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PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES: IMPLEMENTATION AND PROSPECTS

REGIONAL CONFERENCES OF STATISTICIANS AND SIMILAR BODIES

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

I. ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA (ECLA)

1. The statistical activities of ECLA are chiefly concentrated in the Statistical Division. Its programme has been concerned with the collection, analysis, evaluation and presentation of statistics, for use by the ECLA secretariat and for general information, in the economic and social fields. In the context of the global programme of the United Nations Statistical Office, promotion of the development of national statistics and the improvement of international comparability are pursued. The programme covers participation in the regional technical assistance programme, the organization of seminars and working groups and the maintenance of close contact with regional activities of the specialized agencies and with the Inter-American Statistical Institute (IASI).
2. During the period under review, the first (1973) edition of the Statistical Yearbook for Latin America - which replaced the former semi-annual Statistical Bulletin for Latin America - was published, and the second issue (1974-1975) was prepared.
3. ECLA prepared the document "Latin American development and the international economic situation" (E/CEPAL/981), for the second regional appraisal of the International Development Strategy, which included a wide range of indicators of economic and social development in Latin America (E/CEPAL/981/Add.3).

A. National accounts and related matters

4. National accounts series were maintained, analysed and systematized. The series on product expressed in national currency and United States dollars are maintained at constant prices for ECLA use; a new base year was selected for these series, and the corresponding parity rates were estimated.
5. A project was begun in order to establish a permanent file of data on public sector accounts.
6. A permanent file on regional accounts estimates was established, and a document entitled Experiencias sobre cálculos del producto interno bruto regional (E/CEPAL/1012) was issued.
7. The work on co-ordination continued with a permanent group of Latin American experts on social accounting, formed on the occasion of the meeting of the Working Group on Statistics of Income Distribution, Consumption and Wealth, held in Chile, November 1971 (ST/ECLA/CONF.42/L.6), which is now composed of 80 members.
8. A document entitled "National accounts in Latin America: recent developments, present situation and prospects", by Horacio Santamaría, was presented at a Meeting of Central Bank Technicians of the American Continent, held at Quito (November 1974). A document "Experiences of the Latin American countries in using the revised SNA" (E/CEPAL/L.119) was presented at the Interregional Seminar on the Revised System of National Accounts, held at Caracas (December 1975). A document on "National accounts in Latin America: prices and quantities estimates" was presented at a Meeting of Central Bank Technicians of the American Continent, held at Punta del Este (November 1975).

B. Evaluation and analysis of Latin American data on income distribution

9. A joint ECLA/IBRD research project proceeded, with the publication of 15 booklets with detailed tabulations from selected surveys, related to income and other socio-economic characteristics (series E/CEPAL/L.115), as well as "Estimates of the functional distribution of income generated by sectors of economic activity, 1960-1972" (E/CEPAL/L.115/12).
10. With the surveys selected to provide the data base for this project, a data file from household surveys was organized and is currently being expanded. The review that began with the document "Sources of statistics on the distribution of income in Latin America" (ST/ECLA/CONF.42/L.4) was transformed into a permanent inventory of household surveys carried out in the region.
11. Controls for survey data were carried out, and a document on "Income distribution estimates from household surveys and population censuses in Latin America: an assessment of reliability", by Oscar Altimir, was presented at the twenty-fifth seminar of the Programa de Estudios Conjuntos sobre Integración Económica Latinoamericana (ECIEL Programme), held at Rio de Janeiro, March 1976.

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C. External trade and balance of payments

12. Work proceeded on the electronic processing of balance-of-payments statistics of the 23 countries of the region. The series were extended back to 1950.
13. Computer programmes were developed to obtain quantum and unit indexes of exports and imports, and terms of trade.
14. Contacts are maintained with the statistical offices of the countries of the region, the Latin American Free Trade Association (LAFTA) and the Secretaría Permanente del Tratado General de Integración Económica Centroamericana (SIECA), in order to obtain detailed data on external trade. The tapes are at present sent to the United Nations Statistical Office, and a system is under study with a view to organizing the data base provided by duplicates of those tapes in order to develop further applications required at ECLA.

D. Industrial statistics

15. The collection of data from manufacturing censuses and surveys proceeded, and a revised document America Latina: principales indicadores derivados de los censos y encuestas industriales (E/CN.12/L.45/Add.3) was issued.
16. The series on manufacturing output and employment were maintained and brought up to date, as well as those corresponding to the physical output for principal products.
17. A new regional index on mining output (base year: 1970) was developed, with subregional indices, and special research on the importance and output of agroindustry activities was carried out.

E. Demographic and social statistics

18. During the period under review, activities in this field were oriented to support two ECLA projects: one on structural factors which influence population redistribution in Latin America and the other on stratification and social mobility in Latin America.
19. Organization of a data file on employment statistics was started.

F. Technical assistance

20. Technical assistance to the countries of the region in demographic statistics and related questions was provided through missions by regional advisers in the following fields: sampling methods for demographic statistics, household surveys, computer methods and vital statistics.

21. The regional advisory services in national accounts were suspended in 1973, for lack of financing. Some needs of the countries of the region were able to be met through occasional visits of the Chief of the National Accounts Section of the Statistical Division, but these visits could not meet all the major needs.

22. Technical assistance in external trade statistics and in industrial statistics was also occasionally provided by the chief of the respective section.

II. ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA (ECWA)

23. The Statistics Unit became operational on 8 September 1975. Prior to that date the statistics programme was a component of the development planning programme.

24. The 1974 and 1975 work programmes did not delegate any specific activity to the statistics programme. However, the statisticians of ECWA, consisting of one regional adviser who was joined by a statistician in September 1974 and by a consultant late in 1975, performed duties, such as the finalization of the annex entitled "Sectoral developments and development indicators", to the 1975 publication Selected Studies on Development Problems in Countries of Western Asia. They also undertook studies on the national accounts of the region in order to apply the United Nations System of National Accounts and to ensure comparability of results.

25. Early in 1975, ECWA, in collaboration with the Central Planning Organization in Sana'a published, both in Arabic and English, the National Accounts of the Yemen Arab Republic.

26. Preparations for an Annual Statistical Abstract of the Arab World started late in 1975. Work has been under way for the preparation of a provisional draft of the Abstract to be presented at the third session of ECWA. Due to the closure of the office, however, this work has been temporarily suspended.

27. The Unit has initiated work on the assessment of current practices in collecting statistics on prices and compiling index numbers. So far, eight countries have been covered. It is hoped that a paper can be issued on this subject late in 1976.

28. Two papers were prepared for the Interregional Seminar on the Revised System of National Accounts, held at Caracas, Venezuela, from 8 to 19 December 1975: "Experiences of the countries of Western Asia in using the revised SNA" (ESA/STAT/AC.2/14) and "Practices, difficulties, problems and solutions in the case of selected aspects of the revised SNA in the countries of Western Asia" (ESA/STAT/AC.2/15).

29. A survey has begun of the current practices in the countries of ECWA regarding the compilation of national accounts data, i.e. accounting systems and estimation methods. Work has, so far, covered Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. The survey is expected to cover all the countries by the end of 1976, and a report, entitled "National accounts statistics in the ECWA countries"

will constitute a background paper for a working group on production accounts, commodity balances and input-output analysis at current and constant prices, which is scheduled to meet at Beirut in 1977.

30. At the request of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, regional advisory services were made available to the Central Bureau of Statistics, by the Chief of the Statistics Unit (acting in lieu of a regional adviser whose recruitment is still in progress) to assist in finalizing the Syrian system of national accounts which was completely based on the United Nations System of National Accounts. The system was applied to the 1972 national accounts data and the results were published in the 1975 Statistical Abstract of the Syrian Arab Republic. The Unit also applied the new system to a series of national accounts covering the period 1956-1972, and the results have been submitted to the Syrian Central Bureau of Statistics. The Chief of the Unit went to the Syrian Arab Republic on a follow-up mission on this subject.
