meet regional demands.

62. It was also considered that nothing relating to the construction and administration of data banks should be excluded from the areas of direct interest of the national directors of statistics, and it was recommended that this topic be maintained on the agenda of future meetings in order to ensure the necessary continuity.

63. The topic of short-term indicators (Reference Document No. 14) was examined with special emphasis on the increasingly urgent need for timely statistics in order to respond to the considerable demand for information. Simultaneously, the delegates of the different countries were requested to collaborate by answering a questionnaire designed to draw up an inventory of the work carried out in the region in the field of short-term statistics, in order to exchange experience and foment collaboration among countries.

64. A number of delegates confirmed the considerable demand which existed in the field of short-term statistics, and drew on the experience of a number of countries to illustrate this fact. The proposal put forward by a delegate to organize a seminar on the topic met with unanimous agreement. To the same effect, after highlighting the enormous pressure to which the informing units are subjected, another delegate proposed that means of dealing with this situation be discussed at the seminar.

65. The Argentine delegation stated that it was organizing a workshop on the co-ordination of national statistics, to be held during the second quarter of 1988. In this respect, it stressed the need to consider the co-ordination of the national statistical system as a permanent activity. He underlined the need for countries to devote more attention to this aspect, since in recent years it had become clear that a number of preoccupations and restrictions which are of equal concern to the bodies responsible for official statistics in the countries of the region needed to be analysed jointly in order to draw the benefits of the exchange of experience.

66. The principal objectives of the workshop were to bring about an exchange of experience between experts in the area of statistical co-ordination and to produce a set of recommendations designed to improve the national statistical system of each country. It was hoped that debates would focus on the following topics: i) organization of the national statistical system; ii) identification of the basic tools for statistical co-ordination; iii) use of conceptual frameworks as means of co-ordinating and integrating statistics; iv) statistical planning; v) international statistical co-ordination; and vi) statistical secrecy.

67. The representative of the United Nations Statistical Office (UNSO) conveyed a message from his Director, congratulating the Director General of Statistics of the region, and ECLAC, for the regularity with which this type of meeting had been held. He added that the agreements reached therein would no doubt contribute to ensuring that the region's presence was increasingly felt in the activities of the Statistical Commission and in the United Nations Statistical Office itself. He went on to provide a brief presentation of the National Household Survey Capability Programme (NHSCP), and presented a projected workshop, jointly sponsored with ECLAC, details of which are given in Reference Document No. 25, "Taller de Trabajo sobre Errores No-Muestrales". He stressed that the focus of the programme was to encourage the internal integration of the national statistical system, in order that the programme of household surveys should be complementary to the other elements of the statistical system, and, at the same time, constitute a means of harmonizing concepts and variables frequently used in a number of statistical instruments (for example, the concepts of dwelling, household, members of household, etc.). He also highlighted the need for co-ordination among the different elements which make up the national statistical system, so as to avoid a duplication of efforts and to utilize --in as far as possible-- common infrastructure (master samples, sampling frames), above all in view of the scarcity of resources in the region.

68. The representative of the Regional Project for the Integral Treatment of Poverty (RIA/86/004) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) gave a summary of a number of world economic events which had sparked off the present crisis, and on which statistical research had consequently focused its attention. However, he observed that, paradoxically, insufficient attention had been directed towards the collection of those social indicators which would make it possible to identify the very essence of the crisis, which is critical poverty. Consequently, he stressed that in view of this, the fourth programming cycle of UNDP had selected, among other areas of priority, that of critical poverty.

69. The central objective of the project, he added, was to foment the design of national programmes to deal with poverty, a task which required a vast amount of information. The project is being jointly carried out by the Governments of Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela. Ecuador is at present defining its activities, while Cuba and Honduras are in the process of incorporation. ECLAC is collaborating in the definition of the characteristics of poverty.

70. He indicated that the creation of an integrated system of statistics and allied social and economic indicators of permanent nature constituted a major proportion of the project's objectives. In this respect, he observed that although specific types of social statistics exist, they in general only provide partial coverage, as well as being considerably out-of-date and extremely discontinuous, which makes it materially impossible to follow up the deterioration or improvement of living conditions.

71. During the debate participants expressed their satisfaction that, in its first stage, the project had allocated funds for both national agencies specialized in primary and derived statistics as well as for the United Nations Regional Commission, with a view to supporting the tasks of preparing

useful and essential background information for programmes and projects designed to eradicate extreme poverty. There was also agreement over the need to adopt the same support procedure during the follow-up phase, during which periodic qualitative data would be obtained in order to gain an understanding of the circumstances of those economic and social groups most affected by the crisis. The delegates from the countries also agreed to request the president of the Permanent Executive Committee of CIE to inform the administrator of UNDP of these viewpoints.

72. The Uruguayan delegation presented the topic of economic censuses and registers of economic units. The details of their presentation are to be found in Reference Document No. 15.

73. The delegation then stated that the areas which had to be considered in a programme of work were the following: i) the relationship between economic censuses and the system of economic statistics; ii) the objectives of economic censuses; iii) the scope and coverage of economic censuses; iv) methods and strategies for gathering information; v) basic information for organizing and structuring field work; vi) the phases of economic censuses; and vii) registers of economic activities and sampling frames.

74. Since economic censuses have neither achieved the necessary dissemination or continuity within the region, a fact which has made it impossible to take full advantage of experience, the delegation proposed a programme of work which provides for the organization of an evaluation workshop, the establishment of a Technical Commission and the inclusion of a selected set of topics in the programmes of work of the international technical assistance agencies.

75. A number of delegations expressed their satisfaction with the work presented, and after adding a number of commentaries on the experience of their respective countries expressed their support for the proposals. For its part, the Uruguayan delegation offered to organize a Workshop on the Evaluation of Economic Censuses during the second semester of 1988.

76. Finally, a number of global observations were made in relation to horizontal co-operation between the countries of the region. The Canadian delegate gave a review of the circumstances which had led to the organization of this meeting of Directors of Statistics at ECLAC headquarters. He expressed his satisfaction with the success of the meeting, which, in his opinion, had been of a higher level, in both technical and organization terms, than those which had been held during the ten previous years. He expressed his confidence that, through the collaboration between international agencies such as ECLAC, OAS and IASI, it would be possible to preserve the level achieved, and that the Commission would in the future be able to organize a similar meeting.

77. The Spanish delegation stated that the possibilities for technical co-operation had expanded with its country's entry into the European Economic Community (EEC). It stated that Spain had so far co-operated with the region on the basis of its own resources, and that its new connection with the EEC would facilitate a broader and deeper co-operation.

78. He consequently invited the Directors present to indicate their interests and requirements in the field of technical co-operation, first of all in the broadest sense, in respect of the major areas of action, and later, in respect of concrete aspects in which collaboration could be provided by European, and in particular, Spanish experts, who for reasons of language would be able to become more rapidly operational.

79. On account of the participation of the Institute for Ibero-American Co-operation (ICA) in funding the technical co-operation programme, he indicated that it would be highly advisable for countries to submit requests for technical assistance to the Joint Commissions formed by their governments and the Government of Spain. This would facilitate a full understanding of the importance of their needs, and prove of global benefit with regard to the funds devoted to such programmes.

80. The Directors of Statistics of the Americas agreed to place on record their gratitude to ECIAC for the efficient preparation of documents and activities as well as for the organization and secretariat of the meeting, and expressed their satisfaction with the results of the event. They also thanked the representatives of the United Nations Statistical Office, CELADE, OAS, IASI, ILO, JUNAC, CIENES and UNDP for their contribution to the meeting's success.



## Annex 1

List of participants

- ARGENTINA** Sra. Lelia Boeri de Cervetto  
Directora de Coordinación del  
Sistema Estadístico Nacional  
Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos  
Hipólito Yrigoyen 250 Of. 1227  
Buenos Aires
- BOLIVIA** Sr. Marcelo Mercado Lora  
Director  
Instituto Nacional de Estadística  
Plaza Mario Guzmán Aspíazo N° 1  
La Paz
- BRAZIL** Sr. José Guilherme Almeida dos Reis  
Director Técnico  
Instituto Brasileiro de Geografía y Estadística (IBGE)  
Rua Visconde de Niterói 1246 Bloco B  
12o. Andar Mangueira  
Rio de Janeiro
- CANADA** Sr. Béla Prigly  
Director  
International and Professional Relations Division  
Statistics Canada  
R.H. Coats Building Tunneys Pasture  
Ottawa, Ontario, KIA OT 6
- CHILE** Sr. Alvaro Vial  
Director Nacional  
Instituto Nacional de Estadística  
Av. Bulnes 418  
Santiago
- Sr. Juan Crocco Ferrari  
Subdirector Técnico, Asesor de  
Integración Estadística  
Instituto Nacional de Estadística  
Av. Bulnes 418  
Santiago
- Sra. Odette Tacla  
Jefe  
Subdivisión Estadísticas Demográficas  
Instituto Nacional de Estadística  
Av. Bulnes 418  
Santiago

COLOMBIA  
 Sr. Alfonso González Caro  
 Jefe  
 Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística  
 (DANE)  
 Transv., 62 A No. 123-4  
 Bogotá

COSTA RICA  
 Sr. Eladio Cordero Díaz  
 Director General  
 Dirección General de Estadística y Censos  
 Apartado 10163  
 San José

CUBA  
 Sr. Jorge Manuel Martínez Fernández  
 Vicepresidente  
 Comité Estatal de Estadística  
 5a. y Paseo Vedado  
 La Habana

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC  
 Sr. Manuel de Jesús Estrada Medina  
 Embajador Extraordinario y Plenipotenciario  
 de la República Dominicana en Chile

ECUADOR  
 Sr. Wilson Ruales  
 Director General  
 Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos  
 Avenida 10 de Agosto No. 229  
 Quito

EL SALVADOR  
 Sr. Jorge Alberto Láinez López  
 Director General  
 Dirección General de Estadística y Censos  
 43 Ave. Norte y la. Calle Poniente  
 San Salvador

GUATEMALA  
 Sr. Marciano Castillo  
 Gerente General  
 Instituto Nacional de Estadística  
 8a. Calle 9-55 Zona 1  
 Guatemala

HAITI  
 Sr. Louis Smith  
 Director General  
 Institut Haitien de statistique et d'informatique  
 Av. Boulevard Harry Truman  
 Cité de l'exposition  
 Port-au-Prince

Sr. Jean Claude Gautier  
 Director Adjunto  
 Institut Haïtien de statistique et d'informatique  
 Av. Boulevard Harry Truman  
 Cité de l'exposition  
 Port-au-Prince

## MEXICO

Sr. Humberto Molina  
 Director General  
 Instituto Nacional de Estadística,  
 Geografía e Informática (INEGI)  
 Insurgentes Sur 795 PH  
 México, D.F.

Sra. Clarisa Torres  
 Asistente del Presidente de la  
 Conferencia Interamericana de Estadística  
 Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía  
 e Informática  
 Insurgentes Sur 795 PH  
 México, D.F.

## PANAMA

Sr. Amílcar Villarreal  
 Director  
 Dirección General de Estadística y Censos  
 Apartado 5213  
 Panamá

## PERU

Sra. Graciela Fernández-Baca de Valdez  
 Jefe  
 Instituto Nacional de Estadística  
 28 de Julio 1056  
 Lima

## SPAIN

Sr. Javier Ruiz Castillo  
 Director General  
 Instituto Nacional de Estadística  
 Paseo de la Castellana 183  
 Madrid

Sra. Carmen Arribas  
 Jefe  
 Servicio de Relaciones Internacionales  
 Instituto Nacional de Estadística  
 Paseo de la Castellana 183  
 Madrid

## UNITED STATES

Sr. Peter Bucrpone  
 Assistant Director  
 U.S. Bureau of the Census  
 Washington, D.C. 20233

Sr. Tim Brown  
 Chief  
 Latin American Training Branch  
 U.S. Bureau of the Census  
 Washington, D.C. 20233

**URUGUAY**

Sra. Rosa Grosskoff  
 Directora General  
 Dirección General de Estadística y Censos  
 Cuareim 2052  
 Montevideo

Sr. David Glejberman  
 Asesor Técnico  
 Dirección General de Estadística y Censos  
 Cuareim 2052  
 Montevideo

**VENEZUELA**

Sra. Myrna Cisneros  
 Directora General de Estadística  
 Oficina Central de Estadística e Informática  
 Presidencia de la República  
 Oficina Central de Estadística e Informática (OCEI)  
 Caracas

**ORGANIZATIONS**

**UNSO**

Sr. Eduino Berumen  
 Technical Advisor NHSCP  
 United Nations Statistical Office  
 2 UN Plaza Room DC 2-1742  
 New York, N.Y. - 10017  
 U.S.A.

**UNDP**

Sr. Freddy Justiniano  
 Experto en Cuentas Económicas y Sociales  
 Proyecto RIA/86/004 - Tratamiento Integral  
 de la Pobreza  
 Apartado Aéreo 091369 FNUD  
 Bogotá, Colombia

Sr. Rubén Morinelli  
 Jefe Proyecto MEX/87/001  
 Fortalecimiento del Sistema Estadístico Mexicano  
 Insurgentes Sur 795  
 México, D.F.

**ILO**

Sr. Rafael Trigueros  
 Consejero Regional en Encuestas de Hogares  
 Casilla 52353  
 Santiago, Chile

**IDB** Sr. Juan Antonio Buzio  
Especialista Financiero  
Pedro de Valdivia 0193 Piso 11  
Santiago, Chile

**CIENES** Sr. Sergio Chaparro  
Director  
Centro Interamericano de Enseñanza Estadística  
Triana 820  
Santiago, Chile

Sr. Carlos Araujo  
Asistente General del Director  
Centro Interamericano de Enseñanza Estadística  
Triana 820  
Santiago, Chile

Sr. Oscar Miranda  
Coordinador General de Actividades en los Países  
Centro Interamericano de Enseñanza Estadística  
Triana 820  
Santiago, Chile

**JUNAC** Sra. Blanca Freyre  
Jefe  
Unidad de Informática  
Paseo de la República 3895 San Isidro  
Lima 18, Perú

**OAS** Sr. George Plinio Montalván  
Economista Jefe  
Secretario Técnico CIE  
Organización de los Estados Americanos  
1889 F st. NW.  
Washington, D.C. 20006

**IASI** Sr. Evelio Fabbroni  
Secretario Técnico  
Instituto Interamericano de Estadística  
Apartado 5139  
Panamá, Panamá

Sr. Jorge Muñoz Baeza  
Instituto Interamericano de Estadística  
Guillermo Tell 5907  
Santiago, Chile

**ECLAC SECRETARIAT** Sr. Norberto González  
Executive Secretary, ECLAC

Sr. Gert Rosenthal  
Deputy Executive Secretary for Social  
and Economic Development, ECLAC

Sr. Pedro Sainz  
Chief, Statistics and Projections Division, ECLAC

Sr. Reynaldo Bajraj  
Director, CELADE

Sr. Magacio Santamaría  
Chief, Office of Programme Co-ordination  
and Planning, ECLAC

Sr. Arsenio Aguirre, ECLAC  
Sra. Carmen Arretx, CELADE  
Sr. Lancelot Busby, ECLAC, Port of Spain  
Sr. Arthur Conning, CELADE  
Sr. Pedro Esparza, ECLAC  
Sr. Raúl García Belgrano, ECLAC  
Sr. Santiago Jadue, ECLAC  
Sr. Dirk Jaspers-Faijer, CELADE  
Sr. Ari Silva, CELADE  
Sr. Luis Talavera, ECLAC  
Sr. Bernardo Yudelewicz, ECLAC

## Annex 2

Reference documents

Number	Title	Author
1	Provisional Agenda	
2	Distribution of Statistical Information	Statistics and Projections Division/ECLAC
3	Informe sobre actividades del proyecto Sistemas de Computación Estadística	Statistics and Projections Division/ECLAC
4	Actividades recientes de cooperación regional de la CEPAL en el campo de las Cuentas Nacionales	Statistics and Projections Division/ECLAC
5	Cooperación técnica en estadística	Statistics and Projections Division ECLAC/OAS
6	Los censos de población y vivienda de la década del 90 en América Latina	CELADE
7	Considerations for Implementing REDATAM Data Services (Summary of the Spanish version)	CELADE
8	Participación de los países de la región en el 24o. período de sesiones de la Comisión de Estadística de las Naciones Unidas	Argentina
9	Aspectos globales de los censos de población que requieren decisiones a nivel de Directores de Estadística	INEGI/México
10	Actividades de capacitación del CIENES para el bienio 1988-1989	CIENES
11	Conclusiones del Taller Regional sobre Índices de Precios al Consumidor	INDEC/Argentina

Number	Title	Author
12	Seminario-taller sobre encuestas de ingresos y gastos de los hogares realizado en San José de Costa Rica	DGEC/Costa Rica
13	Comisión de Estadística de Naciones Unidas	INDEC/Argentina
14	Indicadores de coyuntura en México	INEGI/México
15	Censos económicos y registros de unidades económicas	DGEC/Uruguay Introducción/CEPAL
16	Taller Regional sobre la coordinación de la estadística nacional	INDEC/Argentina
17	The Relevance of the REDATAM System for the 1990 Censuses	CELADE
18	REDATAM: un resumen	CELADE
19	International Training Programmes in Labor Statistics	United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics
20	Actividades relevantes del Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática durante 1987	INEGI/México
21	Uso de técnicas de muestreo en los censos de población	INDEC/Argentina
22	La programación del control de gestión de los censos de población	INDEC/Argentina
23	Inventario de indicadores económicos de coyuntura	INEGI/México
24	Informe del Taller Interamericano de Planeación de Censos de Población y Vivienda	INEGI/México
25	Taller de Trabajo "Errores No-Muestrales" NHSCP/CEPAL	NHSCP/ECLAC



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Number	Title	Author
26	Fortalecimiento y mejoramiento de las estadísticas e indicadores sociales e indicadores económicos censales	UNDP Regional Project RLA/86/004 Critical Poverty

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