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STRATEGIC PLAN 2005-2015 *

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A. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the strategic plan 2005-2015 is to guide the activities of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in support of the development of official statistics in Latin America and the Caribbean, in accordance with the objectives established in United Nations Economic and Social Council resolution 2000/7 of 25 July 2000.¹

This document reassesses the main priorities identified by members at the meetings of the Conference and the trends emerging from various studies on the principal challenges facing the region's national statistical systems. These priorities and trends were taken into account in developing the proposal for the present strategic plan. The mission, vision, strategic goals, specific goals and main lines of action on which the Conference should focus its efforts from now until 2015 are defined in this proposal. The year 2015 was chosen as the reference for the strategic vision on the basis of the time frame associated with the Millennium Development Goals, which constitute a significant challenge for the region's national statistical systems given the need to develop an appropriate information system for monitoring progress towards the Goals. National statistical offices will also need to focus on preparations for the 2010 round of censuses, the implementation of the System of National Accounts (1993 SNA) in all the countries of the region and the review scheduled for 2008. These joint challenges will give rise to synergies in terms of regional and international cooperation. At its third meeting, the Conference recognized that those three challenges should constitute the guiding principles of the strategic plan over the next 10 years.

At the first three meetings of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC, the need for the region to have an intergovernmental forum for coordination of the regional programme of work was confirmed, as well as the interest of the member countries in taking an active part in the design and implementation of the programme. Meanwhile, the growing incorporation of multilateral cooperation agencies and organizations also shows the importance of this forum for exchanging information and coordinating work programmes. The Conference should also be a significant forum for discussion of the substantive and emerging topics which are of concern to the statistical community in the region.

In accordance with the provisions of the resolution that establishes it, the Statistical Conference of the Americas, in its capacity as a subsidiary body of ECLAC, has the following objectives:²

- (a) To promote the development and improvement of national statistics and work to ensure that they are comparable internationally, bearing in mind the recommendations of the United Nations Statistical Commission, the specialized agencies and other relevant organizations.
- (b) To promote international, regional and bilateral cooperation among national offices and international and regional agencies.
- (c) To draw up a biennial programme of regional and international cooperation activities, to meet the demands of the countries of the region, subject to the availability of resources.

¹ Establishing the Statistical Conference of the Americas of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (E/2000/INF/2/Add.2).

² Ibid.

In consideration of the above, the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC is resolved to give impetus to the fulfilment of its mandate to be “a subsidiary body of the Commission that shall contribute to the progress of policies on statistics and statistical activities in the countries of the region” (resolution 2000/7). For that reason, the strategic plan 2005-2015 of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC shall provide the frame of reference for the Conference’s future biennial programmes of regional and international cooperation, in order to facilitate the effective accomplishment of the four strategic goals of the plan. Furthermore, efforts shall be made to achieve a close linkage between these biennial programmes of action and the programme of statistical work of the ECLAC system.

The Conference also recognizes the transcendental importance of the United Nations Economic and Social Council Resolution 2006/6 “Strengthening statistical capacity”, which concerns the regional development of national statistics systems.³ This resolution expresses the deep concern that “(a) there still exists in many countries a lack of adequate data to (i) assess national trends in the context of monitoring progress towards the realization of all the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, and (ii) inform and monitor the implementation of national development policies and strategies, and (b) in many countries where data do exist, there is lack of capacity to use them and, in certain cases where country data are available, they are not used to the extent possible.” The resolution also calls upon Member States, donor countries and organizations and the international statistical community to intensify their efforts to strengthen national statistical capacity, and in particular calls on international agencies, in accordance with the guidance provided by Member States through the Statistical Commission, to improve the coverage, transparency, and reporting on all indicators in order to enhance the database on all Millennium Development Goals.

The Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC will take the necessary action to ensure that its strategic plan allows multilateral and subregional organizations to coordinate their activities in the region in the best way possible. This coordination will focus on objectives and activities that clearly reflect national and regional priorities in relation to statistical development. These priorities will be specified in the Conference’s biennial programme of regional and international cooperation activities. Its goal is to translate the priorities identified for each of the stages of progress towards the strategic goals into lines of activity and outputs.

In view of the above, the biennial programme of regional and international cooperation activities is a key element in attaining the aims of the Conference. This programme shall summarize the specific aims for a two-year period, which should be consistent with one or more of the four strategic goals and contribute to achieving them. Furthermore, in accordance with the specific goals, the programme should contain clear guidelines to direct and promote the concrete actions of the countries, international, regional and subregional organizations and the various coordination and cooperation entities established for these purposes, such as working groups and expert committees.

In the discussions at the previous meetings of the Conference and in various regional studies carried out to assess the current situation, countries have referred in particular to the need to raise the coverage, quality and transparency criteria of national statistics to the level of the best international practices and to use them as a basis to develop a reputation for the excellence of official statistics among the users, economic stakeholders, social actors and decision makers. It has also been noted that, in certain cases, the national statistical offices of the region carry out their functions in a precarious institutional and legal framework, without sufficient information technology and human and financial resources, and

³ E/2006/INF/2/Add.1 (22 August 2006).

efforts would have to be made to remedy that situation. Reference was also made to the need to improve the way in which the work of multilateral, regional and subregional organizations is coordinated with national and regional priorities in terms of statistical development.

In view of this situation, the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC considers it essential to submit to the Governments of the region the necessary recommendations to ensure that the national statistical systems reach an adequate institutional level in order to carry out completely the function incumbent upon them in the new millennium, in accordance with the United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. It should be emphasized that official statistics are a public good and that the State therefore has the institutional and economic responsibility of ensuring that the processes of production and dissemination are adequate for the needs of society and individuals.

It would be necessary in particular to promote more appropriate legal frameworks in order to facilitate the performance and strengthening of the national statistical systems, as well as to define more clearly the role of national statistical offices and other institutions. Similarly, measures should be adopted to improve the technical training of regional statisticians and encourage research projects in the area of statistical methodology.

In another area, new demands for information are emerging as a result of changes in the economic and social structure accompanying the development process in the countries of the region, and the challenges presented by globalization. Moreover, the statistical products of the region must meet the most rigorous standards in terms of quality, timeliness and integrity. Along these lines, the region should set goals both for the level of development of its statistical capacity and for the processes of regional harmonization and integration in Latin America and the Caribbean, based on the best practices available at the international level.

The Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC acknowledges that the diversity of situations in the member countries of the region means that convergence towards that goal of regional excellence will take place in stages, while there is a huge potential for making use of the experiences and progress achieved in each of the countries of the region. The Conference should therefore encourage countries and the different stakeholders in national statistical systems to participate in its work.

B. STRATEGIC PLAN 2005-2015

1. Mission

The mission of the Statistical Conference of the Americas is to be the intergovernmental body that coordinates the promotion of the development of the official statistics of Latin America and the Caribbean countries, encourages the strengthening of national statistical offices and national statistical systems, contributes to the improvement of technical quality through human resources training and the statistical development of each country, and promotes international, regional and bilateral coordination and cooperation and the harmonization of statistics at the regional and subregional levels.

2. Vision for 2015

The Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC will consolidate its position as the most significant stakeholder and supporter of regional and international cooperation and coordination in order to make sure that they meet the priorities identified by the countries.

Thanks to the work of the Conference, in 2015 the region will be recognized for significantly enhancing national statistical systems, particularly in terms of narrowing gaps in performance between countries of the region. The improvement will be based on well-qualified human resources, increased compliance with the highest international standards and greater quality, efficiency and public credibility of its statistics.

All Governments in the region will be well informed about the importance of statistics in the design and assessment of public policies, which will result in a stable and increasing flow of financing for the functioning of national statistical systems and statistical offices. The national statistical offices will thus have access to common assets in terms of knowledge, methodology and technological developments, which will enable them to respond to the requirements of their authorities in a timely manner.

3. Values

The Statistical Conference of the Americas will be guided by the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, adopted by the United Nations Statistical Commission in a special session held from 11 to 15 April 1994.⁴

4. Strategic goals, specific goals and lines of action

The Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC has outlined the following strategic goals, specific goals and lines of action:

Goal 1: To strengthen the strategic and operational management practices and organization of the national statistical offices and national statistical systems in order to ensure the quality of their outputs and the satisfaction of users.

This strategic goal encompasses the following specific goals:

1. Promote an awareness and application of best practices in terms of legal frameworks, strategic planning, assessment of national statistical systems and financing.
2. Strengthening the relationship with users through permanent monitoring of their needs and assessment of their levels of satisfaction, and the establishment of accessible and timely mechanisms of dissemination.
3. Promote the development of official statistics as a public good among governments, economic stakeholders, social actors and other decision makers, and their use in the design, follow-up and assessment of public policies.

⁴ E/1994/29.

4. Encourage awareness and sharing of experiences among countries in order to make the best use of information and communications technologies.

In order to achieve these goals, the following lines of action should be undertaken:

1. Collect and disseminate information on the legal frameworks governing national statistical systems and national statistical offices.
2. Compile and disseminate information on best practices in terms of organization and strategic management.
3. Form networks of legal and administrative experts in the countries of the region.
4. Develop and promote performance assessment mechanisms for national statistical systems and implement a system whereby the Conference can track the progress they have made.
5. Develop indicators for the use of official statistics in the process of formulating, following up and assessing public policies in the areas of economic, social and environmental issues.
6. Take advantage of information and communications technologies in order to produce and disseminate statistical information more efficiently.

Goal 2: To promote the training of staff in producing high-quality statistical information, managing national statistical systems and carrying out research into statistical methodology.

This strategic goal encompasses the following specific goals:

1. Promote an awareness and identification of institutional needs and the work skills required for producing statistical information and for management.
2. Encourage an awareness of and sharing of experiences in relation to human resources management, as part of work towards defining a human resources management model that is relevant to the different stages of statistical development in the region.
3. Support cooperation and coordination of countries' human resources training efforts in the region.
4. Develop cooperation on lines of statistical research relevant for the region.
5. Strengthen the region's networks of statistical information experts in various spheres.

In order to achieve these goals, the following lines of action should be undertaken:

1. Identify and document institutional needs and the work skills required for producing statistical information and for strategic management.
2. Develop a management model for human resources competent in managing and producing statistical information in various institutional settings.

3. Identify and organize networks of experts in various statistical spheres and mobilize them in the interest of the region.
4. Coordinate the various initiatives and activities of training centres within member countries of the Conference in order to harmonize face-to-face statistics training programmes.
5. Create a distance-learning model to train the staff needed for the management and production of statistical information, with coordination between the training centres of the national statistical offices of the member countries of the Conference.

Goal 3: To promote the development of technical and methodological capacities in order to generate high-quality statistical information in the region.

This strategic goal encompasses the following specific goals:

1. Promote cooperation and the exchange of experiences on worldwide best practices and methodological documents useful for the region in terms of the production of statistical information.
2. Support and promote the implementation of the 2010 round of censuses in the countries of the region.
3. Encourage the development and use of administrative records as a relevant source for the production of official statistics.
4. Produce a document on alternative and complementary methods incorporating censuses, surveys and administrative records to improve the production of sociodemographic statistics.
5. Promote and develop gender statistics in all the countries of the region.
6. Support and promote the implementation of the System of National Accounts (1993 SNA) in all the countries of the region and the revision process up to 2008, in accordance with a regional schedule of stages.
7. Ensure that all countries, according to their circumstances, have relevant statistics on their natural resources and environment, in addition to a minimum set of common sustainability indicators for the region as a whole.
8. Ensure that all countries, according to their circumstances, have relevant statistics on science and technology, in addition to a minimum set of common indicators for the region as a whole.

In order to achieve these goals, the following lines of action should be undertaken:

1. Compile reference materials on methodologies, including information on countries' best practices for the production of statistical information in each area, and automate and disseminate these reference materials.

2. Prepare, by 2007, a document containing technical, logistic and financing recommendations for preparation of the population and housing censuses for 2005-2015.
3. Hold workshops and encourage different forms of cooperation that allow a sharing of experiences in relation to preparatory work for the population and housing censuses in the region.
4. Develop criteria for selecting experts in various fields.
5. Take advantage of the attention given to the Millennium Development Goals to consolidate and systematize the production of sociodemographic and gender statistics.
6. Promote the implementation of time-use surveys to measure women's unpaid contribution and coordinate efforts to systematize national statistical information with a gender perspective in all the countries of the region.
7. Coordinate efforts to conduct statistical research in the region.
8. Provide a diagnostic analysis of the development of the System of National Accounts in the countries and its technical and institutional linkages with the production of economic statistics.
9. Define the priority stages for the implementation of the System of National Accounts (1993 SNA) in all the countries of the region and the revision process up to 2008.
10. Exchange experiences and best practices for the development of statistics on natural resources and the environment and encourage the implementation of a minimum set of common sustainability indicators for the region as a whole.
11. Exchange experiences and best practices for the development of statistics on science and technology and encourage the implementation of a minimum set of common science and technology indicators for the region as a whole.

Goal 4: Promote coordination and cooperation between the member countries of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC and international agencies.

This strategic goal encompasses the following specific goals:

1. Develop a framework for the regional, subregional, multilateral and bilateral cooperation activities aimed at achieving the goals of the Conference as defined in this strategic plan and the recommendations of the United Nations Statistical Commission.
2. Support and strengthen bilateral cooperation between the member countries of the Conference in an effective and efficient manner, especially for the countries that are relatively less developed in terms of statistics.
3. Promote the development of a regional programme to harmonize statistical information in key areas.

4. Ensure that international, technical and financial cooperation on statistical matters is designed to strengthen the institutions of the countries and addresses the priority requirements of the beneficiary countries in the region.
5. Urge international agencies to improve the coverage, transparency, and reporting on all indicators of progress towards the Millennium Development Goals, avoiding imputation unless specific country data are available for reliable imputations following consultations with concerned countries and through transparent methodologies.

In order to achieve these goals, the following lines of action should be undertaken:

1. Draw up an inventory of the activities and projects of international agencies in the region and develop an updated database on international statistical activities in the region.
2. Implement an integrated plan of action in the region to bring the cooperation activities of the Conference, ECLAC and other international agencies into line with the priorities of the Strategic Plan 2005-2015, with due consideration for the decisions of the United Nations Statistical Commission.
3. Identify and develop tools and indicators for facilitating and monitoring progress in terms of achieving the aims and targets related to inter-agency coordination in the region.
4. Request information from international agencies on the measures they have introduced to improve coverage, transparency and reporting on all indicators of progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals and the imputation methods used, where applicable. This information will be presented to the Conference for analysis.
5. Further the establishment and functioning of working groups, expert committees and other forms of organization that support cooperation between countries in order to implement the biennial programme of regional and international cooperation activities and the specific mandates of the Conference in relation to statistics.
6. Promote ever-greater integration among statistical development programmes and institution-building programmes in the region, ensuring that they reflect the priorities established by the Conference and the specific needs of each subregion and the countries.
7. Ensure that the mandates of the different working groups, expert committees and other forms of organization of cooperation between countries and agencies include provision for harmonization in the production, integration and dissemination of the relevant statistical data, through the regional use and implementation of the methodologies, guidelines, classifications and procedures approved by the United Nations Statistical Commission.