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**REPORT OF THE THIRD MEETING OF THE AD HOC WORKING GROUP
ESTABLISHED PURSUANT TO RESOLUTION 553(XXVI)**

(New York, 12 November 1997)

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1. Mandate

1. Pursuant to its resolution 553(XXVI), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) established an ad hoc working group open to all member countries with the mandate of defining, in consultation with the Executive Secretary, priorities for the work programme and of recommending to the Commission strategic directions for its future activities, taking into account the development priorities of Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as budgetary considerations.

2. Place and date of the meeting

2. The third meeting of the ad hoc working group, convened by the secretariat at the request of the Chairman, was held in New York on 12 November 1997.

3. Attendance

3. The meeting was attended by representatives of the following States members of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean: Argentina, Bahamas, Barbados, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, France, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Italy, Jamaica, Mexico, Netherlands, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Portugal, Saint Lucia, Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay, Venezuela (see annex 2).

4. Agenda

4. The ad hoc working group had before it the following agenda:

1. Opening statement by the Chairman of the ad hoc working group;
2. Presentation of a note by the secretariat, entitled "Progress in the implementation of the pilot management scheme" (LC/G.1983);
3. Debate.

5. Summary of the proceedings

5. The Chairman recalled that at its previous meeting the working group had expressed its satisfaction at the progress it had made, jointly with the secretariat, both with respect to establishing the priorities for all activities of the ECLAC programme of work for the biennium 1998-1999 and formulating new strategic priorities. It had been considered useful to convene a further meeting in order to examine whether the ECLAC innovations were consistent with the second track of the process of reform of the United Nations, which had at that stage still not been announced. Both processes had progressed and the doubts that had been raised on the occasion of the previous meeting had been resolved.

6. The Chairman also emphasized the importance of setting the meeting in the overall context of the reform process in order to establish clearly the purpose of the debate and not to enter into administrative and financial matters which the member Governments of ECLAC analysed and took decisions upon in other forums within the Organization.

7. The Executive Secretary of ECLAC began his presentation by referring to the mandate of the ad hoc working group, pointing out that as far as establishing priorities was concerned, it had powers of decision, whereas with respect to strategy its role was more that of making proposals. The working group had in fact acted as a sounding board, allowing the secretariat to maintain a dialogue with the member States concerning ideas as to how to make the Commission more effective. The objective of the meeting was to consider what had been agreed upon at the previous meeting concerning the pilot management scheme, given the secretariat's interest in working together with the member Governments on a process that had only recently been initiated.

8. Specifically, the meeting had been called so that the participants could be apprised of the contents and scope of the measures proposed under the new management scheme. These measures were set out in two memoranda by the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management which would enable the Commission to make better and more efficient use of the resources placed at its disposal. The first memorandum, dated 8 September 1997, concerned the delegation of authority in personnel matters, the second, dated 10 November 1997, the delegation of authority in the financial and budgetary areas. The second memorandum had only been received the previous evening, which explained why the secretariat was distributing it to the delegations as he spoke (see annex 1).

9. It was still too early to provide a precise picture of the organizational and functional profile that ECLAC would have in two years time, but it could be affirmed that the pilot management scheme was being implemented within the framework of the process of reform of the United Nations and the draft budget for the biennium 1998-1999 already reflected a structural change which provided greater flexibility in the use of resources and made more funds available for substantive activities. In addition, the ECLAC secretariat had already taken concrete measures to pass on the delegation of authority granted to it by Headquarters to the regional offices, with the aim of increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of the work of the Commission.

10. Lastly, the Executive Secretary said that the secretariat was deliberately introducing changes gradually, recognizing that the intergovernmental forums had still not adopted complete provisions on the delegation of authority. A "pilot scheme" by its very nature contained a trial element. But he was convinced that the measures adopted so far would reap benefits for the member Governments, since, in the first place, they reduced administrative procedures, making it possible to channel resources thus

saved to substantive activities, and, secondly, they marked the beginning of a change in the secretariat's management culture, placing the emphasis on ex post controls, instead of ex ante financial controls.

11. Following the Executive Secretary's introductory statement, the representative of one country expressed regret that the meeting of the ad hoc working group had been convened in the middle of the United Nations General Assembly. His delegation attached great importance to strengthening the work of ECLAC; the member countries had the responsibility of ensuring that the reforms did not affect its role with respect to research and policy proposals for the development of the region. In view of the fact that the implementation of the ECLAC pilot scheme was to serve as a model for the rest of the United Nations system, his delegation considered as unacceptable the statement in paragraph 16 of the note by the secretariat that the measures contemplated fell within the attributions of the United Nations Secretariat, given that at least some of them required the prior approval of the Governments.

12. It was therefore surprising that the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management, in his memorandum of 8 September 1997 on the delegation of authority in the area of human resources, had indicated that the Secretariat was authorized to begin implementing the pilot plan as of 1 October 1997, since that contravened the letter and the spirit of paragraph 21 of General Assembly resolution 51/221 B. Pursuant to that resolution it had been decided that no modifications could be introduced in the methodology used in preparing the budget, or in established budgetary procedures and practices, or in the provisions of the Financial Regulations without prior consideration and approval by the General Assembly through the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ). The same applied to the concept of results-based budgeting, which was the basis of the proposed pilot scheme.

13. The same representative also expressed the opinion that, in spite of the fact that it was stated in Committee of the Whole resolution 563(PLEN.21) that the pilot scheme would be "developed and described in detail, in order to be submitted for consideration and approval by member countries of the Commission before its implementation", no detailed report on the contents of the proposal had yet been provided. The representative of Cuba requested that such a detailed report be prepared, and expressed concern regarding various aspects of the pilot scheme, particularly with respect to what was said in paragraph 15 of the note by the secretariat concerning the transfer of resources between budget lines, the use of outsourcing and the resulting reduction in the number of permanent posts.

14. He also requested that all mention of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) be expunged from the programme of work on the grounds that FTAA was a discriminatory forum. However, the representatives of two other countries felt that it was incumbent upon ECLAC to support the creation of FTAA in accordance with the commitments made at the Summit of the Americas. Moreover, in view of the vital role which the Commission had played from the very start in promoting integration, those representatives felt it must not stand apart from a process in which so many States members of the Commission were involved.

15. The representatives of a number of countries expressed satisfaction at the implementation of the plan for decentralizing management, emphasizing the fact that ECLAC had been chosen to implement the pilot scheme. In their opinion, this constituted recognition of the capability of ECLAC, which deserved the support of the member Governments. Many delegations expressed the hope that, in the same way that ECLAC had become a pioneer in the field of development, the pilot scheme would enable it to become a model for the entire Organization. In particular, they referred to its tradition of excellence and the important substantive contributions it had made and continued to make to the process of regional

integration, stressing that the ECLAC reform process should include questions of internal management and provide for the possibility of permanent dialogue with the member States concerning the administration of the organization, both in the area of priority setting and with respect to strategic guidelines.

16. Representatives of several countries also pointed out that the delegation of authority by United Nations Headquarters to ECLAC should be carried out in a transparent manner and within the framework of the policies established by the central organs. For example, there was a need to respect the criteria of geographical and gender balance in recruitment, especially with regard to underrepresented countries, and it was requested that the delegation of authority should extend to the link between ECLAC headquarters and the subregional headquarters.

17. Representatives of a number of countries raised questions concerning specific aspects of the pilot scheme, most of which were directed to the Department of Administration and Management at Headquarters. Clarifications were requested on such subjects as performance indicators, oversight mechanisms, the system for assessing activity results, and how a system of sanctions and incentives might work. Questions were also posed as to the possible implications of the reduction in permanent staff and the parallel increase in outsourcing.

18. Representatives of other countries wondered whether it was appropriate for measures to be introduced under the pilot management scheme that involved the transfer of resources between budget lines, since in addition to not permitting full budgetary control it might lead to variations in activities approved previously by the legislative organs.

19. With respect to the memorandum dated 10 November 1997 concerning the pilot project on delegation of authority and the attached table, some representatives requested information on the criteria to be used in allocating any resources saved as a result of efficiency improvements, and a number of representatives expressed the view that such revenues should be used to expand the activities of ECLAC. One representative was of the opinion, however, that there was no provision in force which would allow ECLAC to retain those revenues, and a question was raised as to the authority of the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management to delegate the relevant authority in the financial area.

20. The Executive Secretary announced that, since most of the doubts and questions being raised were directed to the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management, he had invited two persons to attend the meeting who worked in direct collaboration with the Under-Secretary-General so that they might respond to those concerns to the best of their ability. First, however, he noted that there were, in his view, two options with respect to the application of the pilot scheme. One was to suspend its implementation until such time as all existing doubts regarding legal and procedural aspects of the scheme had been clarified on the basis of decisions taken in the appropriate forums. The other was to put the scheme into practice on a gradual, progressive basis through the implementation of those elements that were not being questioned by the Governments. The second option was the most appropriate course of action, and a procedure had been established whereby the secretariat would keep the member Governments informed about any measures adopted. In any event, it should be made clear that, in the view of the secretariat, the steps that had been taken were not prejudging any provisions which the General Assembly might choose to adopt.

21. On the subject of accountability, the Executive Secretary drew a distinction between managers' accountability regarding the completion of tasks they had proposed for inclusion in the programme of

work –a mechanism that was already partially in operation— and the quantitative measurement of outputs. The latter was more difficult because the majority of the Commission's outputs did not lend themselves to such measurements. Despite that difficulty, a number of new indicators had already been identified, and in future an effort would be made to make use of them on a more systematic basis. The secretariat would look into the issue of what indicators should be used to measure the impact of ECLAC activities. Determining what sorts of sanctions and incentives to use was also a difficult task, but it was clear that the main thrust of the incentives would be to promote the most useful kinds of proposals, while the purpose of sanctions would be just the opposite, i.e., to discontinue the allocation of funds to activities found to be irrelevant or ineffective.

22. With regard to the new programme-based budgetary structure, he said that the allocation for section 21 (technical cooperation, advisory services and fixed-term services) had been increased slightly but was still very small and therefore did not pose a threat to the institutional memory of the organization or its geographic distribution, since no radical change in staff was foreseen. The only change that would be brought about by the restructuring exercise would be the attainment of a higher level of excellence in the Organization's work as a whole, inasmuch as the authority delegated to ECLAC would expedite and facilitate its work enormously.

23. As had been announced by the Executive Secretary, the afternoon meeting was attended by the Director of the Operational Services Division and the Principal Legal Officer of the Office of the Legal Counsel, Office of Legal Affairs, so that they might help to clear up some of the doubts raised by the representatives.

24. The Principal Legal Officer said that rule 101.1 of the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations empowered the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management to administer all financial activities of the United Nations and to delegate authority in that sphere; the Staff Rules did not contain any similar provision in relation to human resources, but the logical deduction was that the Under-Secretary-General had similar authorities in that area as well. Furthermore, since by definition the pilot project had no precedents, it might have procedures that differed from those of existing practices. The whole point of a pilot project was to see if the new procedures worked before changing the rules; moreover, past pilot projects had been reported to the General Assembly prior to the introduction of changes in the rules, and that had been accepted. Thus no amendment of existing rules was necessary. In fact, the General Assembly itself had requested that, under the requisite circumstances, proposals for the delegation of authority should be submitted. Therefore, the ECLAC pilot management scheme was in keeping with the provisions of the General Assembly and did not violate any existing rule or regulation. In any event, its implementation would be a matter of ongoing consultation between Headquarters and ECLAC, and the Commission would be required to report on how all such funds were used.

25. The Director of the Operational Services Division emphasized that ECLAC had been offered the opportunity to implement a pilot management scheme and that the Commission had merely agreed to make every effort to do so. In respect of item No. 1 in the table attached to the latest memorandum on the delegation of authority (retaining savings arising from efficiency improvements), the idea was to provide incentives for the adoption of measures to boost efficiency, thereby permitting ECLAC to reinvest those revenues in activities included in the programme of work, in accordance with the priorities to be determined and approved by the Executive Secretary. In response to the questions raised in connection with the increase in the LCC discretionary ceiling to US\$ 1 million (item No. 2), he said that all monitoring arrangements already in place would remain in force, including regular audits of ECLAC, and

that those measures should be supplemented by the submission of reports to the Contracts Committee at Headquarters and the provision of any other documentation that might be required by the United Nations Secretariat. In the final analysis, the delegation of authority would reduce the workload of United Nations Headquarters.

26. Numerous representatives then took the opportunity to underscore a number of the concerns, doubts and objections that had been expressed during the morning meeting, especially with regard to the sequencing of the pilot scheme's implementation, its legality and its possible postponement until such time as certain decisions had been taken in the relevant forums; the representatives of two countries said that they continued to have doubts despite the explanations given by United Nations officials from Headquarters.

27. Other representatives emphasized the need to take a flexible position regarding the pilot scheme and expressed the view that its approval did not fall within the purview of the ad hoc working group. In terms of the working group's functions, they felt that the meeting had been a highly positive one, since it had provided an opportunity for a significant exchange of ideas on the subject which would surely enrich the pilot scheme. Other representatives again, on the other hand, considered that the group should give its opinion on the pilot scheme in accordance with resolution 553(XXVI), as it had in June 1997.

28. At the close of the meeting, the Executive Secretary said that, clearly, not all the elements of the pilot scheme could be implemented immediately; indeed, he felt that such a course of action would be premature, since some of its components had not yet been considered by the Fifth Committee. Nevertheless, he did not feel that the countries were opposed to its implementation. Accordingly, although the ECLAC secretariat could not renounce the authority it had been granted by the Secretary-General, it would not take any steps to implement those elements of the scheme about which there were serious concerns. He expressed his agreement with the proposal made by one delegation that, if it proved necessary, a meeting of the ad hoc working group should be convened before the twenty-seventh session of the Commission (Aruba, May 1998).

29. It was agreed that the Chairman of the ad hoc working group would submit a summary report reflecting all the views expressed by the representatives at the group's three meetings to the member States at the twenty-seventh session of the Commission, which was to be held in May 1998.

Annex 1

MEMORANDUM

DATE: 3 December 1997

TO: Mr. Gert Rosenthal, Executive Secretary
Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

FROM: Joseph E. Connor, Under-Secretary-General
Department of Management

SUBJECT: Pilot project on delegation of authority to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in the finance area

1. Reference is made to my memorandum dated 8 September 1997 which covered the delegation of authority in human resources matters to ECLAC within the Pilot Project as part of the management reform proposals of the Secretary-General. In paragraph 13 of my memorandum, I mentioned that the proposals for increased delegation of authority in the financial and procurement areas were being studied by the Controller and other senior staff in the Department of Management.
2. I am pleased to confirm the Department of Management's concurrence to all the proposals listed in the tables attached to your memorandum dated 31 July 1997, with the exception of the proposed authority for ECLAC to negotiate with donors levels of charges for programme support (overhead) on extra-budgetary contributions for project execution in the Commission.
3. In view of the above, four additional delegations reflected in the attached annex marked A are herewith approved as from the date of this memorandum.
4. As regards the last listed delegation (item No. 4) to apply revenues from sale of goods and services to ECLAC accounts, the Controller has agreed to such proposal subject to the establishment of revolving funds, where applicable.
5. These extended delegations will be monitored as indicated in the attached annex and will be reviewed on the first anniversary of this memorandum, i.e., on 10 November 1998, whereupon decisions for further delegations will be decided upon for items 2 and 3 pertaining to procurement ceilings and SB cases in the Property Survey Board.
6. I should like to receive your confirmation of agreement to these additional delegations of authority which, we anticipate, will streamline administrative actions for which you as Head of Department are responsible and accountable. We have now taken all actions at this end in relation to the proposed extended delegations of authority for this Pilot Project. We are still awaiting your proposals on the performance measurement indicators to complete the remaining aspects of the Pilot Project with ECLAC.

Annex A
DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY TO ECLAC ON FINANCIAL MATTERS

	PROPOSED DELEGATIONS	ANTICIPATED BENEFITS	MONITORING	EFFECTIVE DATE
1. Authority to ECLAC to retain savings arising from efficiency improvements in non-post expenditures to increase the Organization's capacity for effective programme implementation.	The new flexibility and compatibility introduced in the allotments of the current biennium would be retained. ECLAC would continue to be responsible for the execution of the budget and report necessary adjustments to the Budget Division.	Savings resulting from efficiency and cost-cutting would benefit substantive development activities.	Continued monthly reporting to the Controller. Budget performance reports. Audits by internal and external auditors.	10 November 1997.
2. Procurement ceilings (Financial Rule 110.17 (e)).	Increase the currently delegated LCC authority up to US\$ 1 million.	Eliminate delays, time consuming consultations, avoid duplications. Increased accountability for Chief Division of Administration and Head of Procurement, ECLAC.	Through submission of copies of Minutes of ECLAC/LCC to Secretariat of HQCC. Audit.	10 November 1997. Initial stage up to one year with a view to obtain unlimited authority thereafter upon satisfactory evaluation.
3. Write off property (SB cases).	Initially delegation to LPSB for losses accounting to US\$ 5,000.	Eliminate delays.	Audit.	10 November 1997. Initial experimental stage up to one year with a view to obtain unlimited authority thereafter upon satisfactory evaluation.
4. Revenues from sale of goods/services (Financial Rules 107 and 109).	Revenues to be applied directly to ECLAC accounts to finance purchase of goods/services. Revolving funds to be established, where applicable.	Increase accountability for budget management.	Audit.	10 November 1997.

Annex 2

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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

ARGENTINA

Representante/Representative:

Horacio Fernández Palacio, Secretario, Misión Permanente ante las Naciones Unidas

BAHAMAS

Representante/Representative:

Allison Christie, Second Secretary, Pemanent Mission to the United Nations

BARBADOS

Representante/Representative:

Joy-Ann Skinner, Foreign Affairs Officer, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

BOLIVIA

Representante/Representative:

Marco Antonio Vidaurre, Representante Permanente ante las Naciones Unidas

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María Estela Mendoza, Consejero, Misión Permanente ante las Naciones Unidas

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Antonio Ricardo FernandesCavalcante, Third Secretary, Permanent Mission of Brazil to the United Nations

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Miembros de la delegación/Delegation members:

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ESPAÑA/SPAIN

Representante/Representative:

Arturo Laclaustra, Representante Permanente Adjunto ante las Naciones Unidas

ESTADOS UNIDOS DE AMERICA/UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Representante/Representative:

Frank Kerber, International Economist, Office of Economic and Social Affairs, Bureau of International Organizations, Department of State

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Joni Firegold Treviss, International Relations Officer, Officer-in-Charge for ECLAC, Department of State

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Philippe Delacroix, First Secretary, Permanent Mission to the United Nations

GRANADA/GRENADA

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Robert Millette, Permanent Representative to the United Nations

GUATEMALA

Representante/Representative:

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Noemí Espinoza Madrid, Representante Permanente ante las Naciones Unidas

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Ernesto Ottone, Secretario de la Comisión

Petrus Heins, Director Adjunto, División de Planificación de Programas y Operaciones

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