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**FINAL REPORT OF THE MEETING OF DIRECTORS OF
STATISTICS OF THE AMERICAS**

(Santiago, 26-29 September 1989)

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I. ORGANIZATION OF WORK

1. Place, date and purpose of the meeting

1. The meeting of Directors of Statistics of the Americas was held at the headquarters of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in Santiago, Chile, from 26 to 29 September 1989.

2. The Permanent Executive Committee of the Inter-American Statistical Conference (COM/CIE) had, at its seventh meeting held in New York on 11 and 12 February 1989, agreed to ask ECLAC to convene the meeting of Directors of Statistics of the Americas at its headquarters at Santiago, Chile, during the final week in September 1989. Previously, at the sixth meeting of COM/CIE, held at Aguas Calientes, Mexico, in February 1988, a draft agenda had been approved for submission to the New York meeting for discussion. Although practically the entire agenda had been adopted, it had remained as a draft so that any new items which might arise before the holding of the meeting at Santiago (some had in fact arisen) could be incorporated in it.

3. One of the main purposes of the meeting concerned the need to assess the progress achieved in connection with matters agreed upon at the Meeting of Directors of Statistics of the Americas held in September 1987. Those points of agreement included activities in preparation for the 1990 round of censuses, the absorption of computational technologies for the statistical development of the region, technical co-operation in statistics, training, the situation with regard to social statistics and their connection to household surveys held to establish data bases making it possible to adopt rational policies designed to eradicate extreme poverty, and short-term indicators for rapid decision taking. It was also suggested that consideration should be given to other activities such as the dissemination of statistics, data collection and processing, the improvement of social indicators, the informal sector, statistics on services and new kinds of technical co-operation in statistics.

2. Attendance *

4. The meeting was attended by representatives of the following countries members of ECLAC: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Spain, the United States of America, Uruguay and Venezuela.

* See list of participants in annex 1 to this report.

5. Representatives of the following bodies attended the meeting by special invitation: the Board of the Cartagena Agreement (JUNAC), the Inter-American Statistical Institute (IASI), the Inter-American Statistical Training Centre (CIENES), the Latin American Integration Association (ALADI), the Organization of American States (OAS), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Statistical Office (UNSO).

3. Designation of the Chairman of the meeting

6. The representative of ECLAC noted the desirability of keeping the tradition of asking the Chairman of the Inter-American Statistical Conference (CIE) to serve as Chairman of the meeting. In accordance with that tradition, the representative of Mexico was designated Chairman.

4. Agenda and documentation

7. The participants had before them the documents listed in annex 2 to this report and adopted the following agenda:

1) Report on the activities of the representatives of the Latin American and Caribbean countries in the United Nations Statistical Commission: Observations and introduction of proposals (representative of Argentina);

2) Global aspects of population and housing censuses requiring decisions by the Directors of Statistics:

- Progress report on project in support to activities related to the design and preparation of the 1990 round of censuses. This project, which benefits from financial support from the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), is being implemented by ECLAC. (Report on item to be given by representatives of countries which have organized activities under the project and by the representative of ECLAC).
- Progress report on the regional programme on population and housing censuses sponsored by the secretariat of the Organization of American States (OAS). (Report to be given by the representative of CIENES).

3) Evaluation of activities agreed to at the Meeting of Directors of Statistics of the Americas held at ECLAC headquarters in Santiago, Chile, in September 1987:

- Project on statistics for the development of Latin America and the Caribbean (report by representative of ECLAC);
- Regional seminar on the co-ordination of national statistics (report by representative of Argentina);

- Co-operation in statistics in the field of national accounts (report by representative of ECLAC);
- Training in statistics (report by representatives of Panama and CIENES);
- Regional seminar on economic censuses and register of economic units (report by representative of Uruguay);
- Household surveys (report by representative of the United Nations Statistical Office (UNSO)).
Improving data quality through the redesign of household surveys (report prepared by the United States).
- Short-term indicators (report to be presented by the delegation of Mexico).

4) Proposed new activities:

- Dissemination of statistics. Responsibility for document: ECLAC and Mexico;
- Planning data collection and processing in order to produce more timely information. Responsibility for document: Mexico;
- Co-ordination of international trade statistics. Responsibility for document: Canada and the United States;
- Feasibility of using electronic questionnaire in censuses. Responsibility for document: CIENES;
- Critical poverty and social indicators. Responsibility for documents: Argentina, Colombia, OAS and UNDP.
- Informal sector. Responsibility for documents: Argentina and Mexico;
- Statistics on services. Responsibility for document: ECLAC and JUNAC;
- Report on future statistical activities of international bodies in Latin America and the Caribbean. Responsibility for report: CIENES.

5) Institutional responsibilities in the organization of periodic meetings of directors of statistics from the countries of the region.

5. Opening session

8. Mr. Gert Rosenthal, Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), opened the meeting by cordially welcoming the Directors of Statistics of the Americas and those representatives of international bodies who were attending.

9. He said it was highly stimulating for ECLAC to serve as the place where the Directors could meet to exchange views and adopt initiatives designed to improve the development of statistics in

the region. In that respect, he noted that in view of the depressing economic panorama which continued to prevail in the region, where a recession accompanied by inflation was in the offing for the current year, the timely production of reliable statistics for use as a support in the taking of decisions was of enormous importance.

10. He then drew attention to six broad areas which, in his view, characterized the regional economic scenario: i) the problem of inflation; ii) the signs of an approaching period of recession; iii) the behavior of the external sector and the transfer of resources; iv) the deterioration of public finances; v) the social cost implicit in the crisis and vi) the external debt burden. In his opinion, the preparation and collection of statistics should be adapted to the difficulties present in those areas. For example, there was no denying that the widespread inflation put enormous obstacles in the way of the production of good short-term indicators or that, paradoxically, during a period of recession better indicators were required to analyze the distortions arising in the structure of production. In another connection he pointed out that although Latin America had made a great effort to produce a surplus in trade in goods which was estimated to amount to US\$30 billion in 1989, the region was still transferring resources in the amount of some US\$38 billion, and its deficit on current account was over US\$12 billion. In that context, he noted that the region's statistics for foreign trade in services presented particular drawbacks and could not be used for purposes of negotiations, or at any rate could not be presented as being of equal value, in important forums, such as the Uruguay Round.

11. As for the deterioration in public finances caused by the transfer of external resources, in which inflation and the servicing of the external debt played a basic role, he noted that statistical data on the public sector were very fragmentary and unsubstantial. Consequently, it was essential to give impetus to the preparation of a set of short-term indicators on the public sector which would provide significant support in the adoption of measures designed to detect and correct distortions, or in any case distortions at the domestic level. With regard to the social cost of the crisis, he put emphasis on the efforts made by ECLAC to calculate that cost in areas such as extreme poverty. In that respect, he drew attention to the role played by household surveys and noted the need to increase their frequency and to improve social indicators so as to be able to investigate the living conditions of the population, which were at present characterized by dissatisfaction and violence in large conglomerate.

12. He attached great importance to the adoption of new technologies to accelerate the development of statistics. In that connection, he said he thought it would be possible to make great

progress by drawing upon the advances made in computation and teleprocessing. To do so, it was vital to promote close co-operation with the developed countries as well as among the countries of the region. At regional level, ECLAC had a data bank which was perhaps the most complete bank of its kind in terms of macroeconomic statistics and was of course available for use by governments.

13. He ended his statement by saying again how pleased he was that the headquarters of the Commission was for the second time being used as the meeting place of the Directors of Statistics of the Americas. At the same time, he assured the participants that ECLAC was entirely willing to continue offering its technical expertise and the use of its facilities for such meetings, which he considered to be of the greatest value to the statistical development of the countries of the region.

14. After associating himself with the cordial words of welcome addressed to the participants by the Executive Secretary, the Chief of the Statistics and Projections Division, Mr. Pedro Sáinz, noted that during the period 1985-1986 consideration had been given to the approach taken in connection with statistical activities and regional co-operation in statistics, the result being the convening of the meeting of Directors of Statistics of the Americas in September 1987. Both that meeting and the current meeting had been carried out in close relationship with the Executive Committee of the Inter-American Statistical Conference (COM/CIE) in an effort to co-ordinate statistical activities in a period of severe financial restriction and to avoid duplication of effort.

15. Both meetings had been conceived in terms of a new style of operation in that both of them shared the following general objectives: first, the adoption of decisions centered around regional and international co-operation in statistics and consideration of a small number of items of general interest, and secondly the promotion of a considerable number of technical meetings at which experts could examine substantive items and move forward in the co-ordination of new activities.

16. That approach had given rise to tremendous vitality. In one of the most difficult moments, when the crisis in the public sector had in the majority of cases necessitated a reduction in resources for statistical activities, it had been possible to co-operate in a number of activities, action had been undertaken to channel the overall demand for external resources and the number of new proposals for co-operation had increased. Moreover, countries had begun to share responsibilities with international bodies and had even elicited co-operation from a large enterprise in the private sector. In short, a simple, austere method of work had been created, which not only had shown great potential but had also lent prestige to the statistical offices of the

countries of the region, which, in his opinion, were now viewed with greater respect.

17. Efforts to overcome the crisis by using new methodologies, acting with greater efficiency and stepping up regional co-operation had borne their fruit. In that respect, he said he could not refrain from mentioning the recognition given to the region when for the first time a Latin American, Mr. Luis Beccaria, had been named as President of the United Nations Statistical Commission.

18. Referring to the agenda of the meeting, he distinguished between the items by classifying them in three areas. The first category contained items of an institutional nature, which covered the participation of countries in CIE, activities involving co-operation, and the organization of statistical activities at national level. Some of those items were concerned with substantive issues and others with matters of policy. The second category contained items on central issues relating to statistical operations, such as population and housing censuses (in which work had been done in close co-ordination with CELADE); economic censuses, which were indispensable if a good system of national accounts was to be created and operations in connection with short-term indicators and statistics on the external sector. The third category of items covered areas requiring a special effort such as the matter of the absorption of recent progress in technology, the dissemination of statistics in such a way as to link producers to users and the treatment of social indicators derived from administrative registers in general and household surveys in particular.

19. He ended his statement by noting that at the meeting the Directors would be embarking on two tasks of a general nature. First they would be giving detailed consideration to the programmes under execution and second they would be formulating a realistic programme of activities for the coming years. In connection with the second task, he drew attention to the scarcity of financial resources while at the same time noting the support received from some developed countries and international bodies and the willingness they had expressed to continue their collaboration provided the accomplishment of the objectives proposed was treated seriously. Finally, he wished the participants a happy stay in Chile during their time in the country.

II. SUMMARY OF THE DEBATES

Report on the participation of Latin America and the Caribbean in the twenty-fifth session of the United Nations Statistical Commission

20. The representative of Argentina had the task of introducing the report on the participation of Latin America and the Caribbean in the twenty-fifth session of the United Nations Statistical Commission. In carrying out this assignment, he first reported that the region had been represented by six countries. He then noted that the work of the Commission had consisted in examining the progress made in connection with the tasks assigned at the previous session, the consideration of special issues and the discussion of the programme of work of the United Nations Statistical Office (UNSO).

21. With regard to the special issues mentioned above, he drew attention in particular to the co-ordination of international activities in statistics, especially in respect of the improvement of the operations embarked upon to co-ordinate the work of international agencies specializing in tasks relating to statistics. He also drew attention to the progress made in the centralization of requests for information submitted by UNSO to the Statistical Offices of the countries of the region.

22. Other special issues included the adoption of the third revision of the International Standard Industrial Classification of all Economic Activities (ISIC), the provisional approval given to the Central Products Classification (CPC) and the revision of the International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE). In the case of the latter classification, he pointed out that the International Labor Organization (ILO) was the specialized agency responsible and that, owing to budgetary restrictions, it had decided to establish networks of volunteers who would be responsible for the dissemination of comments made on the document introduced by ILO at the twenty-fifth session of the Commission. In that respect, he drew attention to the need for countries in the region to become involved in the matter of status in employment and asked ECLAC to play the role of co-ordinator between ILO and the countries of the region.

23. He also drew attention to the progress made in the work of revising the System of National Accounts (SNA). In that connection, he informed the participants that at the meeting of the Working Group of the United Nations Statistical Commission held recently at Geneva, consideration had been given to the work of the Commission and doubts had been expressed concerning the accomplishment of the programme of revision, in which it had been established that the revised System of National Accounts should be completed and ready for final adoption in February 1991. On

that occasion, the regional commissions had been asked not to prolong the stages of revision. Mention had also been made of the advisability of countries' noting misgivings expressed by users for submission to regional meetings called for that purpose. It had also been suggested that in the task of revising the final version of the System of National Accounts, the regional commissions shall adopt a uniform procedure for presenting observations so that useful suggestions could easily be incorporated into the final version.

24. He laid stress on the work carried out in connection with statistics on services, including the establishment of a group of experts (the Voorburg Group), and drew attention to the support provided by Canada for the performance of those tasks.

25. He went on to refer to the agenda for the next session of the Commission, which included some items of priority for the region, such as the relationship between vital statistics and registry offices and the whole subject of human settlements statistics. In connection with technical co-operation, he noted the need to strengthen the programme to develop national capacity for conducting household surveys as a means of supporting the analysis of the social costs of adjustment and the study on the measurement of the standard of living of the population. He also stressed the need to assess the United Nations industrial statistics programme of 1983 with a view to issuing a report which provided a foundation for the preparation of international recommendations in the future.

26. As for the forthcoming session of the Commission, he said he thought it was important that its agenda should include an item on training in administration and management of national statistical offices. He then reported that a draft resolution was being prepared for submission to the United Nations Economic and Social Council on mechanisms for strengthening co-ordinated activities carried out by international agencies to obtain information from countries.

27. Opening the item under consideration to debate, the Chief of the ECLAC Statistics and Projections Division pointed out that the importance of the Commission lay in the broad coverage it gave to the questions with which it dealt, such as revising the international systems of classification, proposing standards in diverse areas and seeking mechanisms for regional co-operation and co-ordination. Because of the scope of the Commission's activities, he felt that it should play the role of a forum in which countries could make known their desires as regarded statistics, and for that reason he said he considered it of the utmost importance to provide firm support for those countries who represented the region in the Statistical Commission.

28. The representative of Argentina drew attention to the growing importance which UNSO attached to regional groups, which was reflected in an increased capacity to exercise influence in connection with basic statistical issues. He also stressed the need for countries to take advantage of the mechanisms of participation now open to them in order to benefit from the statistical activities it had been agreed to strengthen or undertake.

29. Finally, the representative of Canada acknowledged the recognition given to the work of the representative of Argentina as reflected in his nomination as Chairman of the Commission. He also commended the effort made to produce a draft agenda for the next session with plenty of time to spare. He did, however, feel that an item on the organization of statistics should be added to the agenda. Finally, he laid particular stress on the importance which should be attached to the regional commissions in technical groups responsible for considering and taking decisions on matters relating to statistics.

Progress report on the Project for support to activities
related to the design and preparation of the 1990
round of population censuses

30. A representative of ECLAC reported on the progress of the Project for support to activities related to the design and preparation of the 1990 round of population censuses. He began by briefly describing how the project had come about and underscored the role played by the Directors of Statistics of the Americas in its development. He went on to say that the primary objective of the project was to provide support to the countries of the region in carrying out the 1990 round of censuses by fostering the exchange and dissemination of experiences in that field and the establishment of links among the Latin American countries in the area of technical co-operation. To that end, the Directors had selected eight priority activities, each of which was to include a seminar on the topic in question. In addition, technical co-operation missions to those countries having the most experience in the relevant field had been planned with a view to providing advisory assistance to countries requesting such support.

31. The seminars corresponding to five of the eight activities had already taken place. Those seminars had dealt with the following topics: the administrative organization and strategy of a census (Lima, Peru, October 1988), cartography (San José, Costa Rica, November 1988), the content and design of census forms (Rio de Janeiro, May 1989), the use of sampling in preparing and utilizing census information (Buenos Aires, April 1989), and the use of computer systems to provide users with

access to census information (ECLAC headquarters in Santiago, September 1989).

32. Upon evaluating the above-mentioned seminars, ECLAC had found them to be highly productive. It based its conclusion on the following elements: the excellent way in which those events had been organized by their host countries; the large number of countries represented at the seminars; and the fact that all of them had concluded with the approval of a preliminary report at their closing session and had subsequently distributed a final report to the countries' national statistical offices. The ECLAC representative then provided a brief summary of the seminars' most important conclusions and recommendations.

33. In closing, he referred to the difficulties standing in the way of the implementation of the horizontal technical co-operation activities provided for by the project. The main problem stemmed from the effects of the general financial crisis on the countries' public budgets and, specifically, on their allocations for statistical activities. As a result, despite the interest shown by the countries in obtaining such co-operation, the necessary funds had not been allocated for the daily subsistence allowances of the experts who were to carry out the missions. Additional thought therefore needed to be given to those project activities, and the present meeting of the Directors of Statistics was the most appropriate forum for the adoption of a decision on the matter.

34. The Chief of the Statistics and Projections Division of ECLAC stressed that the most vital aspect of the project seminars had been the technical meetings attended by specialists whose work was directly concerned with the topic, as well as the large number of documents that had been produced and the preparation of their final reports. In that connection he reported that all of the work done at the technical meetings had been duly documented in order to facilitate subsequent research projects.

35. As for the problem which had arisen in respect of the project's horizontal co-operation activities, he observed that although some countries had requested advisory assistance missions, when the time had come to set their priorities they had been unable to solve the problem of how to finance the experts' daily subsistence allowances. In the light of those circumstances, he suggested that the meeting should discuss three options regarding the use of the project funds available for the execution of such missions: a) to reduce the number of advisory missions and finance the daily subsistence expenses of the experts, b) to reassign the funds to the preparation of technical documents by special consultants, and c) to use the funds for different activities.

36. A decision was reached to endorse the first option proposed by the Chief of the ECLAC Statistics and Projections Division based on the view that it was in keeping with the spirit of the project activities as they had originally been programmed. Accordingly, the meeting participants asked the Chairman of COM/CIE to contact UNFPA in order to request that the unused funds should be reprogrammed in accordance with that decision.

37. The Director of CIENES then presented that organization's training programme for 1990-1991 to the Directors of Statistics, noting that the courses of a broader scope provided for therein would complement the work done at the seminars.

38. The representative of Dominica requested the technical documents presented at the seminars, if possible in English, and observed that the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) was preparing some quite similar workshops which would be held in Antigua and in Trinidad and Tobago.

39. The representative of Peru underscored the benefits accruing to countries hosting such seminars. He also felt, however, that the budgetary and sociopolitical problems besetting the countries made it necessary for them to re-think their census strategies.

40. The Director of CELADE explained that his organization's main objective was to collaborate with the governments in designing and developing social development policies and strategies which would have a direct impact on the well-being of the population. One crucial factor in that undertaking was the preparation of sociodemographic analyses which would provide a sound basis for such policies. Those demographic studies were conducted in conjunction with the countries concerned and were geared to their differing needs and policy approaches, such as, for example, the present tendency to decentralize social policies. The usefulness of the 1990 round of censuses in that connection would go beyond the scope of analyses at the national level since techniques that had only recently become available would also permit the census data to be employed in subregional analyses or for studies of subpopulations in general. CELADE stood ready to collaborate with the governments in advisory assistance missions relating to the upcoming census round. In that regard, it would be helpful if the countries would advise CELADE as to the nature of their future needs as early as possible so that the use of the limited resources that were available could be programmed more efficiently.

41. A representative of CELADE noted that the Centre had a great deal of experience in the field of population censuses and, in that regard mentioned the work involved in various stages of the census process, such as the design of the census form, the design of tabulations, the processing of the data and the analysis of the results. Its experience in the field had been gained in the

course of the assistance provided by its experts to a number of countries in the region during various census rounds since the 1960s. In regard to substantive matters, CELADE had collaborated in the inclusion of questions on the forms which had made it possible to study such demographic variables as mortality, fertility and international migration. With respect to the processing of census data, he mentioned the advisory services provided by CELADE during the stages of data entry, checking and tabulation, which had included adapting questionnaires for data entry purposes, selecting suitable software packages and training users to handle those packages. CELADE had also been working in the field of decentralization and the study of small areas; its activities in that connection had included developing tools for the retrieval of information from data bases by microcomputer and software packages for preparing population projections for such areas.

Progress report on the Regional Programme
for Population and Housing Censuses

42. The representative of the Organization of American States (OAS) opened the discussion of this topic by explaining that pursuant to resolution CIE/RES-1 (IX-86) of October 1987, CIENES had drawn up a form concerning needs for and offers of horizontal technical assistance in the preparation and taking of censuses and had forwarded that form to the directors of the national statistical offices of the countries of the region. On the basis of the responses received from the 11 countries which had completed this form, 25 requests for technical assistance and 24 offers of such assistance in various fields had been identified. Then, in May 1988, the Directors of Statistics had been sent a summary of those needs and offers, together with other documents prepared by CIENES, so that the necessary arrangements for the provision of OAS assistance in financing the travel costs entailed by horizontal co-operation activities might be initiated. However, only two properly completed applications had been received between August and October 1988.

43. Although the severe financial difficulties of the OAS Secretariat had prevented it from providing the assistance requested during 1988, it was important, as had been announced earlier at the seventh meeting of COM/CIE in New York in February 1989, that applications for horizontal co-operation should be submitted soon so that the funds programmed for the present year might be utilized.

44. The representative of Costa Rica emphasized the importance of this type of activity and made reference to the horizontal co-operation that had taken place between Costa Rica and Honduras, which had been of great benefit to both countries. With respect to the question which had arisen regarding such co-operation, she

agreed that the most suitable option was to reduce the number of technical assistance missions and to finance the daily subsistence allowances of the experts assigned to carry out horizontal co-operation activities in carefully selected priority fields.

45. The participants agreed to ask the Chairman of COM/CIE to approach the Secretary General of the OAS with a request that the as yet unused funds allocated for 1989 also be reprogrammed, that the scope of the items to which such funds were assignable be broadened, and that the institutional restrictions applying to their use be reduced.

Progress report on the Project on statistics for the
development of Latin America and the Caribbean

46. A representative of ECLAC began his presentation of the above topic by pointing out the fact that the activities carried out under the project on statistics for development had actually commenced prior to the meeting of the Directors of Statistics of the Americas held in Santiago, Chile, in September 1987. In describing the origin and objectives of the project, he drew attention to the close contact that had been established with the activities of the Statistical Computing Project, phase 2 (SCP-2), and with other countries at the forefront of the field such as Canada, Sweden, the United States and Spain. The project was receiving a continuous flow of feedback in respect of the advances made in those centres, which had rapidly been communicated to the countries of the region.

47. All the systems provided for by the project had been installed at ECLAC as scheduled, and the seminars which had been planned had been carried out in a fully satisfactory manner. In that regard, he made special mention of the seminar held in Rio de Janeiro, where the joint effort mounted by the host country and ECLAC with the co-operation of the firm IBM-Brazil had been highly successful. As a result, a system of work had been devised in which the governments, international bodies and the above-mentioned private firm had all taken part. In view of its success, the same organizational scheme would be used at the forthcoming seminar scheduled for November in Mexico, in which the Institute of Statistics, Geography and Information Science of Mexico (INEGI), the firm IBM-Mexico and ECLAC would participate.

48. As part of the spirit of shared effort characterizing the execution of the project, Brazil had given Argentina, Uruguay and Venezuela access to the assistance of a Canadian expert who was advising the Brazilian Geographical and Statistical Institute (IBGE) in the use of the RAPID system and its interfaces. In his opinion, this form of co-operation was most appropriate in cases where groups of countries had decided to use the same systems.

Along those lines, arrangements were being made for the signing of a co-operation agreement by Argentina and Brazil under which the various aspects involved in the computer processing of statistical data would be addressed. The two countries had requested that ECLAC join in the undertaking in order to pave the way for the participation of the other countries of the region as well.

49. Technical assistance had been assigned top priority ever since the last quarter of 1988 and, as a result, by the end of 1989 approximately 20 missions would have been conducted in 15 countries of the region. Thanks to those missions, systems could be set up that were in keeping with the resources available to the countries concerned.

50. In discussing the technical and administrative evaluation of the project activities, he reported that at its meeting in Santiago, Chile, in October 1988 the tripartite commission had reached the conclusion that the project was meeting its objectives more than amply. At the request of the commission, in May 1989 ECLAC had proposed to UNDP that the project should be extended for another two years (1990-1991). In line with that proposal, additional topics had been incorporated, such as the use of microcomputers in processing statistical data and the computer-aided dissemination of such data. For his part, the Chairman of COM/CIE had, at the request of the Directors of Statistics of the Americas, sent a letter to the UNDP Regional Bureau Director in June of that year supporting the extension proposed by ECLAC. The UNDP reply to that letter indicated that there was little chance that the financing for the project would be extended but that, if it were, the contributions would be substantially lower than those requested.

51. In view of the fact that what could be regarded as the project's first phase was drawing to a close at year's end, the representative of ECLAC presented a preliminary evaluation of the project from the standpoint of the Commission. In so doing, he underscored the following points: a) the seminars provided a valuable opportunity for an exchange of experiences among the countries of the region, as well as being an ideal vehicle for training the countries' experts and bringing them up-to-date on new developments in the relevant fields; b) workshops such as the one held in Rio de Janeiro by IBGE on the RAPID system were the most suitable means by which groups of countries could study specific topics; c) in the field of horizontal co-operation, the work initiated by Argentina and Brazil provided concrete evidence of the feasibility of such activities; and d) in the coming years priority should be given to activities relating to the screening of data, the management of data bases and computer-aided dissemination.

52. With respect to the seminar on user access to census information, which was held in Santiago, Chile, from 12 to 15 September 1989 as part of the project on support for the 1990 census round, he reported that the papers presented on that occasion had proved to be extremely valuable and of great use in arriving at the following conclusions and recommendations: a) the use of data-base techniques should begin at the very outset of the stage of data utilization; b) strategies for decentralizing data bases should provide for a division of the universe in question which did not involve replication of the data, providing the regulations and conditions in a country permitted the data to be accessed from regional centres either by teleprocessing or through the use of appropriate services; c) on-line access to census data should be furnished only if privacy and the confidentiality of the statistics were assured; d) the creation of meta-data systems to ensure the proper administration, utilization and dissemination of census data was essential; e) each census project should have an office devoted to policies, strategies and techniques of computer-aided dissemination; f) publications would continue to be the most suitable medium for multi-purpose dissemination, provided that the information supplied was up-to-date and that the data presented were confined, in terms of quantity, to their essential minimum; and g) magnetic or optical media such as CD-ROM should be used to disseminate more detailed data and data having a broader coverage.

53. In closing, the representative of ECLAC announced that it had been agreed that working groups would be formed to facilitate and pool efforts in the following areas: a) the use of REDATAM, b) data bases, c) computer-aided dissemination, and d) meta-data systems. Chile would address item a) and Brazil would focus on item d); both of those countries would present preliminary organizational and operational plans at the seminar that was to take place in Mexico in November.

54. The representative of Brazil discussed the horizontal co-operation activities being conducted by Brazil and Argentina in that field. One of the most important activities to be carried out during the coming year was a seminar on data screening, which would be held in February 1990. The purpose of the seminar, which was to be financed by the World Bank, would be to provide training for experts of the region. Specialists from Canada, the United States, Sweden and other as yet unspecified countries would make contributions to that event.

55. The representative of Argentina expressed support for the proposal made by ECLAC to extend the duration and subject-area coverage of project RLA/87/001 and emphasized the importance to the countries of the development and dissemination of packages for handling statistical data. He went on to observe that the horizontal co-operation taking place between his country and

Brazil constituted a core activity into which other countries in the region could be integrated. If they were to join in this effort, ECLAC could participate as a co-ordinator and could give the countries the benefit of the substantive experience it had gained in the course of the project under discussion.

56. The representative of Costa Rica stated that her country needed to incorporate the new systems being utilized by the project in order to improve upon the techniques it currently employed, which she felt were obsolete. To that end it would require the proper technical assistance, particularly in respect of the activities entailed by the forthcoming population and housing census. Accordingly, Costa Rica also supported the extension of the project as proposed to UNDP by ECLAC.

57. The Chief of the ECLAC Statistics and Projections Division highlighted the project's great importance, noting that it had achieved concrete results with the installation of various systems in a number of countries while at the same time providing direct technical assistance through its advisory missions. He also placed special emphasis on the multiplier effect of the project activities as manifested in the co-operation agreements reached among the countries during the year. He described it as a basic project in that it furnished resources for meeting the needs of other activities which called for the computer processing of statistical data. The project had been particularly concerned with the needs of the less developed countries in that regard, as was attested to by the types and number of priority missions sent to such countries.

58. The participants decided to request the Chairman of COM/CIE to contact the UNDP Administrator for Latin America once again and to bring the priority which the countries assigned to the project to his attention in very clear terms, pointing out that little importance seemed to be attached to statistical activities and reaffirming the need to support the project. They also agreed to request that he consider the possibility of traveling to New York in order to communicate the views of the Directors in person. In addition, the Directors of Statistics were asked to contact the UNDP Resident Representatives in their respective countries in order to make them aware of the meeting participants' interest in securing the approval of the ECLAC proposal to extend the project.

Dissemination of statistical information

59. An ECLAC consultant opened the discussion of this topic by explaining that he had prepared an update and follow-up on the items considered at the preceding meeting of the Directors of Statistics in accordance with their instructions in connection with their decision to include an item on the dissemination of

statistics on the agenda of the present meeting. He then proceeded to classify the dissemination of statistical data in terms of goods, services and equipment infrastructure.

60. Following the structure of reference document No. 15, he discussed the use of publications in relation to the applications of the new Standard Generalized Markup Language (SGML) for the preparation of documents. He mentioned the appearance of the new digital-audio tapes (DAT) and portable hard disks and their uses, and then went on to discuss recent advances in diskette storage capacity of which was reaching the remarkable level of 50 million characters. He also gave a presentation on the development and use of WORM (Write Once Read Many) disks, optical magnetic disks and CD-ROM or compact disks.

61. The consultant then briefly described the progress made in compact disks, which were currently capable of storing sound, images, graphics, text, data, software, etc.

62. With respect to new techniques for combined access to different data bases, he discussed what was known as Hypertext Software. From the standpoint of data bases, the most important element was the use of new standardized languages (SQL) for directing on-line queries to such bases. He added that what were known as "gateway" units made it possible to centralize access to various data bases in such a way that the user need not learn different protocols.

63. Finally, the consultant mentioned the use of interactive audiotex and voice recognition as the latest and most sophisticated techniques in the field of telephonic inquiry responses (SRT). In concluding his presentation, he said that the idea of using multimedia dissemination strategies continued to be a valid approach and that publications based on SGML languages, CD-ROMs and SRT services would offer the best means of dissemination in the near future.

64. One of the representatives of Mexico observed that the technology currently available for the dissemination of data was undoubtedly highly varied and powerful. However, at least in the case of his own country, the level of user know-how and the computer equipment available to users did not yet permit them to make use of those technical advances. By way of example, he mentioned that in Mexico data were disseminated by means of diskettes and publications and that, surprisingly enough, a large part of the demand was for the latter. Thus, he felt that the users' technical profile should be analysed prior to the adoption of a data dissemination technology. Nonetheless, thought was indeed being given to using sophisticated CD-ROM support technology for the dissemination of Mexico's census data.

65. The representative of Uruguay explained that in her country household survey data were customarily disseminated by diskette. That had been the practice with various governmental and private institutions, as well as with international organizations such as ECLAC. She was concerned, however, by the possibility that such information could be copied illegally (given the fact that the data were supplied to private organizations for a fee) due to the ease with which the data could be transcribed. Other participants were of the opinion that no foolproof safeguards existed in that respect; indeed, even those hazardous techniques involving the introduction of a virus did not provide real protection.

66. The representative of Peru raised the possibility of establishing an interconnection among the countries so that they might have mutual access to certain types of information, such as data on short-term economic phenomena. He went on to tell the participants about an instance in which information on other Latin American economies had been sought on behalf of a ministry in his country; it had not, however, proved possible to achieve that relatively unambitious objective due to the lack of easily accessible sources of information.

67. The representative of Chile, for his part, remarked upon the high fees charged to users for large volumes of information when the data were supplied in traditional magnetic forms such as diskettes. He cited family budget surveys by way of example and raised the question as to how such costs might be minimized. In that connection, he suggested that when formulating policies concerning the dissemination of information, it would be advisable to provide for the differential treatment of users. Such policies should be supplemented by multimedia strategies which would permit different prices to be charged.

68. In commenting upon his country's policies on statistical dissemination, the representative of Venezuela said that information of public interest was made known through mass media such as newspapers, magazines, radio and television. In his view it was of the utmost importance for ECLAC to prepare a practical manual which would provide guidance to the national statistical offices of the countries of the region regarding the adoption of dissemination strategies and policies.

69. A representative of ECLAC felt that it would be desirable for major data-gathering centres, such as ECLAC itself, to computerize a minimum of information. As regarded national statistical offices' need for information on other Latin American countries, he suggested that a first step might be to set up a pilot project involving just a few countries which would deal with economic data. Under such a project a data bank might be established at ECLAC which would contain information furnished by

the countries' statistical units and whose use would initially be restricted to those same countries.

70. The representative of Colombia drew attention to the fact that the available information was being underutilized, especially when one considered the size of the investments required for its production. He therefore felt that it was very important to promote its use by means of policy measures which would not necessarily entail charges for such services. The countries' national statistical offices should play a central role in channeling information to users.

71. For his part, the representative of the Secretariat of the Board of the Cartagena Agreement (JUNAC) informed the participants that consideration was being given to the interconnection of the data transmission networks of Peru, Colombia and Venezuela and, at a later stage, of Bolivia and Ecuador. In that regard he drew attention to the potential of the JUNAC data banks and the relatively small extent to which they were being utilized.

72. The Directors of Statistics requested that ECLAC continue its studies on the subject and that if possible it prepare an updated version of the document under consideration for presentation at a future meeting of the Directors.

Planning of data collection and processing activities

73. A representative of Mexico gave a presentation on the basic aspects entailed in the planning of data collection and processing activities designed to increase the speed of data compilation. Two of the main factors which he discussed were the decentralization of such activities and personnel training. Decentralization was a slow process which should be carried out gradually. In the early stages, the activities of regional offices had to be carefully supervised; then, as time passed, they could be assigned greater and greater responsibilities, always bearing in mind, however, that the guidelines of the national information system were established by the central offices.

74. The representative went on to say that training played a fundamental role in making decentralization feasible. He added that training should if possible be undertaken on a joint basis so as to involve both the personnel of the various central and regional statistical offices and the staff of other information-generating units. One means of accomplishing this was through co-operation agreements among the bodies concerned. Another very important factor in producing information swiftly was the formation of working groups at the very start of a project so

that specialists in statistics and information sciences could pool their efforts.

75. In general, the comments made by participants from various countries concerned the decentralization of statistical services and, in particular, two different aspects of that process: the production of statistics and electronic information processing. In regard to the generation of statistics, it was noted that due to the growth and development of the field, it had become necessary to rationalize such activities by decentralizing their operational components while maintaining the centralization of technical and administrative functions. Some aspects of experiences with that process in Argentina, Colombia and Mexico were also mentioned, and it was observed that the federal structure of Argentina's and Mexico's political and administrative systems had expedited the process. Another point which was made was that the decentralization process also had to be carried out at the sectoral level through the various ministries and other public and private bodies.

76. Insofar as electronic information processing was concerned, it had been necessary to complete a number of different stages in order to carry forward its decentralization, such as those of selecting suitable equipment and computer systems, training personnel in their use, designing networks to link up the various operational centres, and assessing the technical feasibility of satellite connections or other means of communication.

77. In commenting upon the subject of the speed of information delivery, the representative of Guatemala said that in some cases the authorities failed to use the data provided by statistical offices whose compilation represented a great deal of time and effort. Such situations called for a training programme for users as well as compilers of statistics. In that connection a representative of ECLAC noted that the publication of up-to-date periodic reports in September and December of each year on trends in the Latin American economies was helping to create an awareness of the need for information and to convince senior personnel of the importance of providing support to statistical production units.

Seminar on economic censuses and registration of economic units

78. The representative of Uruguay introduced the item on economic censuses and register of economic units, reminding the participants that at the previous meeting of Directors of Statistics of the Americas, the importance of that question had been discussed in detail. She referred in particular to the inequality of such statistics by comparison with statistics related to the short-term economic situation, pointing out that statistics of the latter kind were very attractive for

governments which preferred to allocate the few resources available to them. In Uruguay great importance was attached to economic censuses since they provided information on the structure of certain economic activities while at the same time providing an up-to-date framework in which sample surveys could be conducted; in that connection she noted that at present economic censuses constituted the only valid base for surveys whose objective was to quantify and measure the performance of economic activity with no loss of representativeness and reliability.

79. In view of the problems which all Latin American countries experienced in that connection, the Government of Uruguay had been asked to convene a meeting on the question, which had been scheduled for October 1989. Unfortunately, not enough resources had been available to Uruguay to finance the many requests for support received, some of which had been referred to ECLAC. For that reason, it had been decided to raise the problem in the current meeting in the hope of finding a solution to it.

80. The representative of ECLAC told the participants that a questionnaire had been distributed to the countries with a view to the preparation of a document on the situation in the region in the field of economic censuses. Many replies had been received, and countries which had still not replied were asked to do so as quickly as possible so that the commitment entered into in that respect by ECLAC could be honored.

81. In those circumstances, the participants accepted the suggestion of the secretariat of the meeting that permission should be given to meet with each delegation directly in order to determine the feasibility of holding the meeting from 14 to 17 November on the understanding that the countries would bear the travel costs involved.

82. Having held the necessary consultations, the secretariat said it had been decided that all the delegations were in agreement with the new date proposed for the holding of the seminar and that four of them (those of Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia and Mexico) had undertaken to finance their participation in the manner suggested, whereas 10 other delegations (those of Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, Honduras, Panama, Peru, Spain and Venezuela) had indicated their willingness to finance the costs of travel, but their final reply had remained subject to the consultations which would necessarily have to be held in their countries.

83. Referring to the World Programme of Industrial Statistics, the representative of the United Nations Statistical Office (UNSO) drew attention to the importance of regional meetings as suitable forums for the formulation at international level of

recommendations on industrial statistics for submission to UNSO for its consideration.

84. In addition he said that in the preparations for the next round of the World Programme of Industrial Statistics, the United Nations had concentrated its efforts on the most comprehensive methodological material possible with the idea that countries could adapt it to their own particular needs. By way of example, he mentioned a master list which was classified by industrial users of the leading raw materials, energy inputs, primary and secondary commodities, industrial waste, etc. He also referred to the work carried out to establish links between Revisions 2 and 3 of ISIC, the revisions of the methodological handbooks on industrial production and employment indexes and the introduction of changes in the reference periods used in these indexes. Finally, he noted the desirability of holding seminars and training workshops and said that UNSO would be willing to make advisory assistance from its regional experts available to the countries in the industrial statistics programme.

Report on the regional seminar on the co-ordination
of national statistics

85. The representative of Argentina summarized the report on the regional seminar on the co-ordination of national statistics held in Buenos Aires in July 1988, which had been attended by representatives of the majority of countries of the region and of some developed countries and international bodies. Although the agenda prepared for the occasion covered a selection of important issues, co-ordination of national statistics was a very broad field, whose scope was difficult to define in a way which was acceptable to all countries.

86. He then listed the main points debated on that occasion in connection with the structure and organization of the statistical process in the countries of the region, noting that structure and function were closely related with the general way in which the administration of a country was organized and said that for that reason it had been recommended that countries should, as soon as possible, tackle the establishment and mode of operation of a council of statistics and the formulation and periodic evaluation of national statistical plans and programmes.

87. With regard to policies, plans and programmes, he stressed that much more attention had been given to the process of programming than to programmes as such and that although the lack of experience of national statistical offices with regard to programming techniques had been recognized, it had been proposed that an inventory of basic regional statistics should be prepared as a tool not only for countries which had not yet established

such as inventory but also for use in the formulation of plans and programmes in any country of the region.

88. Another matter considered had been the role played by conceptual frameworks in the production and co-ordination of statistics, especially economic statistics, with reference made to the advantage of such information's being incorporated in a complete conceptual framework which was consistent with the United Nations System of National Accounts. In that connection, he said there had been a consensus concerning the advisability of national statistical offices preparing the national accounts for their country or at least operating in close co-ordination with whatever offices did in fact prepare them. Concerning the use of instruments of co-ordination, it had been recognized that in order to ensure the comparability and utility of statistical data, classifications, codes and definitions should be the same as those used in the national statistical system.

89. As for co-ordination with international bodies, agreement had been reached on the importance of the participation of country representatives in statistical meetings convened by specialized international agencies. Finally, on the question of the protection of the confidentiality of data, he pointed out that it was necessary for national statistical offices to make a concerted effort to disseminate information on their activities to safeguard statistical secrets.

90. The representative of Colombia noted the necessity of studying the impact of the new information technologies on the structure of national statistical systems, especially in light of the possibility of establishing statistical data banks which could in the first place be supplied through channels which were the same for the diverse entities generating information and secondly could be consulted by their users through single access points which made it unnecessary to have recourse to many institutions to obtain information of a varied nature.

91. The representative of Peru said he considered it essential to propose mechanisms and make recommendations which would allow national governments to become aware of the importance of consolidating their national statistical system in order to make timely and reliable statistics available for use in the development process and in the taking of decisions. The attainment of that goal meant that national statistical offices should be given the status and the necessary resources needed to carry out the activities planned in a context of permanent governmental support.

92. The representative of Costa Rica said that, because of the small size of his country, it had not been necessary to embark on a process of decentralizing the statistical system and that the final information derived from demographic, agricultural and

households survey data was diffused throughout the region once the centralized process of processing it had been completed.

93. The representative of Guatemala said he supported the recommendation made by the representative of Peru regarding the need to promote at international level the importance and utility of statistics as a guideline for economic and social policies adopted by governments. The necessary awareness campaign should be supported at the highest governmental levels in such a way that the political component of statistical activities could make a significant contribution to furthering the work of national statistical offices and making them more dynamic.

94. Finally, the representative of ECLAC reiterated the importance of national statistical systems which contributed consistency and efficiency to the national effort in this field. With regard to user access to information, he said ECLAC was willing to co-operate in this field provided a mechanism could be found for including the topic in one of its programmes of work.

Priorities and procedures for the development of statistics
in a small island country of the Caribbean

95. The representative of Dominica addressed the meeting concerning the development of statistics in his country, saying that it illustrated the problems encountered by small Caribbean island countries. He then provided some information concerning the size of his country and its statistical office and institutional structure. Early in 1988 significant challenges had arisen, such as those of reducing the one-year lag in the countries foreign trade statistics and of building a system of economic indicators, including a consumer price index --tasks for which very few resources had been available. As from that time, emphasis had been placed on the development of human and computer resources, on the implementation of census and demographic programmes, on foreign trade statistics and on the carrying out of household surveys.

96. Finally, he noted that the main facts deduced concerning the development of statistics in small Caribbean countries included the importance of training and the need to improve communications and establish links both within the statistical office and between it and other public agencies with a view to building up relations based on close professional contact and on acceptance of the respectability of developing technical capacity in statistics.

Short-term indicators

97. The representative of Mexico introduced the topic of short-term indicators, informing the meeting that at the request of the Directors of Statistics of the Americas at their preceding meeting, the National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Information Sciences (INEGI) had conducted a survey in which countries reported on the availability of short-term indicators and such matters as periodicity, coverage, timeliness and the mechanisms used in processing and dissemination were covered. Since few countries had answered the questionnaire, recourse had been had to all the bibliographical information available in order to construct a table giving an approximation of the present situation, which figured as an annex to reference document No. 7 and contained 343 indicators relating to the points mentioned above. He asked the Directors to look over the annex and to dispatch the corrected version as soon as possible so that a description of the situation of the region with regard to short-term indicators could become available in the near future.

98. The representative of Peru commented on problems which arose in the calculation of short-term indicators, for consumer price index purposes in particular, in situations where inflation was high. He gave details concerning the procedures used in his country, the problems encountered, the effects of differential variations between controlled prices and free prices, the considerable time it took to readjust certain factors and the political effects of the results. He pointed out that Peru was working intensively in the field of short-term indicators and noted that a seminar would soon be convened in Lima, to which countries which had experienced high rates of inflation would be invited for the purpose of discussing alternatives to the procedures now in use. He made a document on short-term indicators available to the participants, explaining that in addition to quantitative findings, it also included information concerning the methodology used in calculating the indicators. He asked the ECLAC Secretariat to study the possibility of holding a seminar on the problems which arose in connection with statistical indicators in periods of high inflation, requesting that it be held, if possible, in Lima.

99. The representative of ECLAC reiterated that in periods of high inflation difficulties arose in many branches of statistics and noted that, in so far as the problem of national accounts was concerned, great importance had been attached to it in seminars recently organized by ECLAC. An attempt was being made to obtain financing for research in that connection. Finally, he observed that if a consensus were reached with regard to the creation of a data bank on short-term indicators for use by the national statistical offices of Latin America, the study prepared by Mexico would be of basic importance in defining the contents of such a bank. The representatives of the countries participating

in the meeting indicated their agreement with that suggestion and promised their countries' co-operation in the creation of a data bank on short-term indicators.

Activities of ECLAC in national accounts and the
organization of statistics

100. The representative of ECLAC delivered a short review of the activities of the Commission in the field of national accounts and the organization of statistics. He referred to ECLAC's systematic participation in the process reviewing the System of National Accounts (SNA), both in the discussion of the concepts and methodologies behind it and in gathering criteria and recommendations from countries on the subject. To further the discussion and elicit suggestions, two regional seminars had been organized in which the majority of the countries of the region had participated. ECLAC had been strengthening its role in the dissemination of information on the advances made in the process of revision as well as in studies carried out in that regard both by countries and by various international bodies. He drew attention to the support being provided by the National Institute of Statistics (INE) of Spain for the translation and publication in Spanish of the new System of National Accounts.

101. As for technical co-operation in national accounts, he referred to programmes in which ECLAC has been participating; in that respect, he mentioned projects underway or in the programming phase in Brazil, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Paraguay and Venezuela. He then referred to support provided in the organization and development of national statistical systems, drawing attention in particular to the co-operation furnished to international bodies and national statistical offices in the preparation of seminars on national efforts to co-ordinate statistics, on economic censuses and methods review, and in the maintenance of an exchange of documents with experts in statistics and statistical institutions in the countries of the region.

102. Finally, he gave information on the schedule of activities still pending within the framework of the SNA revision programme. With regard to the schedule of regional meetings for consideration of the new version of SNA, it had been suggested to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), that it defer until the second half of 1990 the Regional Seminar on National Accounts to be held in Rio de Janeiro, to consider the preliminary version of the document relating to the system, which had been planned for November 1989.

103. The representative of Argentina proposed that the seminar be held as soon as possible to allow its conclusions to reach the United Nations Statistical Commission on time for its meetings in

February 1991. The secretariat of the meeting welcomed that proposal and offered to make the necessary contacts with IBGE regarding the matter.

104. The representative of ECLAC reminded the participants that the seminar on the organization of statistics, which was to have been held in Bolivia, had been suspended since it had coincided with the change in government. The representative of Bolivia said in that connection that the commitment made in that regard would be respected and that his country was willing to organize the seminar. He suggested the first months in the second half of 1990 as a tentative date.

105. The representative of Guatemala noted that work was underway, with ECLAC support, to co-ordinate the efforts of institutions which led in the production of statistics. He added that the co-operation provided by ECLAC for strengthening Guatemala's system of national accounts had been channelled through two institutions --the Central Bank and the National Statistical Institute (INE). In the Central Bank, consideration was being given to the criteria and methodological procedures necessary for changing the base period of the SNA series. As for INE, it was working on the revision and application of methods to raise the quality of the quarterly and annual indexes of manufacturing production and on the consolidation of an information and public management system (SIGEP) now functioning in the secretariat of the National Economic Planning Council.

106. The representative of Venezuela informed the participants that in his country the finishing touches had been put to the plans for changing the SNA base year, which had called for an intensive effort, abundant resources and the participation of foreign professionals. He expressed interest in the possibility of holding a workshop on the change in the base year used for purposes of the national accounts and offered his country as the site of such a meeting.

107. The representative of Cuba said his country was taking macroeconomic measurements on the basis of the methods advocated by the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA). However, for a number of years progress had been shown in the preparation of global indicators in accordance with the methodology prescribed for the United Nations System of National Accounts, on the basis of data calculated in accordance with the Material Product System (MPS). In that respect, he said it was hoped to be able to perfect and increase the indicators with a view to their possible official publication once sufficient consistency had been acquired. His country was participating in a group of experts from developing countries which was responsible for revising the System of National Accounts. It also intended to continue working with the countries of the region by participating in training programmes, receiving advisory services

from international bodies and preparing studies for the establishment of bilateral comparisons with the countries of the region.

Co-ordination of international trade statistics

108. The representative of Canada said that in international trade the same flow of transactions was measured twice --by the exporting country and by the importing country with the result that in many cases the statistical measurement of trade had become a matter of dispute when one country's information differed from that recorded by its trading partners. The mistrust engendered by the presentation of different figures for a single operation both at national and at international level cast doubt on the statisticians of both countries if the data each of them provided could not be brought into harmony.

109. Canada and the United States had been working on that problem for over 15 years with a view to coming up with an appropriate criterion for the statistical measurement of their bilateral trade. After modes of operation leading to a substantial improvement in the harmonization of the measurements used in that area had been examined and put into practice, both countries had undertaken to i) accept the monthly figures on imports by the other country instead of its own export figures and simultaneously to put out a press release at the end of each quarter; ii) replace its breakdowns on exports by the other countries breakdowns on imports after holding discussions and consultations on the matter. The measure described was to go into effect by the end of 1990 at the latest.

110. The difficulties in coming to that agreement had related primarily to differences in definitions and concepts and to a few special items of trade. In connection with the latter, he referred to the processing of fish on the high seas, oil platforms beyond coastal limits, the identification of movements of free zones in border areas, the treatment of trade in electric and military equipment, purchases by tourists, containerization and temporary admissions. He stressed that the parties were called upon to make their practices more flexible since if they did not, it would be impossible to reach a solution.

111. In 1989 the United States had begun to use a harmonized system which had been adopted by Canada in 1988, which meant that for the first time both countries could structure their national codes on a common set of principles. Working on the basis of a set of common codes, both countries had continued to strive to bring their registers into harmony with each other in such a way that there would be greater co-ordination of detail than shown in their national systems of classifications. He said he felt that the process of harmonizing trade statistics should continue to

make progress by means of systematic comparison. In that connection he said that both the United States and Canada were willing to work together in establishing permanent bases of comparison with third party countries with a view to increased harmonization.

112. The representative of the United States said that in his country the Census Bureau was responsible for the compilation, processing, elaboration and publication of foreign trade statistics while the Customs Service collected the basic documentation used to compile the trade statistics, checked their accuracy and transmitted it to the Census Bureau. The Census Bureau was carrying out a number of tasks in conjunction with the Customs Service with a view to raising the quality of the statistical data produced. In that connection, he mentioned the effort to 1) reduce the overlap produced as a result of the time which elapsed between the registration of customs data and the registration of statistical data because of changes in the procedures for processing and transmitting and publishing data; ii) reduce the instances of failure to cover commercial transactions by establishing controls in the main ports of entry or exit of merchandise; iii) register trade in constant terms as from January 1990 in order to ensure that they did not reflect the effects of inflation or currency fluctuations; iv) provide users with new tools of classification based on information recorded in customs registers not previously used; v) collect data by computer to facilitate the preparation of more accurate reports and reduce paper work and vi) create a committee made up of representatives of the academic, financial, commercial and governmental sectors to improve foreign trade statistics at all stages of their production.

113. The representative of Argentina said the matter under discussion was highly important from the point of view of bilateral trade but called attention to the difficulties which stood in the way of the comparison of openings in national economies produced for taxes reasons. He also said that another matter which required special attention was the effect produced by time lags in the registration of merchandise shipments.

114. The representative of the United States said that within the harmonized system used by his country and Canada, they had kept the same position in the first six digits but that at a higher level of breakdown, problems arose which were gradually being solved as the result of a combined effort as were problems related to customs registers and monthly time lags. The representative of Mexico reported that a joint effort of the same kind was being made with the United States and that the results had begun to be put into practice at several customs posts located on the border.

115. The representative of the Latin American Integration Association (ALADI) mentioned a number of problems relevant to the item under consideration which had arisen in the countries members of ALADI. Some of those problems related to i) the fact that although the tariffs nomenclatures had a common base (NCCA, four digits), they differed in respect of the criteria for classification in the subpositions, titles and breakdown at product level; ii) the fact that countries used different commercial systems, which resulted in a time lag in respect of the time statistical data were registered; iii) differences in the treatment applied to temporary imports in different countries; iv) the fact that in general, customs documents did not meet statistical requirements and v) the failure to integrate submissions of foreign trade data.

116. He went on to make the following recommendations: i) the adoption by countries of the harmonized system at the level of six digits as a basis for their national merchandise tariffs; ii) the adoption of customs documents which gave comprehensive consideration to the requirements for statistical information and iii) the organization of meetings for customs agents and statisticians for the purpose of preparing a uniform customs document which satisfied both customs and statistical requirements.

117. The floor was then taken by a number of participants who stressed the need for improved co-ordination among customs authorities, whose registers should be designed primarily to meet the needs of tax authorities and agencies producing economic statistics. In that connection, it was reported that UNCTAD operated a programme on the collection of foreign trade statistics for relatively less well developed countries, which made it possible to mechanize customs systems with the needs relating to the production of economic statistics taken into account.

Household surveys

118. The representative of UNSO explained that the National Household Survey Capability Programme was a global technical co-operation programme in statistics which was being executed by the United Nations system, including those specialized agencies which required information in that connection. Thus, it was sponsored and financed jointly by the United Nations, UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA and the World Bank.

119. The Programme has been initiated in 1979, and at the end of 1988 its participants included thirty countries, five of them in the Latin American and Caribbean region. Income and expenditure surveys had predominated in the Programme, such surveys having been carried out in 22 countries. The emphasis laid on household

incomes and expenditure reflected the importance attached to those indicators in measuring a population's standard of living and in advancing social development in the participating countries. The plan of operation adopted in December 1988 called for another 15 countries to be incorporated in the programme in 1991.

120. As the number of countries in the Programme increased, efforts would be made to find and provide the external advisory services required to conduct projects formulated and adopted by governments or whose formulation and adoption were expected. In addition to national projects consideration was currently being given to the preparation of regional projects for small, geographically contiguous countries with similar characteristics and resource restrictions and without the capacity to put together and carry out household survey programmes on their own. A case in point was the Caribbean region, where the secretariat of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) was providing decisive support for a regional project. A draft of the project on the basis of which the countries concerned could receive technical assistance from groups of experts, was already available.

121. Finally, he remarked that another strategy adopted recently concerned the idea of incorporating elements linked to the National Household Survey Capability Programme of each country in projects relating to the population and housing censuses for 1990s. That strategy had been discussed with UNFPA and had received its support; its purpose was to salvage people working in the census exercise who disappeared during the period between one population census and another and use them in household survey programmes. By way of example, he referred to Panama as being a Latin American country in which trade-offs of that kind had been successfully made. One of the most gratifying tasks carried out under the Programme had been that of preparing a series of technical studies on various aspects of household surveys. He also named some other studies which were in various stages of preparation. In another connection, he reminded the participants that the United Nations was at present defining the goals of the fourth Development Decade and pointed out that household surveys were used exhaustively in evaluating and following up on that exercise.

122. The representative of Argentina proposed that the participants should agree to ask the International Labor Organization (ILO) to restore to the region the post of Regional Adviser in Household Surveys, in consideration, in particular, of the extension of the National Household Survey Capability Programme. In that respect, he mentioned the possibility of strengthening the Programme by means of horizontal co-operation as had been discussed at previous meetings. These proposals were strongly supported by a number of the country representatives present. In this same connection the representative of ECLAC

reminded the participants that owing to help received from a regional advisor, ECLAC had been able successfully to perform a number of activities relating to household surveys, including, for example, the execution of projects in Honduras and Costa Rica. The representatives of a number of countries agreed to ask ECLAC to transmit to the relevant international agencies the view of the Directors of Statistics that the post of Regional Adviser in Household Surveys should be restored to ECLAC.

Improving data quality through the redesign of household surveys

123. The representative of the United States expressed the view that a population census represented a good opportunity to raise the quality of the data collected in current household surveys in that it brought the sampling framework up-to-date. In addition, the concepts used in such surveys, the questionnaires relating to them and the methods employed in collecting and reprocessing data could be revised. In a case of each 10-year census, the information gathered on the distribution of population and housing units in a country was updated and could be used to redesign current household surveys.

124. In the United States seven surveys were to be redesigned on the basis of data from the 1990 census. Three of those surveys --the Current Population Survey (CPS), the Consumer Expenditure Survey (CES) and the Consumer Point of Purchase Survey (CPOPS) were sponsored by the Office of Labor Statistics. CPS provided monthly estimates of employment and unemployment, and the consumer price index was based on CES and CPOPS. Other surveys to be redesigned included the National Health Survey, the National Survey on Criminality, the American Housing Survey and the Survey on Incomes and Participation in Social Action Programmes. Those surveys provided estimates relating to health, victims of criminality, housing and income in respect of the population of the United States. They would be sponsored by the National Centre for Health Statistics, the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Census Bureau.

125. A redesign exercise provided a good opportunity to make changes in the design of a survey, to increase the coverage of minority populations in surveys and to improve data on subnational geographical areas, such as states. By way of example, he mentioned that in redesigning the national population survey in 1990, an effort would be made to explore the possibility of expanding the sample in order to obtain monthly data of sufficiently high quality on employment and unemployment in the majority of the states in the country.

126. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in the Executive Office of the President of the United States had established a

working group on redesign of household surveys, whose objective was to advise OMB on the redesign of the most important current household surveys to ensure that they met the needs of the organizations which sponsored them and of their users, were conducted in a timely manner and were cost-benefit efficient.

127. The redesign activities based on the 1990 census would result in a new design for the current population survey which would be carried out in October 1995, five and a half years after the reference date of the 1990 census. He stressed that the process of redesign was a long one and included the design of new questionnaires, the modernization of the processing system, the taking of a superimposed sample to evaluate the impact of the new questionnaire and procedures and other activities. However, if the surveys were not redesigned, changes in the population and in housing units reported in 1990 would not be reflected in the data obtained in the surveys and their quality would suffer.

128. The representative of Mexico said his country was working on a project in which census data were used to improve the surveys carried out in the country.

Technical co-operation in the field of statistics

129. The representative of Spain introduced the item on technical co-operation in the field of statistics by first of all noting Spain's long-standing links with the development of statistics in Latin America, making special mention of the role played by distinguished Spanish experts including Francisco Azorin and Enrique Cansado.

130. He went on to say that the co-operation extended by Spain took the form of courses, on-the-job training and technical support from experts. The courses held in Madrid had concentrated primarily on the samples used in household surveys and on national accounting. The fellowships granted had made it possible for many Latin American's with technical training to visit the National Statistical Institute (INE) of Spain. In that context he pointed out that the technical support given had been provided in response to requests made by countries and international bodies. New activities which could benefit from Spanish co-operation included activities in the field of foreign trade, the dissemination of statistics and research into poverty and the informal economy.

131. Finally, he gave information concerning the broad prospects which had opened up when Spain had been brought into the European Economic Community (EEC). In that connection he observed that the establishment of an EEC training centre in Luxembourg to co-ordinate the activities of other centres located in Paris, Madrid and Lisbon, would allow Spain to expand its co-operation

with Spanish-speaking America in the field of training, research and development studies. In conclusion, he urged the Directors to report as soon as possible on their priorities in respect of technical co-operation provided by Spain in the manner described above.

Electronic questionnaire project

132. The representative of CIENES informed the participants that the electronic questionnaire project had begun as a consequence of a study on the timeliness and quality of statistical data collected through personal interviews carried out in the course of conducting censuses and surveys. The finding of that study was that the data collected were unsatisfactory in terms of both timeliness and quality. The use of electronic questionnaires --a method which did not eliminate the need for an interviewer but rather provided help for him in his task, had been adopted as an attractive solution. The fact that data could be collected on a magnetic computer medium offered the possibility of evaluating and correcting them during the interview so that eventually they could be transmitted direct to a central computer facility, seemed to him to connote a very satisfactory solution.

133. When the project had been designed, the idea had been to carry out a pilot experiment to evaluate its operation, to design appropriate hardware and software for it and to estimate the costs of their manufacture and use. However no final conclusions had as yet been reached concerning the best ways in which the countries of the region could share in its use and in the costs which its use would entail. After inviting the representatives to apply to CIENES in respect of any questions they might have in connection with electronic questionnaires, he asked the representative of Chile to describe the experiment carried out by his country under an agreement drawn up between INE and CIENES.

134. The representative of Chile explained that a pilot test had been carried out in connection with the collection of data for the national employment survey and that a sample made up of 120 representative dwellings from different socioeconomic strata in the urban and rural areas had been constructed. For purposes of the performance of those tasks, interviewers had received training to familiarize them with the equipment used, which had consisted in a portable micro-computer and a questionnaire system designed and installed in the equipment by a private enterprise. Details of the evaluation of the pilot experiment in comparison with the traditional method may be found annexed to reference document No. 9.

135. His evaluation was that the method was relatively suitable for urban, but not for rural, areas. He felt it had been of great value for assisted coding and the non-omission of persons in a

household called upon to answer questions concerning their occupation. However, one disadvantage was that, surprisingly, the length of the interviews had increased. Moreover, the equipment associated with the method had proved clumsy to handle in the field, and the screen had been found to be unsuitable in natural light, which had made the visualization of the task exceedingly difficult. He recounted as an anecdote but as an important factor to bear in mind, the stern resistance put up by households at a low socioeconomic level against the technical equipment because it looked like the communications equipment used by the police. Rejection and distrust had also been noted on the part of those interviewed when they saw that some of their personal data had been recorded on the electronic questionnaire (computer) prior to the interview in the field.

136. The representative of Brazil reported that in 1985 IBGE had used the techniques described to collect data for the price index. Only one day of work had been saved with respect to the traditional method, and the relative cost had been very high.

137. Finally the representative of Argentina expressed the view that the electronic questionnaire was not applicable in population censuses, which were usually conducted on a set day, or to economic censuses but that they could be used in household surveys. He therefore felt it would be desirable to seek the opinion of developed countries which had experimented with the electronic method although it was already known that they had met with certain difficulties and that in practice the method had turned out to be relatively expensive. With regard to the Chilean experience, he mentioned the coding problems encountered, especially those relating to the occupational group. He felt it would be a good idea to resolve difficulties of that kind before focusing on the remaining aspects of the question. He also felt that owing to the scarcity of resources, the Directors were probably not in a position to support projects of the kind under discussion; however, he felt it was useful and efficient for countries like Chile and Brazil with experience in the field of electronic questionnaires to exchange their findings in that respect. Finally, he suggested that CIENES should focus its activities on the provision of training and advisory services to the countries of the region since the cost of research such as that described appeared to be very high.

Social indicators

138. The representative of the UNDP Regional Project on Critical Poverty (RLA/86/004), described the progress achieved so far in the development of a synthetic measurement of the well being of a population or an index of social progress. In that respect, he noted the widespread dissatisfaction felt in connection with economic measurements of development such as per capita national

product and said that that dissatisfaction had set off a search for a synthetic measurement of the social dimensions of development.

139. If the index of social progress was to supplement or replace the per capita national product, the process of its elaboration needed to be as diffuse (transparent) as that of the construction of the national accounts indicator at both microeconomic and macroeconomic level. At the same time, it should be sensitive to changes in income distribution and to short-term variations in the social environment. The index proposed was, in its first part, a measure of the potential life time (PLT) of the population i.e., the time left to each person to live. Thus, at the aggregate level, the per capita PLT, corresponded to the difference between the average life expectancy and the average age of a population. Other refinements of the index included the fact that it expressed that measure on the basis of maximum PLT expressed in terms of maximum desirable length of life such as, for example, 80 years. Another advantage was that it combined the PLT index with a measure of poverty in such a way as to define an indicator known as "lifetime poverty gap". Finally, he said that in future an attempt would be made to include dimensions of the quality of life in the measure.

140. Opening the discussion on this item, the representative of Venezuela spoke in detail on his country's participation in the activities carried out in support of the establishment of an index of social progress. He noted that the President of Venezuela was particularly interested in the subject and referred to the results of the meeting of the South Commission held in Caracas in August 1989 with 15 high-level international experts in attendance. He said that a book containing the reports presented at that meeting had already been published, that in the next few months another meeting would be held on the same topic and that it was important for the statistical offices of the countries of the region to participate in those discussions.

141. The Technical Co-ordinator of the UNDP Regional Project on Critical Poverty summarized the objectives of the project, stressing the role a synthetic index could play in integrating the social indicators of different sectors, possibly helping to construct a system of indicators similar to that available in the field of national accounts.

142. The representative of Argentina noted that attempts of the kind described had not met with any success in the past, at least in so far as eliciting a consensus in the international community was concerned. That was partly because of the absence of a macro social theory to give conceptual unity to social indicators in the way that economic theory was sustained by the system of national accounts.

Situation in Latin America vis-à-vis social statistics

143. This item was introduced by the representative of ECLAC, who began by saying that the need to evaluate the effects of the crisis, made it increasingly urgent for a set of social development indicators to be made available. He reminded the participants that at their preceding meeting, held in Santiago, in September 1987, the Directors of Statistics of the Americas had agreed to include the question of social statistics on the agenda of the current meeting and that pursuant to that decision, the chairman of COM/CIE had addressed himself to the UNDP Regional Administrator asking for his support in such activities. In its reply, UNDP had expressed its endorsement of the initiative to create an integrated system of related social and economic statistics and indicators but had offered no concrete support.

144. As agreed to by the Directors at their 1987 meeting and in view of the facts referred to, ECLAC had prepared an inventory showing the availability of basic statistics in the region. The three main sources of information for the elaboration of social indicators were population and housing censuses, household surveys and administrative registers. In respect of the first two sources, he reported that CELADE operated a bank of population census samples and ECLAC Statistics and Projections Division, a bank of household surveys, containing information used in preparing studies on poverty and income distribution, which had been widely circulated.

145. He went on to explain that the inventory prepared had been based on information usually derived from administrative registers. For the purposes of the inventory, seven areas had been selected, including demography, health, education, housing, the administration of justice, salaries and wages and social expenditure. Forms in that connection had been sent to the National Statistical Offices of 25 countries of the region. Replies had been received from 16 of those countries, which had made it possible to update and correct the inventory.

146. With regard to the availability of information, he noted that the information available to countries was fuller and more up-to-date than that which existed in ECLAC. He noted, however, that in general the number of countries with information declined as the data sought became more specific in the areas of demography, health and education. In the other areas dealt with, few countries conveyed information to ECLAC, and much of the information conveyed was very much out of date. Finally, he noted that the importance of social indicators was reflected in the concern shown by UNSO, UNFPA, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the World Health Organization (WHO), which had worked together in the area under consideration.

147. Finally he reported that ECLAC had addressed many meetings and a number of international bodies stressing the need to allocate development resources to this branch of statistics and noting that if that were not done, requests for statistical information on social indicators would elicit replies which were few and of limited value. In his view, UNDP should co-operate in this matter, in particular, as a body which had allocated abundant resources to the war against poverty and had offered its support at the Directors' previous meeting. In this regard, the Directors of Statistics had asked to the Chairman of COM/CIE to approach the UNDP administrator for Latin America informing him of the need for part of the resources allocated by UNDP in this area to be channeled towards the National Statistical Offices of the individual countries concerned.

148. After a general exchange of opinion on the matter, the representative of UNSO reported on the publication of a handbook on social indicators, which was available in Spanish and had been sent to the National Statistical Offices. He noted that the handbook had been prepared as a result of UNSO's concern with the promotion of social statistics.

Critical poverty and social indicators

149. The representatives of Argentina, Colombia and ECLAC had been made responsible for the presentation of this item. The floor was taken first by the representative of Argentina, who reported on the research conducted in his country since 1984, which had resulted in a study on poverty in Argentina focusing on unmet basic needs and based on data obtained from the 1980 population census and estimates made in accordance with the "poverty line" method which used information on incomes obtained from current household surveys. He also reported on the activities carried out under the research project on poverty in Argentina undertaken in 1986, in connection with which primary data had been collected by means of five ad hoc surveys conducted in five parts of the country with different characteristics. The findings of those surveys had been used to compare the results obtained by using both methods of estimating poverty and to add to the pool of knowledge concerning poverty. Finally, he stressed the advisability of continuing with this line of research by conducting further household surveys for the purpose of updating the measures of poverty available and including in the 1990 census some questions which might help to improve the estimates made on the basis of the unmet basic needs method.

150. The representative of Colombia described the methods and results of the poverty studies conducted in his country from 1986 onward. He mentioned the support given to the National Bureau of Statistics (DANE) by the regional project of UNDP and ECLAC for carrying out those activities. He reported that the studies were

aimed at developing procedures for periodical measurements in order to evaluate the results of social policies. As in the case of Argentina, he stated that both methods for measurement (unmet basic needs and poverty line) were used and that the main sources of information were the population censuses of 1973 and 1985, the family budget survey and the permanent household survey.

151. A representative of ECLAC outlined the Commission's recent experience with poverty studies. His presentation centered especially on the activities of the Statistics and Projections Division, in collaboration with UNDP, in order to update estimates on the degree of poverty in 12 countries of the region. The speaker emphasized the merits and limits of the information normally used as the basis for these studies, giving special attention to the main obstacles on the level of data that have to be faced in each stage of the estimation process.

152. Together with mentioning other studies on living conditions of the population being carried out by ECLAC, he stressed that these activities have led the institution to increasingly make a more intense and continual use of the primary information generated by the countries, especially household surveys, which the Commission had access to in virtue of the permanent collaboration with National Statistical Offices. Finally, he pointed out that without this valuable collaboration, ECLAC could not respond in the future to the challenge of keeping its respective data banks as up-to-date as possible and using them in an efficient and timely manner.

153. Last, the representative of Spain stated that the National Statistical Institute of his country had published in March of the current year a methodological study on poverty, which also contained documentation on the issue generated by work groups of the European Economic Commission. He put the study at the disposition of the Secretariat of the meeting.

The informal sector

154. The representative of Argentina referred to the problems of measuring the informal sector in Latin America and pointed out the relevance of the question for heterogeneous economies like those of Latin America, due to the fact that a significant part of the supply of goods and services is generated in units where the separation between capital and labor is not clearly defined. He stated, however, that the measurement of this sector faced difficulties because of the lack of consensus concerning its characteristics. This has given rise to diverse definitions, at times at variance with one another, to which are added the problems of obtaining information because of the smaller size of the enterprises in this sector and because these activities are frequently carried out in homes and are not seen.

155. He emphasized the need to understand the transactions of the sector and define it precisely. Regarding the first aspect, he thought it important to recognize the informal units within the universe of establishments treated in the statistical system, and in relation to the second aspect, he proposed unifying the criteria for defining the sector, in order to be able to make comparisons between countries. He expressed the opinion that adopting the recommendations recently issued by the United Nations Statistical Office (UNSO) was highly useful for this purpose.

156. He stated that he considered it important for the question of the informal sector to carry out a programme of actions that involved the countries and the international organizations. These actions should include the delimitation of the conceptual and empirical aspects to be analyzed, the specific ways of approaching the treatment of the issues, and the responsibilities of the different countries and organizations. Among the substantive issues, he mentioned the delimitation, properly speaking, of the sector, the dimensions that allow for a better understanding of its characteristics, and the potentialities of the distinct statistical instruments. Finally, among the concrete actions he proposed to: i) systematize each country's experience in measuring and interchange those experiences; ii) continue to treat the issue in the meetings of the National Statistical Offices of the region; and iii) explore the possibility of holding a special meeting to elaborate a position that could be considered in the framework of the project being carried out by the ILO on this question. Along these same lines, he thought it advisable to interest the Regional Employment Programme for Latin America and the Caribbean (PREALC) or other organizations in the region concerned about the issue in collaborating with this project.

157. The representative from Mexico outlined the activities accomplished to date as part of the research project on the informal sector being carried out by the National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Information Science (INEGI) from 1986 onwards, in conjunction with the Office of Scientific and Technical Research Overseas (ORSTOM) of France. The stages of this project were the following: i) study all the pertinent background material on the issue available in INEGI itself; ii) conduct a series of anthropological interviews; iii) design a questionnaire and carry out a pilot survey (EPSI); and iv) conduct a National Survey of the Informal Economy. At the same time, he added that the size of the informal sector had been calculated on the basis of the National Survey of Urban Employment (ENEU), which is taken continually in 16 cities of the country. The project was to move on to more ambitious goals, such as the timely measurement of the informal sector and its trends, and the integration of the statistics of that sector into the

National System of Statistical Information and the System of National Accounts. These objectives are expected to be achieved within three years.

158. A representative of Spain reported that the INE held a meeting in 1986 on the submerged economy, with the participation of delegates from his country and from the European Economic Community. He placed at the disposition of the Secretariat of the meeting the document containing the conclusions of that meeting. The representative of Uruguay then concurred that the region should actively participate in the discussion and stressed the fact that within Latin America and the Caribbean there was less disparity of criteria regarding the definition of the sector than in other continents. She expressed the opinion, therefore, that because of this fact, the region should be able to participate more easily in the next ILO conference on this question in which international recommendations would be made. She ended her remarks by stating that a previous meeting in the region, with the collaboration of PREALC, was urgently needed.

159. A delegate from the United Nations Statistical Office (UNSO) reported on the meeting of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) held in Santo Domingo in 1986, in which the question of women's participation in the informal sector and their contribution to economic activity was examined. He mentioned six case studies, among them one for Mexico and one for Venezuela, and made it known that UNSO would publish them shortly. Likewise, he offered to send drafts of these studies to ECLAC so that they could then be distributed to the countries. He also pointed out that a meeting would be held in Africa from 16 to 20 October on household surveys, in which the question of the participation of women in the informal sector would be treated.

160. Finally, the representative of Bolivia emphasized that in his country this problem was very relevant, that it has been widely discussed and that at the present time efforts were being made to measure the submerged economy. He also subscribed to what the representative of Mexico had said about there being different degrees of informality.

Service-sector statistics

161. A representative of ECLAC stated that the Secretariat shared the concerns of numerous national and international institutions and agencies about improving service-sector statistics. Therefore, in an effort to systematize information, the Secretariat had published two documents that contained standardized data on the external trade in services of the countries of the region for the period 1970-1986. He likewise stated that the more important problems that arose when

elaborating the statistics of those services had been identified by means of a survey made in the central banks of Latin America and in the institutions responsible for the balance of payments. The survey referred to questions like sources of information, levels of breakdown, the classification and treatment of transactions with special characteristics, the identification of the point of origin and destination of trade in services, and the participation of transnational corporations in the service sector. The survey showed a good deal of heterogeneity, both in treatment as well as in the classification and sources of information on transactions in services.

162. He pointed out that special attention had been paid in the survey to the analysis of the treatment of less traditional services, which were becoming more and more important in international trade, and that the omission of important transactions had also been shown. He stated that the activities of transnational corporations had transformed the traditional conception of external-trade statistics, since many operations were carried out through subsidiaries, and therefore their information was inserted in national statistics. In this regard, he noted that the concept of residency was more important than that of property for the register in the balance of payments; for this reason, international exchanges were implicitly recorded in the statistics of the external sector, such as factor payments corresponding to profits earned by foreign investment.

163. He then communicated that, in the seminar on service-sector statistics held in Lima at the end of 1988, it was proposed that the countries be helped to standardize their statistics and improve their coverage, and that in this context serious efforts had been made with respect to definitions and the standardization of information. He stated that several international meetings had been held, basically with the participation of the industrialized countries, with the purpose of improving the international comparison of this kind of statistics; however, Latin America's participation in this field had been rather passive. For this reason, he therefore considered it important that the countries of the region inform one another about the usefulness of adopting the definitions and classifications that are coming from those meetings, in order to contribute to the harmonization of the different statistical records.

164. He pointed out that for the purpose of advancing in the solution of the conceptual and methodological problems, a proposal was made in the Lima seminar to establish a programme for disseminating and discussing monographs, as well as for sharing experiences among the countries of the region, and the recommendation was made to concentrate the attention of the methodological works on sectors considered priorities among service activities, through meetings of those in charge of

elaborating the balance of payments and statistics on trade in services.

165. He also communicated that a meeting would be held soon in Santiago, Chile in which ECLAC's work on secondary sources of service-sector statistics and the harmonization of those statistics in the balance of payments and in national accounts would be discussed. Finally, he added that the participation of the World Tourism Organization (WTO) was being sought to present guidelines concerning statistics on tourism, as well as the participation of the IMF, which is revising the Balance of Payments Manual.

166. The representative of the Board of the Cartagena Agreement (JUNAC) explained the activities of his organization to improve the service-sector statistics in the countries of the Andean Group. He emphasized that those activities took place in the framework of the agreement made in the Primer Seminario Latinoamericano sobre Mejoramiento de las Estadísticas de Servicios (first Latin American seminar on improving service-sector statistics), held in Lima, Peru in November 1988, and that they carry out the work programme of JUNAC concerning the need to undertake actions of co-operation in the service area.

167. After mentioning the general objectives, different measures taken with respect to previous studies, co-ordinating activities undertaken and consulting work received, he described the objectives pursued by JUNAC in the short-term with respect to service-sector statistics. In this respect, he referred to the support given to the member countries for a pilot study to evaluate the international trade in services between the Andean Group countries and those of the European Economic Community; to the contribution to the updating of directories and sample frameworks in the service sector; to support for improving statistics on the modern service subsector, and carrying out statistical research on services related to informatics, consulting, engineering and tourism; to the improvement of statistics on the traditional service subsector; and to the establishment of training activities.

168. He then stressed that the support given to the member countries for improving the production of service-sector statistics intended to successfully apply common techniques, procedures, classifications and methodologies which would allow for comparisons and aggregations on the level of JUNAC; establish the necessary co-ordination to ensure a permanent flow of information on services in the future by improving the production of basic statistics and conducting specific statistical research; and finally, prepare technicians who would guarantee continuity in the production of these statistics. JUNAC counted on the financial support of the European Economic Community to realize these goals.

169. In addition, he briefly summarized the other statistical activities that JUNAC was carrying out to support the member countries in improving statistical production in areas such as the strengthening of statistical systems on foodstuffs in the Andean subregion, follow-up surveys on the consumption of foodstuffs, manufacturing statistics, telecommunication and informatic system for integration organizations, and statistics on the short-term situation of external trade. Finally, he emphasized the co-ordination carried out to achieve the creation of a training centre for statistics on the Andean level.

Future statistical activities of the international organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean

170. The representative of the Inter-American Statistical Training Center (CIENES) said that reference document no. 16 made it known that his institution had gathered as much information as possible on the statistical activities programmed by the international organizations for the biennium 1990-1991 in connection with the areas of more interest for the countries of the region. He added that, despite the fact that not all the countries had answered the survey, it could be stated that a clear picture of the future activities in question was available.

171. The document pointed out that the statistical activities of the international organizations, excluding training, emphasized improving the production of statistics in all its stages, as well as the formation of data banks in the areas of competency of the different organizations. It stated that organizations like ECLAC, the IDB and the United States Bureau of the Census were planning specific technical co-operation projects and seminars on various questions such as national accounts, external trade, household surveys, population censuses, etc. In this context, it was reported that ECLAC had programmed activities regarding methodological recommendations, the standardization of data-processing systems and the application of international statistical classifications. It was also reported that the United States Bureau of the Census and the UNSO planned to offer technical assistance in census-related matters, especially populations censuses. Finally, it was reported that as a by-product of the consultation conducted by CIENES, a directory of the international and national organizations of the region involved in statistical activities had been prepared.

172. The Directors of Statistics of the Americas requested that the Secretariat of ECLAC prepare a tentative agenda for the next meeting of the Directors of the Americas, based on the opinions expressed during the debates of the present meeting. This agenda should be sent to the Directors for their observations, which

could then provide the basis for establishing a provisional agenda.

Institutional responsibilities in the organization of periodical meetings of National Directors of Statistics

173. After a wide-ranging debate among the participants, the majority of the countries (sixteen of nineteen) adopted the following positions concerning institutional responsibilities with respect to the periodical meetings of the National Directors of Statistics of the region.

a) Full recognition and gratitude is expressed for the important contribution made by the OAS during several decades to the improvement of the statistics of the region.

b) For the purpose of regularizing the situation of the meetings of the National Directors of Statistics of the region and freeing the Secretariat of the OAS from a task that has proven difficult in recent years (in the opinion of the majority) the responsibility of calling these meetings should be assigned to the Secretariat of ECLAC.

c) Following upon the previous point, the Inter-American Statistical Conferences would no longer be held.

d) The Secretariat of the OAS is requested to channel whatever financial aid it can provide for statistics-related activities to the technical assistance and training presently being carried out by CIENES.

e) The National Directors of Statistics of each of the member States of ECLAC will make known the positions adopted to their authorities, including the Ministers of Foreign Relations. This with a view to carrying out the consultations they consider pertinent.

174. The following observations were made with respect to the positions quoted:

175. Mexico will consult with its Ministry of Foreign Relations before defining whether or not it support the positions adopted by representatives of the other countries. As Chairman of COM/CIE, it will present this question to the meeting of that Committee on 29 September 1989.

176. The representative of Bolivia stated that, after consulting with his Foreign Ministry, he could suggest that the work of the OAS in the area of statistics be evaluated in the framework of the CIE meeting.

177. The delegation of the United States declared that it had to consult with the State Department before defining its position regarding this matter.

178. The representative of Dominica totally supported the positions of the majority, and added that he hoped that regularizing the organization of the meetings of the National Directors of Statistics called by ECLAC would make it possible to grant financial assistance to the Caribbean countries so they could attend future meetings. Moreover, he committed himself to present this proposal, along with the Final Report of the meeting, to the Conference of National Directors of Statistics of the Caribbean, which was to be held soon in Antigua.

179. The representative of the OAS reiterated that the General Secretariat of the OAS was fully disposed to support, in the best way possible and in accord with the priority established by its political organs, any initiative to promote the statistical development of the region.

180. He stated that this willingness was confirmed by the Secretary General of the OAS when he met, on 28 April 1989, with the Chairman of COM/CIE and the Canadian delegation. Moreover, this disposition was reflected in the memorandum co-ordinating statistical activities signed by the General Secretariat of the OAS and the Secretariat of ECLAC.

181. Last, he affirmed that the attitude of the General Secretariat of the OAS was not to hinder, rather to the contrary, favor the carrying out of any action that would contribute to strengthening the national statistical systems of the member countries.

ANNEX 1
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

COUNTRIES

ARGENTINA
 Sr. Luis A. Beccaria
 Director
 Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos
 Hipólito Yrigoyen 250
 Buenos Aires

BOLIVIA
 Sr. Waldo Cerruto
 Director
 Instituto Nacional de Estadística
 Mario Guzmán Aspiazu No. 1
 La Paz

BRAZIL
 Sr. Lenildo Silva Fernandes
 Director de Pesquisa (Estatística e Censos)
 Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e
 Estatística (IBGE)
 Rua Visconde de Niteroi 1246 Bloco B
 12o. Andar, Rio de Janeiro

CANADA
 Mr. Béla Prigly
 Director
 International and Professional Relations
 Division
 Statistics Canada
 10-A, R.H. Coats Building
 Ottawa, Ontario KIA OT 6

COLOMBIA
 Sr. Alfonso González
 Jefe
 Departamento Administrativo Nacional de
 Estadística (DANE)
 Transv. 62 A No. 123-14
 Bogotá

COSTA RICA
 Sra. Virginia Rodríguez Varga
 Directora General de Estadística y Censos
 Dirección General de Estadística y Censos
 Apartado 10163
 San José 1000

CUBA
 Sr. Francisco Almagro Vázquez
 Vicepresidente Primero
 Comité Estatal de Estadísticas de Cuba
 Calle Paseo # 60
 La Habana

CHILE

Sr. Luis Jaime Gatica Benítez
Subdirector de Operaciones
Instituto Nacional de Estadística
Av. Bulnes 418
Santiago

Sr. Enrique Silva R.
Subdirector Técnico
Instituto Nacional de Estadística
Av. Bulnes 418
Santiago

Sra. Odette Tacla-Chamy
Jefe Subdivisión de Estadísticas Demográficas
Av. Bulnes 418, 4o. piso
Santiago

DOMINICA

Mr. Oscar Pérez de Tagle
Chief of Statistics
Central Statistical Office
Ministry of Finance
22 Bath Rd.
Roseau, Dominica

DOMINICAN
REPUBLIC

Sr. Francisco Carias
Embajador de la República Dominicana en Chile
Mariscal Petain 125
Las Condes, Santiago

ECUADOR

Sr. Gaudencio M. Zurita
Director General
Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos
Avenida 10 de Agosto No. 229
Quito

GUATEMALA

Sr. Neftalí Hernández Fajardo
Gerente
Instituto Nacional de Estadística
8 Calle 9-55 Zona 1
Guatemala

HONDURAS

Sra. Iris Bonilla de Godoy
Subdirectora General de
Estadística y Censos
6a Ave. 8a. Calle Comayaguela D.C.
Tegucigalpa

MEXICO

Sr. Miguel Cervera
 Director General
 Instituto Nacional de Estadística,
 Geografía e Informática (INEGI)
 Vázquez del Mercado 101
 20000 Aguascalientes

Sr. Daniel García
 Director de Asuntos Internacionales
 Instituto Nacional de Estadística,
 Geografía e Informática (INEGI)
 Vázquez del Mercado 101
 20000 Aguascalientes

Sr. Mario Palma
 Coordinador Ejecutivo
 Instituto Nacional de Estadística,
 Geografía e Informática (INEGI)
 Vázquez del Mercado 101
 20000 Aguascalientes

PANAMA

Sr. Amilcar Villarreal
 Director de Estadística y Censo
 Apartado 5213
 Zona 5, Ciudad de Panamá

PERU

Sr. Félix Murillo Alfaro
 Jefe - Economista
 Instituto Nacional de Estadística
 Av. 28 de Julio 1056
 Lima

SPAIN

Sr. José Quevedo
 Presidente
 Instituto Nacional de Estadística
 Paseo de la Castellana 183
 Madrid

Sra. Carmen Arribas
 Consejera Técnica
 Relaciones Internacionales
 Instituto Nacional de Estadística
 Paseo de la Castellana 183
 Madrid

UNITED STATES

Ms. María Elena González
 Mathematical Statistician
 U.S Office of Management and Budget
 Statistical Policy Office
 New Executive Office Building, Room 3228
 Washington, D.C. 20503

UNITED STATES
(cont.)

Mr. Louis C. Kincannon
Subdirector General
Bureau of the Census
Washington, D.C. 20233

Mr. John McCracken
Chief
Division of International Technical
Corporation
Bureau of Labor Statistics
Room S 1310, 200 Constitution Avenue, N.W.
Department of Labor
Washington, D.C.

Mr. Norman Tague
Branch Chief, Foreign Trade Division
Bureau of the Census
Washington, D.C. 20233

URUGUAY

Sra. Rosa Grosskoff
Directora General
Dirección de Estadística y Censos
Cuareim 2052
Montevideo

VENEZUELA

Sr. Félix Leonardo Seijas Zerpa
Jefe de la Oficina
Oficina Central de Estadística e Informática
Caracas

AGENCIES

ALADI

Sr. Gonzalo Valenzuela
Director
Departamento Información y Estadística
Cebollati 1461
Montevideo

CIENES

Sr. Reynaldo Franco
Profesor
CIENES
Casilla 10015
Santiago

Sr. Oscar René Miranda Rojas
Profesor
CIENES
Casilla 10015
Santiago

CIENES (cont.)	Sr. Andrés Passicot Director CIENES Casilla 10015 Santiago
IASI	Sr. Evelio Fabbroni Secretario Técnico Instituto Interamericano de Estadística Apartado 5139 Panamá
JUNAC	Sr. Adolfo López Economista Junta del Acuerdo de Cartagena Casilla 18-1177 Lima
OEA	Sr. Carlos Araújo Secretario Técnico de la CIE CIENES Casilla 10015 Santiago
OEA/CIM	Sra. Gloria Carlin Coordinadora Centro Regional de Informática de la Mujer (CRIM) Casilla 10015 Santiago
	Sra. Monserrat Cea Asistente Técnico Estadístico Centro Regional de Informática de la Mujer (CRIM) Casilla 10015 Santiago
UNDP	Sr. Julio Boltvinik Coordinador Técnico Proyecto Regional para la Superación de la Pobreza Apartado Aéreo 091369 Bogotá
	Mr. Megnad Desai Consultant to UNDP London School of Economics Houghton Street London WC2A 2AE

UNSO

Mr. Edmundo Berumen
Technical Adviser, NHSCP
2 U.N. Plaza, Room DC 2-1742
New York, N.Y. 10017

Mr. Halit Turgut
Chief, Industry, Energy and Environment
Statistics Branch
Statistical Office
United Nations
New York, N.Y. 10017

ANNEX 2

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

Working documents

Symbol	Title	Author
LC/R.784 (Sem.50/1)	Temario provisional	ECLAC Statistics and Projections Division
LC/R.788 (Sem.50/2)	Notas sobre las estadísticas del comercio exterior de servicios en América Latina	ECLAC Statistics and Projections Division
LC/R.795 (Sem.50/3)	Actividades de la CEPAL en el campo de las cuentas nacionales y la organización estadística	ECLAC Statistics and Projections Division
LC/R.796 (Sem.50/4)	Actividades realizadas en el marco del "Proyecto de apoyo al diseño y preparación de la ronda de censos del 90"	ECLAC Statistics and Projections Division
LC/R.797 (Sem.50/5)	Actividades realizadas en el marco del proyecto "Estadísticas para el desarrollo de América Latina y el Caribe".	ECLAC Statistics and Projections Division

Reference documents

1	Informe sobre el 25º período de sesiones de la Comisión de Estadística de las Naciones Unidas.	Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos, Argentina
2	Informe del Seminario Regional sobre Coordinación de la Estadística Nacional.	Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos, Argentina
3	La medición del sector informal en América Latina.	Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos, Argentina
4	Improving data quality through the redesign of household surveys.	United States Office of Management and Budget

Symbol	Title	Author
5	Documento metodológico de la investigación sobre el sector informal en México.	Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática de México
6	Difusión de la información.	Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática de México
7	Indicadores económicos de coyuntura (Avance del Proyecto).	Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática de México
8	Planeación de las actividades de recolección y procesamiento de la información, para darle mayor oportunidad.	Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática de México
9	Cuestionario electrónico (CIENES).	CIENES
10	Situación de las estadísticas sociales en América Latina y el Caribe (CEPAL).	ECLAC Statistics and Projections Division
11	Quality improvements to the U.S. merchandise trade statistics (Summary).	United States Department of Commerce - Bureau of the Census
12	Actividades nacionales de capacitación en estadística que se ofrecerán en los países de la región en los años 1990 y 1991	CIENES
13	Programa Regional de Censos de Población y Vivienda - Asistencia técnica horizontal en materia censal	CIENES
14	Difusión de la información estadística	ECLAC Statistics and Projections Division

Symbol	Title	Author
15	Informe sobre futuras actividades de los organismos internacionales en América Latina y el Caribe	CIENES
16	Armonización de las estadísticas de comercio internacional Estados Unidos - Canadá	Bureau of Statistics of Canada
17	Programa para desarrollar la capacidad nacional de efectuar encuestas de hogares (NHSCP)	United Nations Statistical Office (UNSO)
18	Acciones de la Junta del Acuerdo de Cartagena para el mejoramiento de las estadísticas del sector servicios en los países del Grupo Andino	Board of the Cartagena Agreement (JUNAC)
19	Priorities and procedures for statistical development in a small Caribbean island state	Sr. Oscar Pérez de Tagle - Dominica
20	Sistema de información e instrumentos de gestión para la toma de decisiones	Instituto Nacional de Estadística/Perú
21	El sistema estadístico nacional en el proceso de regionalización del Perú	Instituto Nacional de Estadística/Perú
22	Indicadores de coyuntura	Instituto Nacional de Estadística/Perú
23	Pobreza crítica e indicadores sociales	DANE/Colombia