

FOR PARTICIPANTS ONLY

13 de noviembre de 2006

ENGLISH

ORIGINAL: SPANISH

ECLAC
Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

Sixth Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Statistical
Conference of the Americas of the Economic Commission
for Latin America and the Caribbean

Madrid, 25 and 26 September 2006

DRAFT REPORT

In accordance with the procedure followed at meetings of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies, the member countries and associate members have 30 days in which to submit their comments and observations on the draft report, after which time the present document will be issued in final form.

CONTENTS

	<i>Paragraph</i>	<i>Page</i>
A. ATTENDANCE AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK	1-8	1
Place and date of meeting.....	1	
Attendance.....	2-7	
Chairperson.....	8	
B. AGENDA.....	9	2
C. PROCEEDINGS.....	10-39	2
D. AGREEMENTS.....	40	7
E. ANNEX.....	41	9
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS.....	-	11

A. ATTENDANCE AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

Place and date of meeting

1. The Executive Committee of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) held its sixth meeting in Madrid, on 25 and 26 September 2006.

Attendance

2. The meeting was attended by representatives of the following member countries of ECLAC which serve on the Executive Committee: Chile, Colombia, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Spain and the United States of America.

3. Representatives of the following member countries of the Conference were also present: Argentina, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Brazil, Cuba, Dominican Republic, France, Germany, Guatemala, Italy and Paraguay.

4. The Secretariat of the United Nations was represented by a member of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE).

5. Also present were representatives of the following United Nations bodies and programmes: the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

6. Representatives of the following United Nations specialized agencies were also present: the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO).

7. Representatives of the following intergovernmental organizations were also present: the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the Statistical Office of the European Communities (EUROSTAT).

Chairperson

8. Mr. Gilberto Calvillo, President of the National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Informatics of Mexico (INEGI), chaired the meeting in his capacity as Chairperson of the Executive Committee, while Spain acted as Rapporteur.

B. AGENDA

9. The Committee adopted the following agenda:
 1. Adoption of the agenda
 2. Progress report on the activities of the Programme of Regional Statistical Work for Latin America and the Caribbean, July 2005-June 2007
 3. Report and discussion on follow-up to the agreements reached at the third meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC and at the fifth meeting of the Executive Committee
 - (a) Consideration of the final draft strategic plan 2005-2015 for final adoption by the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC at its fourth meeting
 - (b) Consideration of the functioning and activities of the working groups established by the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC at its third meeting
 - (c) Review and execution of the initiative on regional public goods
 - (d) Mobilization of the resources required to implement the strategic plan 2005-2015 of the Conference and its biennial programme
 - (e) Coordination of subregional statistical activities
 4. Preparations for the fourth meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC
 - (a) Consideration of the substantive issues to be discussed at the fourth meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC
 - (b) Analysis of the proposed guidelines for the biennial programme of regional and international cooperation activities for 2007-2009
 - (c) Consideration of the provisional agenda for the fourth meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC
 5. Other matters
 6. Agreements and decisions

C. PROCEEDINGS

10. At the opening session, statements were made by the following: Ms. Carmen Alcaide, President of the National Institute of Statistics of Spain; Ms. Marta Mauràs, Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC); and Mr. Gilberto Calvillo, President of the National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Informatics, Mexico, in his capacity as Chairperson of the Executive Committee.

11. The President of the National Institute of Statistics of Spain expressed her satisfaction that the meeting was being held in Madrid and extended a warm welcome to all participants. She said that the

Institute had adapted its training programme in the light of the needs expressed at previous meetings, and the resources allocated for that purpose had increased considerably when Spain had joined the European Union. In the past 30 years, the Institute had provided constant support for training in Latin America, organizing courses which had been well attended. Hosting the present meeting of the Executive Committee was another opportunity to show her country's commitment to improving statistics at the regional level.

12. The Executive Committee had been playing a significant role in developing and extending international statistical comparability and in determining which substantive issues should be considered, making the Conference an intergovernmental forum for active participation by countries and national institutes.

13. Lastly, the speaker said she hoped the success of the meeting would have a direct effect on progress in terms of official statistics in all the region's countries.

14. The Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean said that the previous meetings of the Executive Committee had been focal points for bringing realism and enthusiasm to the task of shaping a strategic yet practical architecture that would help to endow the Conference with the type of institutional structure called for in resolution 2000/7 of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. To that end, a number of formulas and mechanisms had been considered for fulfilling the founding objectives of the Conference.

15. The speaker went on to mention three major issues in the process of strengthening the Conference: examination of the final draft strategic plan 2005-2015; a review of the progress made by the working groups and the challenges facing them; and the decision to be taken on guidelines for the biennial programme of regional and international cooperation activities. She recalled that the Executive Committee had decided at its fourth meeting to provide the Conference with a strategic plan to serve as a real long-term road map and to reflect its leadership role in developing and improving statistics in the region and ensuring their international comparability.

16. At its third meeting, the Conference had agreed to establish working groups and related mechanisms to encourage countries to play a more active role in developing the regional and international cooperation programme and to share their experiences, make the best use of the invariably scarce resources available, and promote joint activities and initiatives. The Executive Committee was now responsible for assessing their outputs, the difficulties identified and the challenges to be met in order for the working groups to make a real contribution to achieving the objectives of the Strategic Plan and to the regional and international cooperation programme.

17. Third, she referred to the importance of the discussion of guidelines for the biennial programme of regional and international cooperation activities. The programme, the strategic plan and the working groups were all based on an approach that took into consideration the multiplicity of actors involved. The role of the Executive Committee was to help link and coordinate all those stakeholders. The Office of the Executive Secretary of ECLAC viewed the Conference's work with optimism, seeing it as a unique intergovernmental forum for a high-level political dialogue open to all the various offices and other agencies in the field of statistics. There was no other intergovernmental forum in Latin America and the Caribbean with such potential; indeed, it was a unique opportunity to forge a culture of dialogue and of technical and policy coordination.

18. The Chairperson of the Executive Committee stated that, since participants at the meeting in Dallas two years previously had proposed activities aimed at boosting the Conference's role in the long term, all those involved in the planned projects had done a great deal of important work. That drive must be sustained, given that regional development in statistical matters demonstrated the growing recognition of the importance of statistics and the improvements in capacities at the country level. Clearly, there was a variety of actors who had their own agendas; this was natural, but it showed a need for harmonization. The Conference must act as an "umbrella" for all efforts, and that was one of the main challenges facing the present meeting.

19. Another challenge concerned the remit of the Conference, in terms of identifying and strengthening the statistical capacity of national offices and systems. Countries should allocate their own resources accordingly, but they also needed a great deal of support from international agencies. First of all, governments must recognize the vital importance of statistics for the design and development of public policies. One of the tasks of the Executive Committee was therefore to define ways of influencing national agendas to raise the profile of official statistics.

20. The Director of the ECLAC Statistics and Economic Projections Division presented, on behalf of the secretariat, the document entitled "Progress report on the activities of the Programme of Regional Statistical Work for Latin America and the Caribbean, July 2005-June 2007" (LC/L.2588). He began by pointing out that the presentation on the activities conducted would for the last time be divided into two sections: the first relating to countries, the Commission and other United Nations agencies, and the second covering the activities of the working groups.

21. One of the aims of the current change of direction was to make the Conference a link between the international community and the regional level. Internationally, considerable efforts were being made to harmonize the work of international organizations and regional agencies, and the Millennium Development Goals had an important role to play in that context.

22. Latin America and the Caribbean was the region that had received the least financial aid in recent years for the implementation of the International Comparison Project (ICP), owing to the way the region had been classified on the basis of income. Progress had however been made in the region towards achieving the goals of the Project thanks to cooperation among countries and the valuable support of Statistics Canada. Problems were compounded by the difficulty of convincing donors of the importance of moving forward with the statistical training programme and the impossibility of doing so without the cooperation of all those involved, which required years of advance planning.

23. As for the second objective of the programme, the Office of the Executive Secretary had decided to adopt a cross-cutting approach to all its training activities and was collaborating with various United Nations agencies. The third objective, relating to technical and methodological capacity-building, was analysed in detail in the progress report.

24. During the ensuing discussion, the representatives of Cuba, Mexico, Spain and UNFPA took the floor. In response to questions and requests for more specific information, the Director of the ECLAC Statistics and Economic Projections Division said that the programme of work was the result of cooperation and consensus, and stressed that it was a programme of activities not just for the Commission but for the region as a whole.

25. A representative of the secretariat, presenting the document entitled "Report on the activities of the working groups created at the third meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean" (LC/L.2595), stated that the groups were a clear indicator of how the Conference was maturing. Representatives of the working groups summarized their objectives and reported on the work they had carried out and the obstacles they had often encountered in fulfilling the tasks assigned to them. In that regard, the representative of Argentina referred to the importance of the project on national public goods that was being implemented with funding from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), and to the need to reorient some of the tasks assigned to working groups to increase the coherence and effectiveness of their actions. That proposal, which was the subject of a lengthy exchange of opinions, is reflected in the Agreements arising from the meeting (see section D).

26. With the exception of the working group on the Millennium Development Goals, the groups had all committed to deliver specific results for the next meeting of the Conference. Despite that, there had been a noticeably low level of country participation in the groups, which could be due to a lack of resources, shortages of experts in some cases, as well as language problems as in the Caribbean countries.

27. An analysis of the work of the groups led to the following preliminary conclusions: (i) groups should work to very specific terms of reference and mandates with definite timeframes; (ii) the responsibilities of the members of each group should be clearly defined; (iii) it should be determined whether there were sufficient financial and human resources for the analysis of priority issues; and (iv) working groups must coordinate with other groups and entities to avoid duplication of effort.

28. Several delegates expressed interest in involving central banks in the development of statistics in the region, since they were already active in that area. It was proposed that, in the event of such cooperation, national statistical institutes should act as focal points for the central banks.

29. The Chairperson read out a letter sent by José Antonio Mejía, Coordinator of the Programme for the Improvement of Surveys and the Measurement of Living Conditions in Latin America and the Caribbean (MECOVI) at the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), in which he apologized for not being able to attend the meeting and stated that IDB had approved funding for five subprojects as part of the programme on regional public goods. Several delegates took the floor to highlight the importance of IDB funding and the responsibility incumbent on countries and the Conference to make use of the funding as planned. It was agreed that the Chairperson of the Executive Committee would ask IDB why it had approved a project that, while urgent, did not yet meet the requirements established from the outset of the process.

30. The Secretary of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and the Assistant Director of the Statistics Department of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) then took the floor to describe their respective statistical activities, which showed as many resemblances as differences in relation to the activities in the region.

31. Some delegations offered to share with countries their experiences in implementing activities related to the working groups, such as workshops, training or methodological development. Reference was also made to several areas in which changes had been introduced, changes that could be communicated to other countries in case they could usefully be incorporated in the corresponding studies. Furthermore, the websites of many organizations and national institutes contained considerable amounts of useful information that would enable countries to build on their work so far.

32. Several delegates referred to regional imputations on progress towards the Millennium Development Goals contained in the publications of international bodies. More specifically, there were discrepancies between data that countries provided to the United Nations Statistical Commission and those contributed by such bodies. A number of delegates stressed the need for international agencies to take account of the recommendation made by the United Nations Statistical Commission at its thirty-seventh session: to avoid imputation unless specific country data were available for reliable imputations following consultations with the concerned countries and through transparent methodologies.
33. At the morning session on Tuesday 26 September, delegates heard presentations on subregional statistical activities. The Director General of the Statistical Institute of Jamaica referred to joint activities conducted by members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), and representatives of the Andean Community and the PARIS21 programme gave detailed descriptions of work carried out since the previous meeting. The meeting was also informed of activities in the context of MERCOSUR.
34. Presenting the final draft strategic plan 2005-2015, a representative of the ECLAC secretariat explained that it was an enhanced version of the plan considered at the meeting in Mexico and that, as agreed, it had been formulated on the basis of strategic objectives and the specific goals arising out of them, and action lines on institution-building, training and human resources, developing statistical capacity and regional cooperation (see "Final draft strategic plan 2005-2015", LC/L.2575).
35. The secretariat presented the "Proposed guidelines for the biennial programme of regional and international cooperation activities, 2007-2009" and explained that the proposal complied fully with the action lines and goals set out in the strategic plan 2005-2015. It was based on the three main challenges facing the region's national statistical systems: conducting the 2010 round of population censuses; monitoring progress towards the Millennium Development Goals; implementing 1993 SNA and the national accounting methodology update scheduled for 2008. The biennial programme of regional and international cooperation activities would group together the activities of the Commission, working groups and United Nations agencies, and an outline for the presentation of the programme was therefore proposed.
36. Several delegates stressed the importance of aligning the biennial programme with the strategic goals of the Conference, and highlighted the need for an integrated programme of statistical activities for the region in the future.
37. In that connection, one delegate referred to Economic and Social Council document E/2006/24-E/CN.3/2006/32, which included provisions on strengthening countries' statistical capacity, and requested that those provisions be explicitly considered in the strategic plan. Several other delegations agreed with that request.
38. The secretariat and the Chairperson presented a draft provisional agenda and a list of potential substantive issues for the fourth meeting of the Statistical Conference. Those issues were the subject of some discussion, as reflected in the Agreements.
39. Following consideration of the remaining items on the agenda, participants turned their attention to the draft agreements of the sixth meeting of the Executive Committee.

¹ E/2006/24-E/CN.3/2006/32.

D. AGREEMENTS

40. At its sixth meeting, held in Madrid on 25 and 26 September 2006, the Executive Committee of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean agrees to:

1. Take note of the progress report on the activities carried out under the Programme of Regional Statistical Work for Latin America and the Caribbean, July 2005-June 2007;
2. Take note also of the report on the operation and activities of the working groups created at the third meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean;
3. Confirm that Spain is to be responsible for the activities of the Working Group on Human Resource Education and Training, except in respect of its work regarding education and training in relation to poverty and the Millennium Development Goals, which are to be incorporated into the work of the Working Group on the Monitoring of Progress Towards the Millennium Development Goals;
4. Request Argentina to take responsibility for coordinating the Working Group on the Monitoring of Progress Towards the Millennium Development Goals, and that it include the activities aimed at updating the methodology for measuring poverty in the region on its agenda;
5. Adopt the necessary measures to broaden participation by members of the Conference in the working groups' activities;
- 6.; Welcome the activities in the area of statistics based on a gender perspective that are being conducted by the National Institute of Women of Mexico, the National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Informatics of Mexico, the United Nations Development Fund for Women and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, and recommend that at its fourth meeting the Conference should make arrangements to align its activities with the biennial programme of regional and international cooperation activities for 2007-2009;
7. – Approve, on a preliminary basis, the final draft strategic plan 2005-2015, incorporating the provisions of the Economic and Social Council resolution 2006/6 and setting a time period of four weeks for observations regarding this document to be conveyed to the Chairperson of the Committee;
8. Approve also the proposed guidelines for the preparation of the biennial programme of regional and international cooperation activities for 2007-2009, and urge the members of the regional and international statistical community to collaborate with the Chairperson and the secretariat to provide content for the scheme set out for the presentation of the biennial programme mentioned under point D, paragraph 42 of document LC/L.2600;

9. Also approve the draft provisional agenda for the fourth meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean as set out in the annex to these agreements;
10. Decide that at its fourth meeting the Conference should examine the following substantive issues: the Millennium Development Goals, the 2010 census round and institution-building in national statistical offices: credibility and autonomy, and that its agenda should set aside the amount of time necessary for their due consideration;
11. Organize three thematic meetings within the framework of the preparations for the fourth meeting of the Conference on (i) monitoring fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goals; (ii) the 2010 census round; and (iii) the changes to be made in the System of National Accounts in 2008, and convey these meetings' technical findings to the Conference;
12. Entrust the secretariat with the task of preparing a comprehensive report on all activities carried out under the Programme of Regional Statistical Work for Latin America and the Caribbean, July 2005-June 2007, particularly those conducted by the Conference's working groups, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean system and international agencies and those of a subregional nature;
13. Hold the fourth meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean during the last week of July 2007 at the headquarters of the Economic Commission in Santiago, Chile;
14. Express its gratitude to the Government of Spain, and particularly the Chairperson of the National Institute of Statistics, for their excellent organization of the meeting and for the hospitality extended to the participants.

E. ANNEX

41. Draft provisional agenda of the fourth meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean:

1. Adoption of the agenda and organization of the work of the fourth meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
2. Report on the activities carried out under the Programme of Regional Statistical Work for Latin America and the Caribbean, July 2005-June 2007

Adoption of the Strategic Plan 2005-2015
4. Presentation of proposals for the biennial programme of regional and international cooperation activities for 2007-2009
5. Presentation and discussion of substantive issues
6. Adoption of agreements
7. Report of the Rapporteur
8. Election of the Executive Committee of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean for the period 2007-2009

LISTA DE PARTICIPANTES
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

A. Estados miembros de la Comisión
Member States of the Commission
États Membres de la Commission

ALEMANIA/GERMANY

- Wolfgang Schulze, Federal Statistical Office

ARGENTINA

- Mario Krieger, Director adjunto, Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos (INDEC)
- Guillermo Bluske, Director de Coordinación de Relaciones Institucionales y Cooperación, Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos (INDEC)

BRASIL/BRAZIL

- Eduardo Pereira Nunes, Presidente, Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia y Estadística (IBGE)
- Wasmália Bivar, Directora de encuestas, Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia y Estadística (IBGE)

CHILE

- Mariana Schkolnik, Directora Nacional, Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE)

COLOMBIA

- Ernesto Rojas, Director, Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística (DANE)

CUBA

- Oscar Mederos, Director General, Oficina Nacional de Estadística (ONE)
- Caridad Fernández, Directora de Información, Oficina Nacional de Estadística (ONE)

ESPAÑA/SPAIN

- Carmen Alcaide, Presidenta, Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE)
- Mariano Gómez, Director general de productos estadísticos, Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE)
- Miguel de Castro, Director general de procesos e infraestructura estadística, Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE)
- Antonio Martínez Lépéz, Jefe del Gabinete de la Presidencia y Coordinación y Planificación Estadística, Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE)
- Antonio Martínez Serrano, Subdirector general de relaciones internacionales, Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE)