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**Note on progress with the proposed action plan on training in statistics for
staff of international organizations**

Prepared by the IMF

**NOTE ON PROGRESS WITH THE PROPOSED ACTION PLAN ON TRAINING IN STATISTICS
FOR STAFF OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

**(Prepared by the IMF Statistics Department for the 9th Meeting of the Committee for
the Coordination of Statistical Activities, New York, February 26, 2007)**

I. INTRODUCTION

1. This note provides a summary of developments on issues pertaining to statistical training in international organizations since the 8th Meeting of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities (CCSA) in Montreal, during September 4–5, 2006. In this meeting, the Committee took note of document SA/2006/10 presented by the IMF, “Note on Progress with the Proposed Action Plan on Training in Statistics for Staff of International Organizations,” and discussed the objectives and action plan of the newly developed CCSA training website. The action plan comprises (1) further efforts to improve the CCSA training website by expanding the content (and providing timely updates) and number of featured organizations; (2) explore possibilities for setting up arrangements to allow staff from CCSA organizations to attend courses in other organizations or for an interchange of staff (concurrently, efforts should be made to expedite the development of e-training to overcome the barriers to shared training); (3) further progress by the working group coordinated by PARIS21 and the World Bank to explore mobilization of resources to support enhanced training among CCSA organizations; and (4) explore means to establish focus groups on training in each organization to help generate greater awareness and pressure groups to strengthen training, including improved compilation of information on training, which could be shared.
2. Following discussions, the Committee agreed that members would be given two weeks to provide comments or inputs on a draft of the proposed preface to the CCSA website, prepared by the IMF, entitled “Objectives and Action Plan of the CCSA Training Website.” After the deadline, the document would be finalized and posted on the CCSA website.
3. The Committee also agreed to undertake a stocktaking on (a) e-learning activities and (b) competencies for statisticians used in various CCSA organizations to draw relevant lessons on these two issues for the CCSA.

II. DEVELOPMENTS SINCE THE LAST CCSA MEETING

A. Training Website, Focus Groups, and Competencies for Statisticians

4. A draft preface to the CCSA website was circulated to members for comments. The document was revised to reflect the comments and, subsequently, placed on the website, <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/acsub/index.asp>, where it can be viewed.

All the CCSA organizations were contacted as part of the efforts to extend the representation and content of training materials on the training website. A number of organizations responded positively and, as a result, a total of 14 organizations have now made contributions on the website. However, there has not been much success in obtaining additional training materials or updates of the original submissions, including the requested information on training focus groups or competencies for statisticians. While these developments limit further progress with the recently agreed CCSA action plan for training, they have also prompted new questions on the strategy, design, and other aspects of the CCSA training website.

5. Experience with the CCSA training website to date indicates that while useful, it has some unintended side effects which need addressing. First, current arrangements appear to require continued outside efforts to prompt CCSA organizations to update and expand the training information they have provided so far for the website. Second, the host organization—UNSD—will also have to continue receiving and reposting the information on the website. Over time, as this information accumulates, the UNSD will face an increasing burden of managing and making an inventory of this information. Moreover, this information would inevitably and increasingly diverge from the information kept by organizations at their headquarters' websites.

6. A possible solution entails using the CCSA training website as a portal for CCSA members, through which hyperlinks will provide access to each organization's headquarters training website. By implication, the CCSA website portal should contain a minimum of information, which, in turn, would require limited updating. The bulk of the training information would thus remain within the major websites of each organization, providing ease of management and updates on a regular basis. Questions have been raised by some organizations on the access by outsiders to the content on their main websites. This is an important issue since access to most organizations' Intranet is also protected by security firewalls, which limits access to current staff of the relevant organizations. A possible way around this problem may be the creation by each organization of a website outside of the security firewall but which would provide access to outside clients as well as its own staff. Such a common website would minimize the cost of maintenance and updates but would contain the relevant training information to achieve the CCSA's objectives of sharing such information.

7. Some CCSA organizations have reported that they are undertaking measures to revamp their websites. The IMF is one of these organizations and plans to adopt the approach suggested above. If necessary, there should be a roundtable discussion of these possible solutions to see if consensus can be reached on the way forward.

B. E-Training Issues

8. E-training is a cheaper and more viable alternative to physical sharing of training through exchange programs and or mutual access of staff to other CCSA organizations' training programs. The rapid improvements in information technology are making it increasingly easier to share lectures and training materials in real time, while the cost of transportation and potential legal and other financial arrangements for physical sharing of training programs have not facilitated the CCSA's efforts to make progress in this area. These considerations have contributed to the desire of the CCSA members to explore the current practices and experience with e-training.

9. Progress has been limited with the joint effort between the IMF and EUROSTAT on the e-training project (as agreed in Montreal) because of staff shortages. However, there are a number of major initiatives with e-training which promise to provide useful experiences to draw on in the future, including:

- the IMF's internal e-training program mainly in managerial/leadership,¹ language and technological courses, and the external (targeted at member country officials) distance learning program, mainly in financial programming courses;
- the World Bank's e-learning materials on management of statistical development projects (under development);
- the Development Gateway Foundation's Virtual Statistical System to provide an open source software service to countries to be used in data compilation;
- Statistics Finland's eCourse in Statistics, currently comprising five modules and support materials, including hyperlinks to e-learning resources of six national statistical organizations;²
- Statistics Canada's eCourse in Statistics (under development);
- The proposal of the Statistical Institute for Asia and Pacific's (SIAP) to set e-library and e-learning programs. The latter would be set up via a pilot exercise, which will focus on teaching basic skills, with good performance in Internet-administered tests to serve as a prerequisite for admission to the six-month training programs at the Tokyo campus, as well as shorter programs in regional centers. As a first step, more training materials should be accessible through the Internet.

¹ The eCornell managerial/leadership courses are offered in partnership with Cornell University.

² CensusAtSchool of Australian Bureau of Statistics, Learning Resources of Statistics Canada, Schools Corner Statistics New Zealand, Students Corner of Central Statistics Office Ireland, Projecto ALEA Study materials of the National Statistics Institute of Portugal, and Virtual Economy Home Page on the UK Economy.

10. The above list of e-training programs is not exhaustive and it would be useful if CCSA members can provide more examples, both in their organizations or in other public and private organizations, from which relevant experience could be drawn for CCSA member organizations.

C. Working Group on Resource Mobilization

11. The World Bank and PARIS21 are spearheading this working group to explore ways to provide additional funding or enhanced advocacy for sharing training materials among international organizations. The activities have centered on a number of initiatives, including:

- Plans by PARIS21 to resuscitate the Training Task Team convened by the SIAP; it is expected that the Task Team will hold a meeting in mid-March, probably in Uganda;
- Ongoing World Bank efforts, in collaboration with PARIS21 and other partners, including EUROSTAT, to develop e-learning material on the management of statistical development projects, which also would be relevant for the CCSA organizations. The World Bank has invited other CCSA organizations to collaborate in this effort, which could serve as a useful pilot in developmental work in this area.

III. NEXT STEPS

12. As next steps in implementing the action plan, we would propose the following:

- Make further efforts to improve the CCSA training website portal by expanding the number of participating organizations. These efforts would be concomitant with measures to revamp the CCSA member organizations' headquarters' websites to enhance access and the sharing of training materials with other member organizations;
- Explore possibilities for establishing/expanding e-training arrangements, with the aim to improve the sharing of training for staff among the CCSA organizations;
- Enhance further progress by the working group coordinated by PARIS21 and the World Bank to explore mobilization of resources to support enhanced sharing of training arrangements and materials among the CCSA organizations;
- Explore means to establish focus groups on training in each organization to help generate greater awareness and pressure groups to strengthen training, including improved compilation of information on training, which could be shared.