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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA  
CENTRAL AMERICAN ECONOMIC COOPERATION COMMITTEE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOUSING, BUILDING AND PLANNING

GENERAL  
CCE/SC.4/II/GTMC/3  
10 August 1962

Working Group on Modular Coordination on Housing  
San Salvador, El Salvador, August 14-22, 1962

ORIGINAL: SPANISH

CATALOGADO

MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP  
ON MODULAR COORDINATION ON HOUSING IN THE  
CENTRAL AMERICAN ISTHMUS  
(Note by the Secretariat of CEPAL)

Meeting sponsored jointly by the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America (CEPAL), the United Nations Bureau of Technical Assistance Operations (BTAO), the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB).

## 1 Background

As part the activities undertaken within de economic integration programme, during the last five years in the field of housing, the Sub-Committee on Housing, Building and Planning of the Central America Economic Cooperation Committee has established a working group to study at the technical level the results of the investigations carried in the field of modular coordination, and to make recommendations for the adoption of that system in its member countries.

The problems of housing have been the subject of study in the integration programmes since 1957. At the Meeting on Housing, Planning and Building Materials Industries held in San José, Costa Rica in november of that year the need was pointed out to establish Central American standards and specifications for some building materials and to undertake studies for their dimensional coordination. The project was included in the programme of work of the Sub Committee on Housing, Building and Planning established in 1958 as a subsidiary organ of the Committee on Economic Cooperation.

Afterwards, on the basis of Resolution 61 (CCE) of the Committee, the United Nations Bureau of Technical Assistance Operations assigned an expert on housing to the programme, who since july 1959 has been working in the studies on building materials standardization and modular coordination, as well as in the analysis of the national housing programmes and of the present situation of the building materials industries in operation in Central America. In 1962 additional colaboration has been received from experts of the Organization of American States and, more recently, from one expert on productivity from the International Labour Organization, assigned to the Central America regional technical assistance programme.

The studies prepared are included in the reports entitled Modular Coordination in Housing (E/CN.12/CCE/SC.4/9) and Work Booklet

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dimensions; tolerances; efficiency and productivity, and module appropriate for Central America.

Second, the group will study the relationship between modular coordination and the technological process of industrial production for building materials and equipment needed for housing. Within this study special attention should be given to the industrial processes in use and to the possible alterations to be introduced in them for the production of modulated materials, and standard dimensions should be formulated for the production of the various components. Once those standards have been formulated, the group should integrate them -by means of unified types and equivalents- in more complex architectural designs for whole or partial housing units.

The development of the two first points will permit a thorough analysis, not only of the aspects related to the modular coordination system as such, but of the implications of its possible adoption in the planning, organization and operation of the housing programs of the national housing institutes in the Central American countries.

In accordance with the results thus obtained, the group will complete its activities with the formulation of concrete recommendations and of procedures -

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including deadlines, testing, initial scope and subsequent effects-for the adopción of the system of modular coordination by the national housing institutes on a Central American basis. It will also formulate recommendations regarding the steps and measures to be adopted to promote the gradual adaptation of the building materials producers and housing equipment manufactures in Central America to the requirements of the modular coordination system.

#### 3. Organization of the work of the meeting

The group will work in plenary meetings. The participants will have the advice of experts from the United Nations, the Organization of American States and the Interamerican Development Bank, as well as from countries outside Central America-Sweden, the United Kingdom, Canadá, and the United States of America- where more advanced experiences in the field of modular coordination on housing are available.

In order to make an analysis of the relationship between the basic module and the design modules proposed on one hand, and the industrial processes for the production of construction materials and housing equipment, on the other, the group will visit six factories in San Salvador, where it will hold working sessions.

#### 4. Results of the meeting

It is important to make emphasis on the significance of the meeting of the Working Group on Modular Coordination on Housing for the Central American Economic Integration Programme. The advantages of utilizing this system in housing are wellknown. In the countries with greater experience in the matter, these advantages have mainly consisted in a considerable

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loweving of tne cost of the construction programmes, which in relation to available resources, in amounts always limited, make possible more sizable advances than those achieved under different condittions in the solution of the social problem of housing. Besides, the reduction and standardiza-tion of the types of materials and equipment used, obtained through the mo-dular coordination system, result in higher levels of productivity and efficiency and in a reduction of the cost/<sup>of</sup>production of materials and equip-ment.

It is evident that the same benefits could be derived from the application of the modular coordination system in the Central American countries. Furthermore, the existance of a regional common market and of an economic integration programme determine the possibilities of obtain-ing additional advantages. In fact, the execution of the national housing construction programmes on the basis of modular materials and equipment, with a uniform criterion on the regional level, will greatly facilitate the development of Central American production and its commerce within the framework of the common market. And, also, the utilization in all the coun-tries of the region of the modular coordination system will result in the existence of apropiate conditions for the coordination of the national hou-sing programmes and for an eventual degree of especialization in some as-pects such as planning, design and utilization of the everlimited techni-cal resources, on Central American bases.

It is in this sense that the present meeting of the working Group on Modular Coordination on Housing has an important meaning for the econo-mic integration of the Central American Isthmus. The report and other outcomings of the meeting will be submitted to the consideration of the Sub Committee on Housing, Building and Planning of the Cental American

Economic Cooperation Committees to be held in 1962 and will permit the organs of the integration programme and its member states to take the necessary measures for joint action in this field.

The emphasis so given to modular coordination will coincide with an stage of intensification in the housing Programmes in Central America in which the Inter American Bank of Development has an active participation through its technical assistance and financing operations. It is to be hoped that the results of this meeting will also be of value in this process of acceleration of housing construction and will also contribute to an increasing participation of the financing institutions, whether national, regional or international, which deal with the housing problems in Central America.