

Seminar on the implementation of the System of National Accounts 2008 in the Western Asia Region

23-26 May 2010, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman

Draft report

The seminar was organised by the United Nations Statistics Division/Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNSD), in collaboration with the United Nations Economic Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA) and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). The seminar was hosted by the Ministry of National Economy of the Sultanate of Oman (MONE).

The purpose of the seminar was to initiate the formulation of an implementation programme for the 2008 SNA and supporting economic statistics with the objective of developing comparable economic statistics for member states in the Western Asia region to monitor the integration of their economies. It is expected that this initiative would lead to a multi-year programme to move these countries over to the 2008 SNA and to establish a minimum common data set of annual and high frequency statistics.

The expected outcome for the seminar was to reach consensus among participants on a regional programme for the implementation of the 2008 SNA in the Western Asia region which include:

- a comprehensive, region-wide assessment of countries' current capacity and needs to produce the basic economic statistics and national accounts for policy and decision making;
- a region-wide roadmap to enhance the scope and quality of basic economic statistics and national accounts for improved policy and decision making;
- a minimum common data set of annual and high frequency statistics; and
- a mechanism to coordinate activities and to build capacity in economic statistics and national accounts.

The main outcomes of the seminar are presented below.

Participants of the Seminar:

1. Welcomed the initiative by Kuwait to undertake the translation of the 2008 SNA in Arabic and agreed to form an editorial board, with ESCWA as the secretariat. The aim of the editorial board is to support Kuwait in the peer review of the translated text to ensure the consistent translation of national accounts terms and definitions. The translation will start with the glossary, followed by Annex three (changes to the 2008 SNA) before the rest of the chapters are translated.
2. Agreed to use the *Implementation programme for the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics*, adopted by the Statistical Commission, as the framework for formulating their national and regional implementation programmes for the 2008 SNA.

3. Agreed with the importance of high frequency indicators, as reflected in the Ottawa data template, for the early detection of changes in economic trends and will include the collection and dissemination of high frequency indicators in the implementation programme for the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics.
4. Welcomed the proposed implementation tools, the *Statistical System Information* sheet and the *Self Assessment Diagnostic Tool*, and encouraged countries to use these tools to assess the appropriateness of the national statistical production process to produce quality economic statistics supporting the implementation of the 2008 SNA.
5. Welcomed the initiative by UNSD to establish a dedicated website to track and support the implementation programme for the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics.
6. Welcomed the Knowledge base for economic statistics and macro economic standards established by UNSD and agreed to provide material on country practises to be housed in this Knowledge base.
7. Agreed that a vision document is an important step to establish a road map for the implementation of the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics. Apart from a vision statement and a future roadmap, the vision document should report on the statistical and institutional needs and changes to the statistical agenda; while adhering to the principles of being cost effective, fit for purpose and informing about the present instead of the past.
8. Supported the establishment of a governance structure consisting of an Advisory Expert Group and national focal points to support, advise and oversee the implementation programme of the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics in the Western Asia region, reporting to the ESCWA Statistical Committee and its Bureau. The ESCWA will prepare the terms of reference for the governance structure to be submitted to the next Session of the ESCWA Statistical Committee in October 2010.
9. Agreed on the following indicators of progress for the formulation of the national and regional implementation programme for the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics:
 - i) Provide comments on the *Self Assessment Diagnostic Tool* by 15 June 2010.
 - ii) Update the Country *Statistical System Information* sheet and submit it to UNSD by 30 June 2010 together with information on:
 - a focal point in the country that can be contacted regarding the 2008 SNA implementation programme;
 - a timeline for the self assessment diagnostic exercise within 3 to 4 months;
 - a timeline for the completion of the vision document developed based on the self assessment within 18 months;
 - the kind of assistance needed, if any, for formulating the vision document.

- iii) Make available the report on the outcome of the self assessment diagnostic exercise by end September 2010 to the UNSD;
- iv) Complete the vision document by the end of 2011 and submit the report to UNSD for posting on the SNA implementation website; and
- v) A report by ESCWA on the regional programme for the implementation of the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics to the ESCWA Statistical Committee in October 2010.