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First meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas
of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

Santiago, Chile, 9-11 May 2001

**ANNOTATED PROVISIONAL AGENDA AND ORGANIZATION OF THE WORK OF
THE FIRST MEETING OF THE STATISTICAL CONFERENCE OF THE AMERICAS
OF THE ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**

A. BACKGROUND, OBJECTIVES AND MEMBERSHIP OF THE STATISTICAL CONFERENCE OF THE AMERICAS OF ECLAC

1. Background

By resolution 2000/7 of 25 July 2000, the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations approved the establishment of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean as a subsidiary body of the Commission. In so doing it ratified resolution 580(XXVIII) as adopted by the Economic Commission at its twenty-eight session and thus completed the process set in motion at the Meeting of Directors of Statistics of the Americas held in March 1999, at which it had been agreed that a proposal for the establishment of a body to be known as the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC would be submitted to the Commission at its next session.

2. Objectives

The objectives of the Conference are:

- To promote the development and improvement of national statistics and their international comparability, bearing in mind the recommendations made by the United Nations Statistical Commission, specialized agencies and other relevant organizations.
- To further international, regional and bilateral cooperation among national offices and international and regional agencies.
- To prepare a biennial programme of regional and international cooperation activities designed to meet the demands of the countries of the region, subject to the availability of resources.

3. Membership

All countries that are members of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean are members of the Conference.

4. Meetings of the Conference

The Conference shall hold its regular meetings every other year and may accept invitations extended by Governments of member States to hold its regular meetings in their countries.

5. Executive Committee

The Conference shall elect an Executive Committee, in accordance with the regulations established by the Commission. The Chairperson of the Executive Committee shall also preside over the meetings of the Conference. The Executive Committee is empowered to convene a special meeting in the interval between regular meetings.

The Executive Committee shall be made up of a chairperson and six members. Its members shall be elected from among the member countries of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. Special attention shall be paid to ensuring that the subregional groups of countries are represented on the Committee.

B. ANNOTATIONS TO THE AGENDA

1. Election of officers

Pursuant to resolution 2000/7 of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, at the beginning of each meeting of the Conference, the Chairperson of the Executive Committee, in consultation with the members of the Executive Committee and of the Conference, shall draw up a proposal on the election of the new Committee. The newly elected Committee shall take up its duties once the regular meeting of the Conference at which it was elected has ended and shall remain in office until the end of the next regular meeting.

In view of the fact that this will be the first time that the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC will meet, it is proposed that a chairperson, two deputy chairpersons and a rapporteur should be elected to preside over the deliberations of this first meeting and to oversee the election of the Executive Committee upon its conclusion. It is further proposed that when the Heads of Delegation meet on 9 May prior to the opening session of the Conference, they should analyse the election of these presiding officers and consider the possibility of electing four of the countries that were chosen to sit on the Steering Committee at the Meeting of Directors of Statistics of the Americas held in March 1999, which, together with ECLAC, carried out the preparatory work for this first meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC.

2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of the work of the first meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC

Working document:

- Provisional agenda (LC/L.1471(CEA.2001/1))

The Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC will have before it the following provisional agenda for its consideration and approval:

1. Election of officers
2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of the work of the first meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC

3. Background information on the establishment of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC
4. Report on the Programme of International Statistical Work for Latin America and the Caribbean, 1999-2000
5. Presentation of a proposed programme of international statistical work for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2001-2002
 - (a) Presentation on subprogramme 1: Adaptation and production of basic statistics within the framework of a regional strategy for the implementation of the System of National Accounts 1993 (1993 SNA)
 - (i) Classifications and nomenclatures
 - (ii) Services statistics
 - (iii) Directories of firms and other establishments
 - (iv) Construction statistics
 - (b) Presentation on subprogramme 2: Environmental statistics and statistics on science, technology and innovation
 - (c) Presentation on subprogramme 3: Statistics and indicators on social variables and well-being
 - (i) Population and housing censuses, 2000 round
 - (ii) Programme for the Improvement of Surveys and the Measurement of Living Conditions in Latin America and the Caribbean (MECOVI)
 - (d) Presentation on subprogramme 4: Dissemination of statistical information
 - (i) Portal of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC
 - (e) Partnerships in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century
6. Challenges and trends in the modernization of statistical systems
 - (a) Institutional organization
 - (b) Modern management of national statistical offices
 - (c) Modernization of structures and methodologies
 - (d) Dissemination and marketing policies
7. Election of the Executive Committee of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC for the 2001-2003 term
8. Other matters
 - (a) Determination of dates and venues for the second meeting of the Conference and the meetings of its Executive Committee
9. Report of the Rapporteur

In determining how much time to assign to the consideration of each item on the agenda, emphasis has been placed on the debates and the exchange of views among the participants. The underlying objectives are to promote an in-depth exploration of each issue brought to the attention of the plenary, to foster the participation of as many delegations as possible and to ensure that any agreements that are reached are the outcome of a broad dialogue. With these aims in mind, and in view of the fact

that the reference documents for each agenda item have been examined in advance, it has been decided that presentations should be no longer than 15 minutes in duration and should focus on the substantive points in question.

The secretariat placed the relevant materials for the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC on the Commission's Web page six weeks in advance of the meeting so that they would be available to the participating delegations. The secretariat will also provide the participating delegations with working, reference and background documents dealing with the items on the agenda.¹

3. Background information on the establishment of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC

Because this is the first meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC, the secretariat will present a brief account of how the Conference came into being and will discuss the implications of its status as a subsidiary body of the Economic Commission. (**Working document:** Overview of activities conducted under the Programme of International Statistical Work for Latin America and the Caribbean, 1999-2000 (LC/L.1475(CEA.2001/5))

4. Report on the Programme of International Statistical Work for Latin America and the Caribbean, 1999-2000

The ECLAC secretariat has prepared a document entitled "Overview of activities conducted under the Programme of International Statistical Work for Latin America and the Caribbean, 1999-2000". This document lists the statistical cooperation activities in which various countries have participated along with international and regional organizations. (**Working document:** Overview of activities conducted under the Programme of International Statistical Work for Latin America and the Caribbean, 1999-2000 (LC/L.1473(CEA.2001/3))

This overview's purpose is to provide a brief description of the activities carried out in the region in 1999-2000 and is therefore by no means a comprehensive review of those activities. Four subprogrammes are covered:

- Subprogramme 1: Adaptation and production of basic statistics within the framework of a regional strategy for the implementation of the System of National Accounts 1993 (1993 SNA)
- Subprogramme 2: Environmental statistics and indicators
- Subprogramme 3: Social and poverty statistics and indicators
- Subprogramme 4: Dissemination of statistical information

5. Presentation of a proposed programme of international statistical work for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2001-2002

¹ See "Documents presented at the first meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean" (LC/L.1487(CEA.2001/6)).

One of the tasks of the Executive Committee of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC is to prepare a proposed programme of international statistical work for Latin America and the Caribbean once every two years. This proposal is then to be submitted for consideration and approval.

As noted earlier, at the Meeting of Directors of Statistics of the Americas held in March 1999, a Steering Committee was elected to work with ECLAC in carrying out the preparations for this first meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC. When this Steering Committee met in La Paz, Bolivia, on 7 and 8 December 2000, it considered and approved, on a preliminary basis, a proposed programme of international statistical work for Latin America and the Caribbean for 2001-2002 for submission to the Conference. (**Working document:** Draft programme of international statistical work for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2001-2002 (LC/L.1474(CEA.2001/4))

The proposal is the result of a joint effort on the part of Governments, international and regional agencies and the ECLAC secretariat. Its purpose is to provide as complete a listing as possible of the international and regional cooperation activities that should be carried out in 2001-2002 so that these activities can be organized, rationalized and focused within the region.

- (a) Presentation on subprogramme 1: *Adaptation and production of basic statistics within the framework of a regional strategy for the implementation of the System of National Accounts 1993 (1993 SNA)*

This subprogramme's objective is to plan, coordinate and specify activities designed to assist the countries in implementing the System of National Accounts 1993 (1993 SNA), including its quarterly, regional and satellite accounts, while maintaining the continuity of the progress made to date both in the adaptation and compilation of the basic statistics required by the system and in the actual implementation of the 1993 SNA.

The subprogramme is divided into five elements involving the following activities: translation of technical documentation and its distribution to personnel in charge of the 1993 SNA and to agencies that compile basic statistics; assistance for the countries of the region with the adoption of recommended international categories, definitions and classifications for the compilation and organization of basic statistics; training of national accounts experts and producers of basic statistics; improvement, extension and harmonization of basic statistics, price statistics and macro-statistical schemes; and promotion of international technical cooperation (see paragraphs 18-49 of working document LC/L.1474(CEA.2001/4)).

During their meeting in La Paz in December 2000, the members of the Steering Committee came to the conclusion that, because of the significant role played by certain areas of work in permitting a fuller implementation of subprogramme 1, it was important to delve more deeply into a number of topics. These subjects, and the countries that offered to prepare studies on them, are indicated below.

Mexico and Canada offered to undertake a joint effort, in conjunction with the United States, to prepare a document on classifications and nomenclatures and to report to the Conference on the work they were doing in order to achieve a greater convergence between the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) and the General Industrial Classification of Economic Activities within the European Communities (NACE). Argentina subsequently offered to present a document on its National Nomenclature System (see reference documents DDR/5 and DDR/27).

The Steering Committee noted that the production of services, as measured by value, was making an increasingly important contribution to the countries' gross domestic product (GDP). It also indicated, however, that statistical development in the area of services was in its very early stages and posed a number of methodological challenges for national statistical offices. In order to address this issue, it was agreed that a reference document prepared by the ECLAC secretariat would be presented (see reference document DDR/4).

The representatives of several countries spoke about the importance of having up-to-date directories of firms and other establishments, since they are the main source of inputs for the preparation of sampling frames for use in conducting periodic surveys of firms and other establishments. It was pointed out that the absence of such directories undermined the quality and coverage of the basic statistics used as inputs for the System of National Accounts. Mexico and Spain offered to present studies on the subject. Argentina also undertook to furnish a document on the same topic (see reference documents DDR/7, DDR/26 and DDR/8).

At the request of ECLAC, Colombia then agreed to contribute a document on the subject of statistics on construction. The Commission has found that major improvements are called for in the compilation of data on this industry in the countries of the region and believes that a discussion of Colombia's experiences in this area would be of benefit (see reference document DDR/20).

(b) Presentation on subprogramme 2: *Environmental statistics and statistics on science, technology and innovation*

Environmental statistics and statistics on science, technology and innovation are relatively new areas of research in the region, and the countries therefore do not yet have a great deal of experience in the compilation of these sorts of statistics and indicators. In most cases, the job of compiling primary statistics is dispersed among many different public and private agencies, and technical links between this work and the countries' national statistical systems (which bear the primary responsibility for coordinating these activities, disseminating information and ensuring data quality and comparability) are largely lacking.

The main focus of the proposal to be analysed is that the countries should undertake or strengthen activities aimed at consolidating these areas as subsystems linked to the national statistical system. To accomplish this it is recommended that, as a first step, statistical inventories and directories of agencies and institutions that process environmental statistics and statistics on science, technology and innovation should be prepared and that efforts should be made to see to it that the production of such statistics is gradually brought into line with the needs of their national and international users, within the framework of the international recommendations made in this regard (see paragraphs 50-62 of working document LC/L.1471(CEA.2001/4) and reference document DDR/3).

(c) Presentation on subprogramme 3: *Statistics and indicators on social variables and well-being*

The objective of this subprogramme is to design and coordinate activities aimed at improving and expanding the production of demographic and social statistics and indicators.

The main activities in this subprogramme for the 2001-2002 biennium concern the 2000 round of population and housing censuses, the improvement of household surveys under the MECOVI programme

and the use of databases for the generation of indicators on quality of life, income distribution and the measurement of poverty in the region.

This subprogramme also provides for the continuation of technical assistance and international cooperation designed to enhance the capabilities of national statistical offices through the transfer of methodologies, training of national statisticians and participation in task forces and research groups dealing with subjects of interest to the region (see paragraphs 63-95 of working document LC/L.1474(CEA.2001/4) and reference document DDR/6).

(d) Presentation on subprogramme 4: *Dissemination of statistical information*

The progress made by many of the region's statistical offices in taking advantage of the technologies available on the Internet for managing large-scale micro-databases, phasing in meta-information systems on statistical data and developing systems for marketing data and services via e-commerce should unquestionably be a focus of the activities included in this subprogramme during 2001-2002. The objective of this effort should be to assist offices currently employing these mechanisms to move on to state-of-the-art technologies and, most importantly, to help those offices that are at earlier stages in this process to approach the state-of-the-art as quickly and as easily as possible (see paragraphs 95-102 of working document LC/L.1474(CEA.2001/4)).

(e) Partnerships in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century

Partnerships in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (Paris 21) is a new international organization created on the initiative of the United Nations, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the International Monetary Fund and the European Commission. This organization is formed by political authorities, statisticians and statistical information users seeking to promote development. It is not a new international agency as such, but instead works through existing organizations. The aim of this presentation will be to inform the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC about its objectives, programme of work and organizational structure and to elicit the initial reactions of the Conference participants (see reference document DDR/10).

6. Challenges and trends in the modernization of statistical systems

During the meeting held in La Paz, the Steering Committee decided that, in order to permit the Conference to function as well as possible and to provide an open forum in which the directors of national statistical offices could discuss experiences and exchange views on questions of importance for the organization, execution and planning of their national statistical information systems, substantive issues should be selected for in-depth consideration during the plenary sessions of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC. The members of the committee also decided that these deliberations and their conclusions would not necessarily be binding in nature and would therefore not be included in the final report on the meeting of the Conference. Instead, a summary of the discussions taking place during these sessions would be drawn up and later forwarded to the directors.

The substantive issue selected by the Steering Committee on this occasion was chosen from a list of proposed subjects which had been drawn up with the help of all the directors of statistical offices who wished to participate. The topic chosen for consideration at the first meeting of the Conference was: "Challenges and trends in the modernization of statistical systems". This topic was then divided into the following sub-topics: institutional organization, modern management of national statistical offices,

modernization of structures and methodologies, and dissemination and marketing policies. At the beginning of the portion of the meeting to be devoted to this important item on the agenda, a representative of the Statistics Division of the United Nations will give a brief introductory presentation on best practices in statistics (see reference document DDR/31).

(a) *Institutional organization*

This sub-topic covers aspects relating to the mission and vision of national statistical offices. In the course of the discussions on this subject, an effort will be made to answer such questions as: What type of strategy should a national statistical office use to meet the challenges posed by demographic, social, economic, environmental and technological changes? How should statistical offices be organized in order to cope with the effects of globalization? Should normative technical functions be centralized and operational functions decentralized? What priorities should be set for official statistics and how should they be determined? and What organizational model should be used in the future? Presentations on these issues will be made by Argentina, Bolivia Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Guatemala and Spain (see reference documents DDR/30, DDR/22, DDR/25, DDR/16, DDR/11, DDR/23 and DDR/9).

(b) *Modern management of national statistical offices*

This issue will be examined with a view to identifying those aspects of current management practices that clearly pose a challenge for the statistical offices of the countries of the region and to exchanging experiences concerning the measures adopted to address them. Particular attention will be devoted to aspects relating to human resources, infrastructure and, on a priority basis, means of obtaining and managing financial resources. Bolivia and Chile will provide inputs on this subject (see reference documents DDR/13 and DDR/12).

(c) *Modernization of structures and methodologies*

The discussion concerning this topic will focus on the question of how national statistical offices incorporate methodological innovations into the compilation and integration of statistics and how they go about harmonizing their basic statistics and macro-statistical frameworks at the national and regional levels. The participants will analyse the implications of these decisions for statistical offices' internal procedures, improved resource use and, most importantly, their impact in terms of credibility and user confidence. Argentina and Chile will make presentations on these subjects (see reference documents DDR/29 and DDR/24).

(d) *Dissemination and marketing policies*

This sub-topic has been included in the agenda in response to concerns voiced by virtually all the directors of national statistical offices as to how these offices should go about offering information services, as a public good, to their users and how they can market certain products and services, which can serve as an additional source of institutional funding. Studies on this topic will be prepared by Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Spain and Uruguay (see reference documents DDR/28, DDR/15, DDR/19, DDR/21, DDR/18, DDR/17 and DDR/14).

7. Election of the Executive Committee of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC for the 2001-2003 term

Pursuant to resolution 2000/7 of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, the Conference shall elect an Executive Committee composed of a chairperson and six members. Special attention will be paid to ensuring that the subregional groups of countries are represented on the Committee. (**Working document:** Establishment of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (United Nations Economic and Social Council resolution 2000/7) (LC/L.1475(CEA.2001/5))

The newly elected Executive Committee will take up its duties once the first meeting of the Conference has concluded. Its members, who will remain in office until the end of the next regular meeting in 2003, will be elected from a list of candidates drawn up by the officers presiding over the first meeting of the Conference.

8. Other matters

During the discussion held on other matters, the dates and venues for the second meeting of the Conference and the meetings of its Executive Committee will be determined.

9. Report of the Rapporteur

The Rapporteur will deliver a provisional oral summary of the main agreements reached and the principal events that occurred during the meeting. The Rapporteur's notes will be made available to the participants in the closing session. The final report on the meeting will be prepared by the secretariat and will subsequently be forwarded to each of the attending delegations for their comments.

Annex**REFERENCE DOCUMENTS**

DDR/1	Report of the Chairperson of the second meeting of the Steering Committee (La Paz, Bolivia, 7-8 December 2000)
DDR/2	Final report of the second meeting of the Steering Committee (La Paz, Bolivia, 7-8 December 2000)
DDR/3	Recommendations for strengthening the system of statistics and indicators for science, technology and innovation in Latin America and the Caribbean
DDR/4	A strategy for obtaining statistics on production and distribution of services
DDR/5	Economic classifications at the dawn of the new millenium
DDR/6	Resumen de la metodología de la encuesta continua de hogares (Spanish only)
DDR/7	Company registries for statistical purposes: their role in production statistics
DDR/8	Directories of business establishments
DDR/9	The institutional organization of official statistics
DDR/10	The Paris 21 Initiative and possible applications in Latin America and the Caribbean
DDR/11	Organización institucional (Spanish only)
DDR/12	Modern management of the National Institute of Statistics of Chile in the institutional modernization process
DDR/13	Modern management of national statistical offices
DDR/14	Marketing and dissemination policies
DDR/15	Maintaining the confidentiality of statistical information at the Brazilian Geographical and Statistical Institute
DDR/16	Conformación del sistema estadístico nacional de Costa Rica (Spanish only)
DDR/17	The impact of new technologies on dissemination and marketing policies for statistical information: challenges and opportunities
DDR/18	Entorno y retos en la difusión de información estadística (Spanish only)

- DDR/19 Las políticas de difusión en el Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática (Spanish only)
- DDR/20 Statistics on the construction industry
- DDR/21 Estrategia de difusión por tipo de usuario y política de comercialización de la Dirección General de Estadística, Encuestas y Censos (Spanish only)
- DDR/22 Institutional organization
- DDR/23 Ponencia sobre reestructuración del Instituto Nacional de Estadística de Guatemala (Spanish only)
- DDR/24 Methodological and technological modernization in the National Institute of Statistics of Chile
- DDR/25 Organización de un sistema de información para Colombia (Spanish only)
- DDR/26 Directorio Nacional de Unidades Económicas (DINUE). Principales características (Spanish only)
- DDR/27 Coordination of the National Nomenclatures System. A computerized coding system for economic and sociodemographic tasks
- DDR/28 Comercio exterior on line (Spanish only)
- DDR/29 Modernization of structures and methodologies
- DDR/30 Tareas organizacionales en el marco del sistema estadístico nacional (Spanish only)
- DDR/31 New United Nations Statistical Division Web sites
- LC/L.1387 Final report of the first meeting of the Steering Committee (Lima, Peru, 12-13 April 2000)
- DDA/1 Estadísticas e indicadores de ciencia, tecnología e innovación en América Latina y el Caribe (Spanish only)
- DDA/2 Los sistemas estadísticos para la implementación del Sistema de Cuentas Nacionales 1993 (SCN, 1993) (Spanish only)