REPORT OF THE EIGHTEENTH MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE STATISTICAL CONFERENCE OF THE AMERICAS OF THE ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Santiago, 27–28 March 2019

CONTENTS

A. ATTENDANCE AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

Place and date of the meeting

1.   The eighteenth meeting of the Executive Committee of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) was held in Santiago, on 27 and 28 March 2019.

Attendance[1]

2.   The meeting was attended by representatives of the following States members of the Executive Committee: Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Italy, Jamaica, Mexico and Peru.

3.   Also attending were representatives of the following member countries of the Conference: Argentina, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Japan, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Spain and Uruguay.

4.   A representative of Turks and Caicos Islands, an associate member of ECLAC, was also present, as was a representative of the Russian Federation, as a non-ECLAC-member State Member of the United Nations.

5.   Attending from the United Nations Secretariat was a representative of the Development Coordination Office (DCO).

6.   The following United Nations funds and programmes were also represented: the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

7.   Also present were representatives of the following specialized agencies of the United Nations: the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO).

8.   The following intergovernmental organizations were also represented: the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), Partnerships in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21), and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA).

Chair

9.   The Director of the National Institute of Statistics (INE) of Chile chaired the meeting in his capacity as Chair of the Executive Committee of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC.

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[1]   See the full list of participants in annex 3.

B. AGENDA

10.   The Executive Committee adopted the following agenda:

1. Adoption of the agenda.

2. Analysis of priorities for regional statistical development.

3. Review of progress in the implementation of the biennial programme of regional and international cooperation activities, 2018–2019, of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC.

4. Other matters.

5. Consideration and adoption of agreements.

C. PROCEEDINGS

11.   At the opening session, statements were made by Alicia Bárcena, Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), and Guillermo Pattillo Álvarez, Director of the National Institute of Statistics (INE) of Chile.

12.   After welcoming the participants, the Executive Secretary of ECLAC expressed her gratitude for the efforts and dedication of the Executive Committee members and the support of the other countries present at the meeting, where the future priorities of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC would be established. Among the important subjects to address in that context, she mentioned the analysis of countries' capacities to measure progress in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the areas in which mutual support could be provided to improve these capacities; the review of the work and number of Working Groups of the Conference; good practices in the preparation and implementation of household income and expenditure surveys; the improvement in measurement of environmental indicators, given governments' increasing interest in environmental taxes; and progress in the disaggregation of disability data. She also highlighted the importance of creating a platform to follow up the SDGs, which was being developed, and of the prioritization of indicators for regional follow-up. Lastly, she called for an analysis of the strategic challenges relating to regional statistics, such as progress in the management of large quantities of unstructured data, the budgetary sustainability of statistical agencies and support for statistical development in the Caribbean.

13.   The Director of the National Statistical Institute (INE) of Chile referred to the need to eliminate the existing technical differences among the statistical agencies of the region's countries. He also mentioned the challenges raised by the processing of large quantities of data from very different sources, as the future of statistics was more likely to move in that direction and away from the implementation of surveys. He said that the meeting of the Executive Committee provided an opportunity to share experiences, problems and solutions; to evaluate the progress made and expectations of future work; and to ensure that the Working Groups of the Conference achieved real improvements in techniques and procedures. In concluding, he said that the aim was to work intensely to take a qualitative leap forward, close gaps, improve coordination and present relevant results at the tenth meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas.

Analysis of priorities for regional statistical development (agenda item 2)

14.   In order to guide the preparation of the programmes of activities of the working groups of the Statistical Conference of the Americas for the biennium 2020–2021, the following topics relating to statistical development in the region were analysed under this item: strategic and management matters concerning national statistical offices and national statistical systems; economic statistics; environmental statistics; social statistics; and multi-domain statistics.

15.   Under this agenda item, the secretariat gave a brief overview of the process of designing and implementing the instrument that had been used to consult with countries on the issues of greatest priority for the development of statistics. The questionnaire consisted of an adapted version of the Classification of International Statistical Activities, comprising 6 domains and 69 statistical activities. The questionnaire had been sent to the national statistical offices of 40 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, including associate members, which were asked to classify each of the activities as being of high, medium or low priority for statistical development in the country, with high priority activities not to exceed 10. The questionnaire results had yielded "SDG-related indicators" and "Population and housing censuses" as the priorities most frequently identified, followed by "Use of administrative records" and "National accounts and satellite accounts". For Latin America and the Caribbean overall, "SDG-related indicators" and "Population and housing censuses" were similarly prioritized. However, in Latin America, "Use of administrative records" and "Trade statistics" were also prominent, while in the Caribbean "National accounts and satellite accounts" and "Living conditions, poverty and cross-cutting social issues" were given the greatest priority.

16.   With regard to strategic and management matters concerning national statistical offices and national statistical systems, the secretariat first addressed the topics to which the countries had afforded the highest priority. Combination of the number of high-priority responses with the weighted sum of the three levels of priority (high, medium and low) gave as the three most prioritized activities: "Institutional frameworks and principles; the role and organization of national statistical offices, "Frameworks for quality and performance assessment of national statistical systems and offices" and "Management and development of technological resources". In addition, nine countries had identified administrative records, regarding sources of information in the questionnaire, as a high-priority matter. There follows a brief review of the status in the region of the topics most indicated by the countries, on the basis of the results of other tools applied previously. The fundamental principles of official statistics were well-known by the directors of national statistical offices, but less so among the heads of other institutions within the national statistical system and ministries or offices to which national statistical offices were accountable, where the same level of knowledge was not in evidence. Similarly, although most countries had legislation governing statistical activity, in many cases this dated back more than three decades. At the same time, in most countries the make-up of the national statistical system and its coordination by the national statistical office were established by law; however, only around 50% of countries had clearly defined parameters for the participation and responsibilities of each actor in the process of national statistical production.

17.   With respect to the management of statistical quality, the secretariat commented that, overall, 56% of countries lacked a clearly defined or documented policy and framework on quality, and in 45% of Latin American countries that framework applied only to the national statistical office and not to the statistical system as a whole. With regard to the management and development of technological resources, the main challenges highlighted by countries included infrastructure development, ICT security and planning; interoperability standards; and implementation of standards for electronic data interchange. Attention was drawn to the benefits of making use of administrative records, such as the reduction of costs in the production of official statistical information, a lower reporting burden and greater disaggregation, among others. Lastly,

on the basis of the report of the regional seminar on enhancing the use of administrative records for statistical purposes for monitoring the 2030 Agenda and the results of the questionnaire on statistical priorities, the main challenges identified were: limited existence of standardized conceptual frameworks; difficulty in assessing the quality of data sources; lack of training; absence of metadata; the absence of legal frameworks on the collection of private data for statistical purposes; legal restrictions on sources that limited provision of data; difficulty in harmonization of records; lack of data confidentiality guarantees; lack of ICT infrastructure, security and planning; and lack of standards for electronic data interchange.

18.   In the ensuing discussion, there was agreement that the region needed the Conference to produce specific, concise and efficient outputs to provide countries with guidelines by treating major statistical matters at the regional level. The pressure to provide official statistical information in a more timely manner without loss of quality made it vital to approach the topic not only conceptually, but also from a more empirical and pragmatic perspective on how to apply quality frameworks to the entire statistical production process, including the use of secondary sources or new data sources, such as administrative records. Quality frameworks also needed to be linked to other aspects such as relevance and data availability. The discussion also touched upon the possibility of peer reviews of quality. In this context, information on the quality certification experiences implemented by some countries in the region would be useful for other countries. With respect to legal frameworks, generic legislation for the region would be an asset for countries, as it would serve as a useful model for the reformulation of legal frameworks at the national level. The countries indicated that they needed support to implement innovations in statistical production, in particular as regards the incorporation of new data sources.

19.   It was added that the SDGs were a broad subject and addressing them required strategic prioritization. Within that framework, there was an opportunity to focus regional work on themes for which the regional could provide innovative proposals, for example the measurement of decent work. It was also emphasized that mechanisms should be established within national statistical systems to accurately gauge demand for information and include this in short- and long-term statistical plans, according to a prioritization process. Accordingly, statistical plans needed to be aligned with the countries' national development plans. Also suggested as a valuable asset was the development of statistical manuals offering models of how to organize the systems at different phases of the process and with reference to the various actors involved.

20.   The secretariat began its presentation on economic statistics by listing the most prioritized activities of the countries in that field. In descending order, "National accounts and satellite accounts", "Trade statistics" and "Prices" had been identified by most countries as high-priority activities, and at the subregional level, the Caribbean had prioritized these areas more than Latin America had. With regard to the specific themes highlighted by the countries themselves for each priority activity, in the case of "National accounts and satellite accounts", reference had been made to accounts for institutional sectors, supply tables, the GDP expenditure approach, quarterly accounts and satellite accounts for tourism and the environment. In the case of "Trade statistics", themes relating to the trade directory, the integrated system of business registration and basic statistics had been highlighted. Lastly, with respect to "Prices", the main challenges were themes linked to the consumer price index (CPI), the producer price index (PPI), the services price and volume index and updated international classifiers.

21.   Next, the secretariat addressed activities of medium priority, including "Sectoral statistics", "Labour cost", "Macroeconomic statistics", "Science, technology and innovation" and "International trade and balance of payments". In these areas, the themes highlighted as challenges by the countries were mining, manufacturing, construction, tourism, agriculture, forestry, the digital market, research and development, digital innovation, welfare measures and synthetic indicators of the economic cycle. Another

relevant theme mentioned was big data analysis, especially the instruments used to process large quantities of structured and unstructured data, such as web scraping, satellite images and Google Trends. The speaker also said that the harmonization of sectoral surveys on an annual, quarterly and monthly basis, and the spatial disaggregation of national statistics into subnational statistics, were other relevant themes for the region's development in economic statistics.

22.   During the time allotted for comments, the participants agreed to underscore the importance of administrative records to fill the information gaps in economic statistics, in spite of the dependence on other institutions created to gather data. Companies were crucial information providers, and statistics on the agricultural sector were among those afforded the highest priority. In that regard, the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) was identified as an opportunity for advancement. Emphasis was also placed on the need to integrate information sources. The representative of the International Labour Organization (ILO) said that household surveys were fundamental and urged countries to move towards an integrated system to achieve a unique global perspective. Moreover, the information had to be accurate and relevant. The implementation of the System of National Accounts (SNA) 2008 would contribute to the development of the rigorous approach needed and the focus on informality would help to ensure the required relevance. There was also agreement on the importance of measuring the informal sector and the impact of unpaid work.

23.   Next, environmental statistics were discussed. The secretariat said that the regional priorities were fundamentally natural resources and their use and degradation —it was difficult to measure sustainability in that field, as measurement focused on resource extraction and not stocks—; climate change —underscoring the challenge of measuring and producing quality statistics—; disasters —specifically the need to produce statistics on how these affect people, on economic damage and losses, on damage inflicted on ecosystems, and on preparation for disaster risks and management of those risks—; biodiversity —particularly with regard to coral bleaching, endangered species and conservation of endemic species—; and pollution and degradation —relating to the production and management of municipal waste, hazardous waste, breathable air in cities, surface waters and plastic in the seas—.

24.   A presentation of the work done thus far in environmental statistics in the region followed, with an emphasis on three gaps: (i) between supply and demand of environmental statistics; (ii) between the production of environmental statistics by the different countries of Latin America and the Caribbean; and (iii) within each country, between the production of environmental statistics and that of economic and social statistics. The secretariat underscored the need to strengthen statistics relating to climate change and disasters, as the Latin American and Caribbean region was highly vulnerable to the effects of those phenomena. In addition, the collection of environmental data was insufficient and the production of environmental statistics and indicators within the framework of national statistical systems was irregular. Lastly, the challenges of strengthening national statistical systems in that field were fundamentally linked to the legal frameworks for the production of environmental statistics, inter- and intra-agency cooperation and coordination relating to data flows, institutionalization and strengthening of specialized environmental units, and political support.

25.   In the ensuing discussion, several countries highlighted the importance of sustainability and the circular economy to development in the region, in relation to climate change and biodiversity or disasters. As a result, participants underscored the need to develop and institutionalize basic environmental statistics with a view to establishing real national environmental statistics systems, which would be part of national statistical systems and include economic and environmental accounts. Environmental statistics were an interesting field from the statistical perspective, as they provided an example of the combination of a wide variety of sources (for example censuses, surveys, administrative records, sensors and satellite images).

Moreover, environmental statistics provided a major opportunity to use unconventional technologies as new low-cost data collection instruments were being developed, such as air pollution measurement sensors.

26.   Owing to the very nature of these statistics, which covered many themes, one of the main challenges highlighted was horizontal and vertical inter-agency coordination among national stakeholders, given the need to include local phenomena or municipal information (on waste, for example). Participants were urged to continue working in a coordinated manner and to participate actively in non-statistical forums to strengthen decision makers' understanding of the importance of investing in quality environmental statistics. They were also advised to strengthen networks of environmental statistics experts in each country and at the regional level. The representative of Jamaica suggested the joint purchasing of satellite images to share costs and produce environmental statistics based on geospatial data sources. The proposal was supported by several countries. The representative of Guyana requested support in environmental statistics, which had barely been developed in that country thus far.

27.   Regarding social statistics, the secretariat first presented the results of the questionnaire that had been distributed. With respect to data sources, the highest priority activities were "Population and housing censuses", "Use of administrative records", "Household surveys" and "Data validation and analysis". By thematic area, the highest priority activities were "Living conditions, poverty and cross-cutting social issues", "Population" (in relation to the implementation of the 2020 census round), "Labour" (owing to recent changes made by ILO) and "Income and consumption". "Migration" was also highlighted —it had been classified as a medium priority by many countries— in relation to its impact on social statistics estimates. The secretariat also listed the challenges outlined by the countries for each priority activity. With regard to censuses, reference was made essentially to the need for technical assistance, strengthening of national capacities, incorporation of technological innovations and the definition of content in keeping with new social demands and realities. Other highlighted points included the importance of administrative records as a source of direct estimates and to update statistical frameworks, support estimation models for small areas and calibrate survey expansion factors, among other issues. Lastly, the secretariat outlined the challenge for social statistics posed by the updating of statistical frameworks and the renewal of sample designs and their potential impact on the statistical series published regularly by the countries.

28.   In their statements, the countries concurred in underscoring the importance of all the topics included in the area of social statistics, the strength and track record of national statistical offices in this field and the difficulty of prioritizing some activities over others in a context of resource constraints. Some specific issues were highlighted, such as the importance of administrative records, especially as regards vital statistics; the emergence of new statistical tools in response to civil society's demands for transparency; the inclusion of measurement of consumption; and the need to address issues such as calibration of expansion factors in surveys. Representatives of the funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations noted the importance of some cross-cutting approaches in social statistics, as well as the existence of specific measurement instruments for some of the most sensitive issues. They also highlighted their work to support countries in the methodological development and estimation of certain indicators directly related to the SDGs.

29.   The representative of ILO reported on estimates of migrant labour costs, on which the Organization was conducting pilot tests jointly with the Government of Mexico. The representative of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) recalled the Regional Conference on Migration, which convened primarily countries from North and Central America, and whose experience could be used to improve estimates in those countries where the migration phenomenon was more recent. Finally, the representative of the Pan American Health Organization (PHAO) highlighted the experience already existing regarding access

to health records and their processing quality and statistical exploitation, and suggested that the procedures developed in this field could be applied to other, emerging issues.

30. The representative of Colombia proposed organizing the work of the Conference through different parallel mechanisms to address the various topics efficiently. On the one hand, communities of practice could compile existing experience in the region on issues such as household surveys and measurement of migration, poverty or employment, or changes in statistical frameworks and their impact on series of social indicators. On the other hand, communities of innovation would address development issues, such as measuring informality, from a regional perspective. A help desk could also be set up to tap the experience of the countries in the region that had already conducted their censuses, to offer ad hoc support to countries requiring it at any stage of the process. The representative of Mexico agreed that all the issues were important both for countries and for the funds, programmes and specialized agencies, but emphasized that some had to be prioritized over others, and proposed creating a coordination mechanism to provide members with information on new regional and global developments in the different thematic areas.

31. Lastly, the secretariat referred to multi-domain statistics and presented the results of the prioritization exercise carried out by the countries. In the questionnaire, the "SDG-related indicators" activity had received the most high priority ratings, followed by "Gender and special population groups" and "Sustainable development". The challenges that stood out among those identified in the questionnaire were the need to address the tier II and tier III SDG indicators and develop methodologies for calculating them; data disaggregation; the need to improve the mechanisms for coordinating national statistical systems to respond to the SDGs; and interest in topics of SDG reporting and dissemination. Of the other cross-cutting themes, the activity "Geocoding of statistical data, geographic information systems" received the largest number of high priority ratings, followed by "Remote sensing, monitoring systems, estimates and models, scientific research". Of the activities classified as medium priority, "Data dissemination and storage" stood out. The challenges cited in these areas included the need to georeference data, particularly census data; digitization and geocoding; strengthening of national spatial data infrastructure; and securing or ensuring technological support for appropriate integration of statistical and geospatial information.

32. Next, the participants were given the floor, and it was stated that the SDGs should be considered a cross-cutting theme to be addressed by the different Working Groups to be formed in the new biennium. The Conference was highlighted as a space to support governance mechanisms in countries that allowed national statistical offices to play leading roles in information generation. It was important for the activities carried out in the statistical field in the region to be reported to the Conference, in order to form links with other communities of practice. With regard to dissemination of the SDGs, emphasis was placed on the need to address protocols for the exchange of information among the different data platforms used by the countries of the region, and a number of countries shared their experiences in the use of national platforms, including Retrieval of data for small areas by microcomputer (REDATAM) and OECD.Stat. The representative of PARIS21 commented that the OECD user community was using OECD.Stat as a data flow instrument and raised the possibility of using it as a tool for regional work.

33. Participants discussed the need to concentrate on indicators that should have a regional focus —in other words, to which the region could contribute at the global level— and to adopt a common regional vision and act as a bloc through the different national bodies. This would entail consensus on methodological issues, strengthening of territorial disaggregation and establishment of minimum realities that were relevant to that of Latin America and the Caribbean. With regard to geocoding and geographic information systems, interest was expressed in areas such as remote sensing —particularly measurement of environmental variables using sensors— and georeferencing of administrative records. The representative of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) affirmed the importance of continued progress

in georeferencing crime statistics. Because of the problems affecting the region, the preparation of on statistics on gender, population groups with special needs, governance, security and justice, from a regional perspective, were also discussed.

Review of progress in the implementation of the biennial programme of regional and international cooperation activities, 2018–2019, of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC (agenda item 3)

34.   Under this agenda item, the secretariat reported on the overall progress of the Working Groups of the Conference and detailed the activities of the Statistical Coordination Group for the 2030 Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean.

35.   With regard to the first topic, the secretariat summarized the progress with the biennial programme of regional and international cooperation activities of the Working Groups for the 2018–2019 biennium. Most of the activities scheduled for the biennium related to documents (meeting reports, methodologies, analysis and dissemination of results), followed by events (Working Group meetings, conferences, seminars, workshops and courses), the development of methodological tools (design and application of questionnaires and indicator sets) and media resources (videos, websites and bulletins). In terms of progress in outputs, 37% of scheduled activities had been completed, 34% were ongoing and 29% had not yet begun. The secretariat also briefly outlined each output for the biennium that was available and had been shared on the Knowledge Transfer Network website.

36.   By way of conclusions and recommendations, although there had been appreciable progress with the Working Groups' activities and certain outputs served as reference material for producing statistics, activities were also carried out in different ways. Specifically, although some outputs were the effective result of collaboration among Working Group members, in other cases activities were performed by those in charge of projects that were separate from the Groups' activities. With regard to outputs, efforts needed to be directed towards activities with high added value for the region that could be shared beyond each Group, focusing work on specific clearly defined outputs that could feasibly be produced within the biennium. More appropriate mechanisms were also required for participation by Caribbean countries.

37.   In the discussion that followed the presentation, there was widespread agreement on the need for the Working Groups to move forward on the basis of specific outputs that were useful and important for the region. Although the Working Groups were applauded as spaces for exchanging experiences and good practices, having appraised their working dynamics a suggestion was made to move towards other means and mechanisms for collaboration, such as task forces or communities of practice, where the focus would be on defining specific thematic areas and outputs. The IDB representative raised the need to prioritize issues, and to agree that the existence of a Working Group on a particular issue did not necessarily imply that the issue was more important than others not addressed by any Groups. He suggested reducing the number of Groups and rethinking the Knowledge Transfer Network website as a platform for sharing information that was a public good for the region. Lastly, the representative of Canada referred to a project being carried out with 14 Caribbean countries, underscored weak participation by the Caribbean subregion in the Working Groups, and said that the project could contribute to the inclusion of more Caribbean countries.

38.   With regard to the activities of the Statistical Coordination Group for the 2030 Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean, the ECLAC representative referred to the updates made to the inventory of national capacities to produce the indicators included in the global indicator framework for the SDGs, the need to continue updating it, and the importance of adding countries that had not participated in the activities, to have a full picture of the region. The process of prioritizing indicators for regional statistical monitoring of the SDGs was described and upcoming activities outlined: definition of methodological aspects, future

technical refinement of indicators and evaluation of technical assistance and horizontal cooperation requirements, with a view to implementation of the indicators at the regional and subregional levels.

39.   In the ensuing discussion, participants noted that the Statistical Coordination Group should focus not only on updating the assessment of statistical capabilities, but also on reflecting the progress made by each country in addressing the statistical aspects of the SDGs. There was a need to strengthen the representation of the region in world forums, with a common position that better expressed the demands of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. Analysis of how to continue the work of the Conference revealed the need to establish communities of innovation built around the SDGs and governance mechanisms to reflect thematic progress in certain areas. It was important to establish common principles and mechanisms to highlight the regional leadership of national statistical offices.

Other matters (agenda item 4)

40.   This agenda item addressed the rotation of representatives of Latin America and the Caribbean in the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators and the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; progress in the implementation of the Statistical and Geospatial Framework for the Americas (MEGA); and preparations for the tenth meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas, to be held in Santiago in November 2019.

41.   With regard to the first point, the representative of ECLAC stated that the countries nominated by their subregions to join the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators were: Brazil, Colombia, Grenada and Trinidad and Tobago. The country which would replace Mexico had yet to be determined. The representatives of the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development would be: Argentina, Ecuador, Mexico, Saint Kitts and Nevis and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. These countries would be included in the groups mentioned from mid-2019 onward.

42.   Regarding the second point, the representative of Mexico said that the Statistical and Geospatial Framework of the Americas (MEGA) had been established in 2014 and was coordinated by the Expert Group on Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM: Americas), Colombia's National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE) and Agustín Codazzi Geographic Institute (IGAC). The speaker highlighted the support of ECLAC in the preparation of the project and said that in 2016, Colombia and Mexico had prepared and shared with member States a document on the standardization of geospatial and statistical information, which specified the conditions to be met by the statistical and geospatial information for the project. MEGA was aligned with Global Statistical Geospatial Framework principles regarding access and use, interoperability, common geographies for dissemination of statistics and georeferencing.

43.   MEGA would integrate statistical and geospatial information in a unified through common principles and standards for the region as a whole, strengthening dissemination of information to support decision-making. Regarding the characteristics of MEGA information, the initial series would be made up of population data by sex and housing data, with three levels of territorial disaggregation: (i) country, (ii) state or next territorial level, and (iii) municipality or territorial level following the previous one. Although a number of countries had provided the necessary information, some had still not, and were urged to provide said information, given the importance of all the data to the project. Lastly, the speaker said that the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) had finalized the implementation of digital

instrument to visualize images for the MEGA project based on the Digital Map of Mexico platform, an open source geographic information system.

44.   With regard to preparations for the tenth meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas, the representative of ECLAC described the working mechanism to be followed until November. The planned steps were: (i) the report of the meeting, outlining the prioritized topics; (ii) definition of terms of reference by the Executive Committee of the Conference; (iii) the preparation of proposals by the Working Groups and other mechanisms for collaboration among the countries, in keeping with the themes of the report and the terms of reference; (iv) evaluation of the proposals by the Executive Committee of the Conference on the basis of the criteria set out above; and (v) the tenth meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas, when proposals pre-approved by the Executive Committee would be presented. At the meeting, other topics would be dealt with in seminars or side events.

45.   The floor was then given to the participants, who supported the idea that Working Groups —regardless of their denomination— should focus on producing specific outputs corresponding to the region's priorities and needs. A mechanism was needed to establish regional positions within different international bodies —in particular, the United Nations Statistical Commission at its annual sessions, the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators and the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The secretariat undertook to make the necessary arrangements with respect to the Statistical Commission and said that the Statistical Coordination Group was the most appropriate setting in which to establish common positions vis-à-vis the international working groups mentioned previously.

Consideration and adoption of agreements (agenda item 5)

46.   The Executive Committee adopted the agreements contained in annex 1.

Closing session

47.   The Director of the National Institute of Statistics (INE) of Chile, in his capacity as Chair of the Executive Committee of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC, thanked the participants for their work over the two days and concluded the meeting.

Annex 1

AGREEMENTS

The Executive Committee of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, at its eighteenth meeting, held in Santiago from 27 to 28 March 2019,

1.   *Takes note* of the issues and activities identified as priorities for the region on the basis of the results of the questionnaire on strategic challenges for statistical development in Latin America and the Caribbean in 2020–2021, the presentations given by the secretariat and those made by the countries at the meeting, on strategic and management matters concerning national statistical offices and national statistical systems, economic statistics, environmental statistics, demographic and social statistics and multi-domain statistics;

2.   *Also takes note* of the *Second report on the implementation of the biennial programme of regional and international cooperation activities, 2018–2019, of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean*;[1]

3.   *Commends* the working groups on the progress made in the implementation of their programmes of activities and urges them to take the necessary measures to complete the work programmes committed for the current biennium;

4.   *Expresses its thanks* for the support and collaboration of the international organizations that have contributed to the activities of the working groups, either by acting as technical secretariats or by providing cooperation, technical assistance and financing for the planned activities;

5.   *Welcomes* the launch of the new website of the Knowledge Transfer Network[2] and the collection and dissemination of outputs of the working groups in Spanish and English, as well as the calendar of activities;

6.   *Urges* the Statistical Coordination Group for the 2030 Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean to advance in the fine-tuning of methodological aspects of the indicators prioritized for regional follow-up of the Sustainable Development Goals and to make progress in the development of a proposal for activities to be implemented in the next biennium;

7.   *Requests* the Chair to report at the third meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development, to be held in Santiago in April 2019, on the main activities undertaken by the Statistical Conference of the Americas in relation to follow-up to and implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

8.   *Thanks* Brazil, Colombia, Grenada, Mexico, and Trinidad and Tobago, as well as Argentina, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Suriname, for their work as representatives of the region, respectively, to the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators and to the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, respectively;

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[1]   LC/CE.18/3.
[2]   See [online] https://rtc-cea.cepal.org./en.

9. *Welcomes* the election of Brazil, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Grenada, and Trinidad and Tobago as representatives of the region to the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators for the coming biennium, as of June 2019;

10. *Also welcomes* the election of Argentina, Ecuador, Mexico, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines as representatives of the region to the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development for the coming biennium, as of June 2019;

11. *Invites* the countries representing the region in the two bodies to generate joint work schemes and mechanisms to share information with all the countries in their respective subregions, in order to ensure ongoing feedback on the themes discussed and decisions adopted in both forums, and to seek mechanisms for putting forward common positions representing the region as a whole;

12. *Acknowledges* the progress made in implementing the Statistical and Geospatial Framework for the Americas (MEGA) and encourages national statistical offices to take an active part in the project in coordination and collaboration with national geospatial agencies;

13. *Requests* the secretariat to arrange the preparation of proposals for the formation of the working groups for the biennium 2020–2021, as well as for other modalities of collaborative work, for consideration by the Executive Committee prior to the tenth meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas;

14. *Agrees* that the issues addressed by the working groups in the biennium 2020–2021 are to be consistent with the priorities identified at the present meeting, as outlined in the meeting report, and that their work programmes must include clearly defined outputs that are achievable within the two-year period;

15. *Requests* the secretariat to establish a consultation mechanism to define common regional positions for presentation to the United Nations Statistical Commission at its annual sessions;

16. *Agrees* to hold the tenth meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean in Santiago from 19 to 21 November 2019.

Annex 2

REGIONAL PRIORITIES FOR STATISTICAL DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION

There follows a description of the results of the questionnaire on strategic challenges for statistical development in Latin America and the Caribbean 2020–2021, which was taken over February and March 2019 as part of the preparations for the eighteenth meeting of the Executive Committee of the Statistical Conference of the Americas.

The questionnaire was an adapted version of the Classification of International Statistical Activities (CSA), consisting of 6 domains and 69 statistical activities. The questionnaire was sent to the national statistical offices, which were asked to rank each of the activities as "high priority", "medium priority" or "low priority" for statistical development in the country. The number of "high priority" activities was not to exceed 10.

The questionnaire was sent to all the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, including associate members of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). Responses were received from 22 countries, 14 in Latin America and 8 in the Caribbean, i.e. 72% and 36%, respectively, of the countries in each subregion.[1]
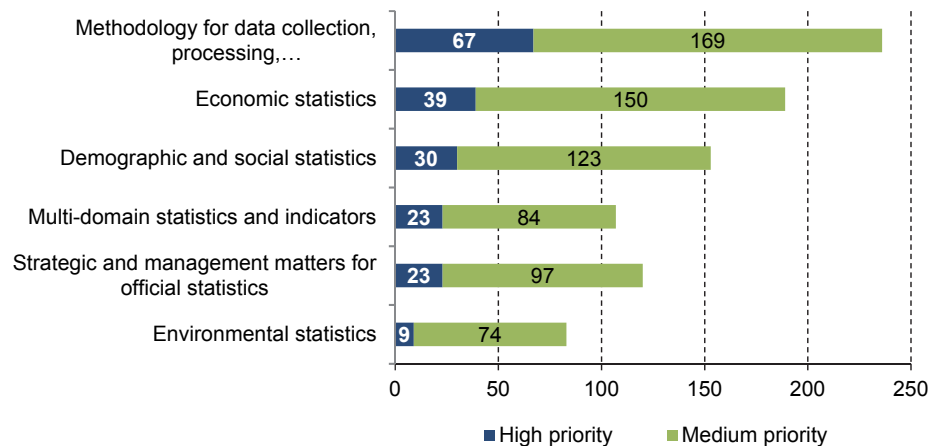
A. RESULTS

By number of "high priority" responses for each domain, "Methodology for data collection, processing, dissemination and analysis" was the statistical domain afforded the highest priority in the region, followed by "Economic statistics" and "Demographic and social statistics". Responses for the "medium priority" category were similarly distributed (see figure 1).

In relation to specific activities, as may be seen in figure 2, "SDG-related indicators" and "Population and housing censuses" were the highest-priority topics for the respondent countries, followed by "National accounts and satellite accounts" and "Use of administrative records". Among the activities ranked as medium priorities, "Migration" and "Mining, manufacturing and construction" were the most frequently selected.
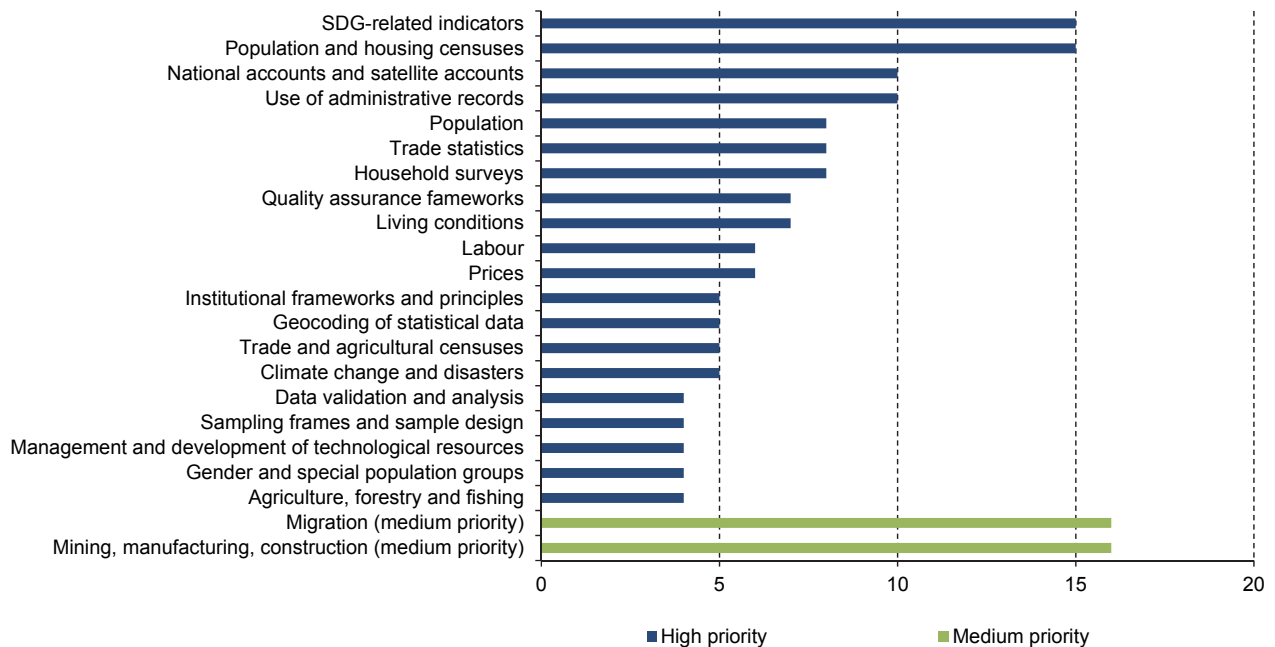
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[1] For these purposes, Latin America includes Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of). The Caribbean includes Belize, Cayman Islands, Curaçao, Dominica, Haiti, Montserrat, Turks and Caicos Islands, and Suriname. The responses of the Plurinational State of Bolivia and Peru could not be included, owing to a difference in prioritization criteria and the use of a previous version of the questionnaire, respectively. Thus, the results reflect the responses of 20 countries (12 from Latin America and 8 in the Caribbean).

Figure 1
Latin America and the Caribbean: activities ranked as "high priority"
and "medium priority", by domain
(Number of responses by domain)

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of the results of the questionnaire on strategic challenges for statistical development in Latin America and the Caribbean in 2020–2021.

Figure 2
Latin America and the Caribbean: ranking of activities classified as "high priority"[a]
and "medium priority"[b], by the largest number of countries
(Number of countries)

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of the results of the questionnaire on strategic challenges for statistical development in Latin America and the Caribbean in 2020–2021.
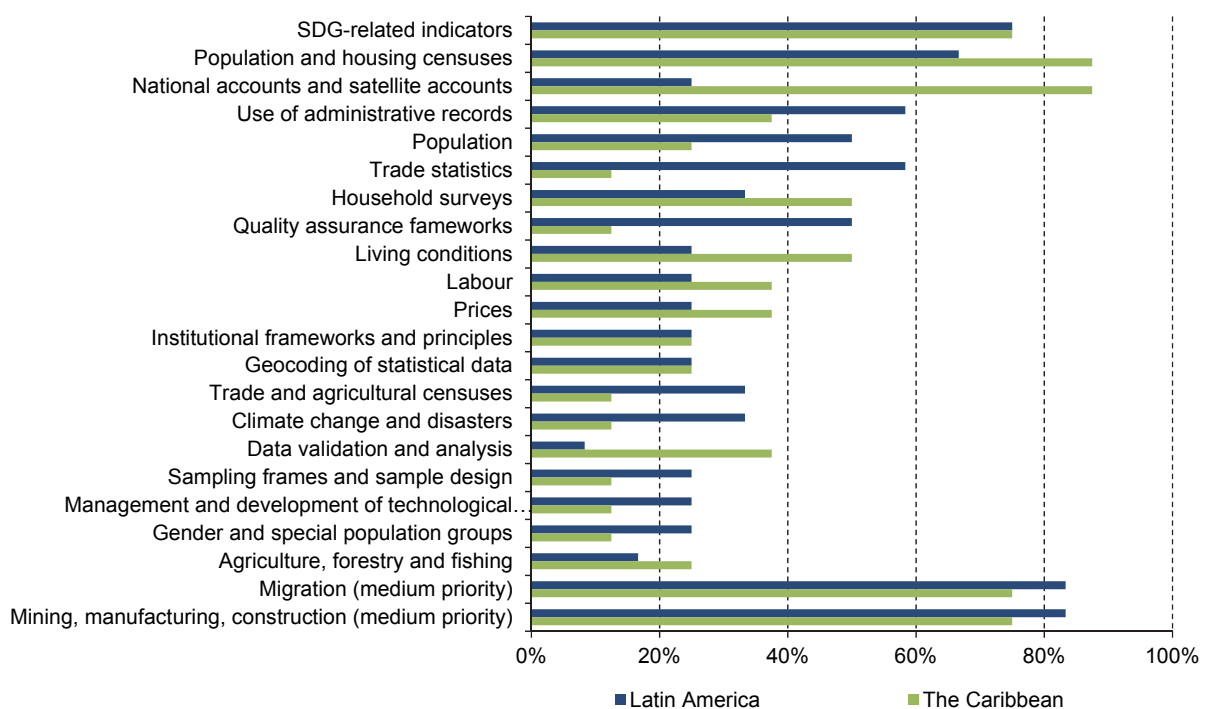Note: Longer activity names are abbreviated owing to limited space.
[a] Includes all activities classified in this category by at least four countries.
[b] Includes the two activities classified in this category by the largest number of countries (16).

When the activities afforded the highest statistical priority are disaggregated by subregion, it may be observed that while the two subregions prioritized activities in the domains of "Population and housing censuses" and "SDG-related indicators" in a similar manner, Latin America gave greater priority to activities such as "Use of administrative records", "Trade statistics" and "Quality assurance frameworks", while the priorities in the Caribbean were "National accounts and satellite accounts", "Living conditions, poverty and cross-cutting social issues" and "Data validation and analysis" (see figure 3).

Figure 3
Latin America (12 countries) and the Caribbean (8 countries): activities ranked as "high priority"
by the largest number of countries
(Percentages)

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of the results of the questionnaire on strategic challenges for statistical development in Latin America and the Caribbean in 2020–2021.
Note: Longer activity names are abbreviated owing to limited space.

B. KEY TOPICS HIGHLIGHTED BY COUNTRIES IN RELATION TO THE STATISTICAL ACTIVITIES AFFORDED THE HIGHEST STATISTICAL PRIORITY

There follows a summary of the issues cited by the countries in relation to the statistical challenges for the activities classified as high priority, on the basis of the comments and observations included in the questionnaire. The two activities with the highest numbers of "medium priority" ratings is also included.

1. Methodology for data collection, processing, dissemination and analysis

No. of countries that classify the activity as "high priority"	Activity	Issues cited by the countries as statistical challenges
15	Population and housing censuses	2020 census round (main challenge)
		Use of technological innovations to improve coverage, quality and timelessness (use of tablets, cell phones, and so on)
		Development of methodologies for reviewing and correcting census data
		Use of administrative records
		Exchange of regional experiences and good practices in census planning, design and implementation
10	Use of administrative records	Design and implementation of population, education and health records
		Use of records for updating statistical frameworks and small area estimation methods
		Generation of social statistics (on labour or migration) through the combined use of registers and other sources
		Availability of data for users
		Cooperation between national statistical offices on the basis of experiences in the use of records
		Inclusion of information from administrative records as auxiliary information for conducting censuses or calibrating household surveys
8	Household surveys	Stronger development of conceptual and methodological issues relating to: • Income and expenditure surveys • Time-use surveys • Financial surveys and perception of security surveys
		Training programmes for human resources involved in the different stages of the production process
		The Caribbean • Financing and continuity of established household survey programmes • Organization of regular (employment) or occasional (post-enumeration surveys) surveys

No. of countries that classify the activity as "high priority"	Activity	Issues cited by the countries as statistical challenges
5	Trade and agricultural censuses	Assistance for the conduct of agricultural censuses
		Multipurpose mapping updates
		Fishing (small-scale) and economic censuses
		The Caribbean • 2026 business survey • Agricultural censuses
5	Geocoding of statistical data, geographic information systems (GIS)	Spatial data infrastructure in support of the geostatistical system: • Digitizing and geocoding rural maps • Updating the digital mapping framework for statistical purposes • Strengthening and complementing technological resources (workstations, servers and applications, among others) to provide mapping services for geostatistical systems • Training of technical personnel involved in mapping
		Developing spatial statistical analysis within geographic information systems
		National and international standards of statistical data geocoding and geostatistical information systems
		Exchange of experiences, good practices and related methodologies
		The Caribbean • Assistance for linking geographic information systems (GIS) data with census data
4	Data validation and analysis	Assistance with the validation methodology for different sources, complex validation techniques and data modelling
		Quality assurance in statistical processes
		The Caribbean • Training in data analysis
4	Sampling frames and sample design	Exchange of experiences on creating and/or updating sampling frames, in relation to the use of data from censuses and administrative records
		Knowledge and measurement of impacts on estimators caused by changes and/or updates in methodologies or sampling frames
		Sampling frames for fishing and agricultural statistics
		Revision of methodologies currently used in the region with a view to improve the efficiency of sampling frame design and construction

2. Economic statistics

No. of countries that classify the activity as "high priority"	Activity	Issues cited by the countries as statistical challenges
10	National accounts and satellite accounts	Progress in changing the base year of national accounts
		Completing the system of national accounts, including balance sheet accounts and measurement of fixed capital consumption, as well as quarterly accounts for institutional sectors
		Implementing supply tables
		Development of environmental satellite accounts
		Exchange of regional experiences and good practices for capacity-building
		The Caribbean • Strengthening of national accounts by economic sector and by expenditure • Compilation of quarterly GDP estimates • Assistance for compiling tourism satellite accounts in 2020
8	Trade statistics	Implementation and analysis of enumeration of economic units
		Implementation of integrated economic statistics
		Participation in global economy measurement initiatives
		Development of an integrated system of business registration
		Exchange of regional experiences and good practices for capacity-building
		Strengthening the link with statistics based on business administrative records and other sources (such as business surveys)
		Methodology for analysis of business activities
6	Prices	Adaptation of updated international classifications
		Preparation of next base year changes
		Development of service sector deflators
		Design of a system of production price and volume indices
		Exchange of regional experiences regarding development of: • Price indices of dwellings and leases • Price indices of services and imported products
		Expanding the sectoral coverage of the producer price index
		The Caribbean • Assistance for obtaining and switching to a new compilation software • Production of quarterly price indices

No. of countries that classify the activity as "high priority"	Activity	Issues cited by the countries as statistical challenges
4	Agriculture, forestry and fishing	Design of an integrated system of agricultural statistics
		Design of a programme to generate accurate and timely information
		Exchange of regional experiences and good practices for capacity-building
		The Caribbean • Production of data specifically for agriculture and forestry
16 (medium priority)	Mining, manufacturing and construction[a]	

[a]   No comments were conveyed for this activity.

3. Demographic and social statistics

No. of countries that classify the activity as "high priority"	Activity	Issues cited by the countries as statistical challenges
8	Population	Establishment or strengthening of information systems for vital statistics based on administrative records (improvements in civil registration, integration with hospital records, and so on)
		Sharing experiences among countries on annual estimates and projections of the population at the national and subnational levels, including the impact of migration
		Publication and projection of official statistics using various auxiliary data sources
7	Living conditions, poverty and cross-cutting social issues	Methodologies for measuring well-being, and incorporation of the OECD Framework for Measuring Well-Being and Progress
		Development of methodologies and training in the construction of indicators
		Technical assistance for evaluation and training for the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES)
		The Caribbean • Assistance to complete a multidimensional poverty index of the 2020 census, and to estimate the 2018–2019 poverty lines • Official guidelines for the definition of poverty and its calculation

No. of countries that classify the activity as "high priority"	Activity	Issues cited by the countries as statistical challenges
6	Labour	Adoption and adaptation of the revision of the International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE-18)
		Updating the conceptual framework for measuring labour informality statistics (XIX and XX International Conference of Labour Statisticians)
		Design and operation of administrative records on employment, design of information systems integrating different sources (surveys and records) and continuous improvement of those sources
		Emergence of new forms of work and the impact of the digital economy and technological transformations on the labour market
		The Caribbean • Measuring unemployment more frequently
16 (medium priority)	Migration	Use of administrative records to generate statistics and indicators
		Standardizing data sources across countries to have updated information on migratory flows for monitoring purposes
		Updating the international migration component in population projections
		Development of tools, methodologies and training
		Designing programmes to generate more timely information on migration to other countries and internal migration
		Analysing topics relating to forced displacement and refugees

4. Multi-domain statistics and indicators

No. of countries that classify the activity as "high priority"	Activity	Issues cited by the countries as statistical challenges
15	SDG-related indicators	Continuing to work on the regional framework for the measurement of SDG indicators and on capacity-building for SDG indicator reporting
		SDGs most cited: 11,12,13, 14 and 15
		Developing or adopting methodologies for disaggregating information, particularly at subnational levels (small area analysis techniques) or for specific populations, such as children, adolescents and persons with disabilities
		Measurement of Tier III indicators
		Methodology, training, production processes and support for the construction of indicators

No. of countries that classify the activity as "high priority"	Activity	Issues cited by the countries as statistical challenges
		Strengthening national statistical systems for the production of sustainable, good-quality data and information
		Exchange of regional practices and experiences on calculation methodology and data source improvement for SDG indicator reporting
		The Caribbean • SDGs most cited: 3, 4 and 8 • Data availability and integration within day-to-day governance
4	Gender and special population groups	Standardization of concepts for measuring indicators on gender and special groups
		Ethnic identification in administrative records
		Fine-tuning the conceptual development, as well as tools and methodologies, for identifying and characterizing different population groups (older persons, the LGBT population, children and adolescents, indigenous peoples, Afrodescendants and persons with disabilities) and phenomena such as violence against specific population groups

5. Strategic and management matters in official statistics

No. of countries that classify the activity as "high priority"	Activity	Issues cited by the countries as statistical challenges
7	Frameworks for quality assurance and performance assessment of national statistical systems and offices	Development of a model for generic and consistent assessment of data quality
		Establishment of quality controls in standardized and documented processes and development of protocols for measuring and documenting the impact of improvements
		Implementation of the Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM)
		Sharing of regional experiences and practices, as well as the development of national frameworks and processes for the certification of statistical operations
		Adoption in Latin America of the national quality assurance frameworks for official statistics adopted at the fiftieth session of the United Nations Statistical Commission and the development of implementation guides

No. of countries that classify the activity as "high priority"	Activity	Issues cited by the countries as statistical challenges
5	Institutional frameworks and principles; the role and organization of national statistical offices	Strategic and functional definitions linked to national statistical offices and the national statistical system as a whole
		Updating of legislation on statistics and technical standards
		Continuing the process of institutional strengthening, by implementing standards (Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM), Generic Activity Model for Statistical Organizations (GAMSO)) and the Recommendation of the OECD Council on Good Statistical Practice
		Recognition and awareness-raising among different political actors to ensure that proposed legal frameworks foster the modernization, coordination and integration of national statistical systems in the region
		The Caribbean • Obtaining greater recognition within the government and the community • Assistance to develop a national strategy for statistical production
4	Management and development of technological resources	Development of ICT infrastructure, security and planning
		Interoperability standards, systems of interoperability and integration of administrative records
		Implementation of standards for electronic data interchange (EDI), incorporating safety standards for statistical production
		The Caribbean • In-house expertise on database management • Lack of human resources

6. Environmental statistics

No. of countries that classify the activity as "high priority"	Activity	Issues cited by the countries as statistical challenges
5	Climate change and disasters	Development of regional methodologies for calculating indicators of climate change and disasters, to support comparable data availability at the regional level
		Development of a system of indicators on the circular economy and on natural disasters
		Development of a system for disaster registration
		Decarbonization of the economy
		Exchange of regional experiences and good practices for capacity-building

Annex 3

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