

**Latin American regional conference in preparation of the second OECD World Forum on
“Statistics, Knowledge and Policy”**

**Ministerial Meeting on
“Measuring the progress of societies: information system for heads of government”**

Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, 12-13 October 2006

Main conclusions

The first regional Forum (for 22 countries participating in the Iberoamerican Network of Ministers of the Presidency or Equivalent - RIMPE) was held in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia from 12-13 October 2006. The meeting was co-organised by the Republic of Colombia, RIMPE, the OECD and PARIS21. Positive feedback was informally received from the participants. A satisfaction questionnaire is being sent to all participants to formally evaluate the meeting and provide suggestions for the future. Despite some difficulties due to the changes in the timing of the agenda, plenary and parallel sessions seemed highly appreciated by participants, both from the statistical and the policy communities. The Colombian authorities were complimented for the excellent organisation of the conference and warm hospitality.

Several ministers expressed strong interest in using the theme “measuring progress” as a unifying framework to evaluate the outcome of public policies. The OECD’s and PARIS 21’s invitees, made up of primarily chief statisticians and representatives from civil society, held parallel sessions to examine how such a framework could improve society’s understanding of economic and social developments and how to make statistics more relevant for decision makers.

The **Vice-President of Colombia** gave a strong and well articulated opening speech on the importance of statistics to evidence-based decision making: he also expressed his intention to participate in the second OECD World Forum on “Statistics, Knowledge and Policy” (Istanbul, Turkey, 27-30 June 2007).

Plenary and parallel sessions were dedicated to the following themes:

- statistics, knowledge and policy
- the measurement of societal progress
- how to build statistics and indicators for development
- the development of a strategic information system for the heads of government
- communicating statistics and indicators to citizens and policy makers
- how to involve the society in defining and monitoring progress
- millennium development goals and national progress
- measuring democracy and human rights
- how to make official statistics more relevant in Latin American countries

The **official conclusions** of the Ministerial meeting included the following reference to the importance of statistics for policy making:

We recognise that pertinent and reliable statistical information is vital for the implementation of policies based on substantive knowledge of the reality, as well as for the evaluation of their results.

The official conclusions will be presented at the High-level meeting (Heads of State) that will be held in November in Uruguay. Some Ministers had bilateral discussions with national statisticians on how to take

forward the issue of “measurement of progress” at national level. The role of OECD as leader in this area was recognised and many countries expressed their interest in participating in the second World Forum.

Action points

During the final roundtable (attended by the representatives of national statistical offices and of civil society organisations) on “What have we learnt?”, the following actions points were discussed:

- The Colombian conference was useful, but there is a need to continue the dialogue on the issue of measuring progress, involving both national and international organisations.
- The OECD, in co-operation with the Statistical Conference of the Americas and PARIS21, should raise the awareness among chief statisticians in the region about the importance of measuring progress and of developing nation-wide efforts to build indicator sets able to provide a comprehensive view of the societal progress at national/sub-national level;
- The OECD should invite all chief statisticians from the region to attend the second World Forum in Istanbul. Specific contributions from Latin American countries at the World Forum could focus on the following issues: public governance, poverty and social entrepreneurship;
- Drawing on good practices already available in different countries, the OECD should develop a handbook on how to develop national initiatives to measure progress. The handbook should both address technical/statistical issues (use of alternative statistical approaches, dissemination of progress measures, etc.) and institutional/organisational issues (involvement of different components of the society, consensus building, etc.).
- The OECD should dedicate a space, within the OECD World Forum web pages (www.oecd.org/oecdworldforum), to Latin American countries, in order to:
 - share information about national experiences based on indicators;
 - advocate the use of indicators systems;
 - discuss how to develop new initiatives or improve the existing ones.
- An electronic discussion group could be created and hosted by the OECD, in co-operation with the Statistical Conference of Americas and PARIS21;
- A working group should be created for Latin American countries to continue the dialogue at the working level on how to measure progress and how to improve existing systems and learn more from developed countries’ experiences;
- The Inter-American Development Bank and other institutions (World Bank, European Commission, etc.) should be approached to contribute to this project with appropriate financial resources;
- The ASHOKA representative mentioned the possibility of organising a survey among their members about how they view the concept of “progress”;
- The information system for the heads of Latin American governments proposed by Mexico is an important opportunity to foster the dialogue between statisticians and policy makers, making statistical offices more visible and influential. INEGI should inform chief statisticians in Latin American countries about opportunities that will arise from the adoption of the information system by their national governments.

The OECD, in co-operation with the Statistical Conference of Americas and PARIS21, will formulate concrete proposals before the end of the year.

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