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Background document
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**Implementation of the 2008 SNA
Activities of the regional commissions**

Prepared by UNSD in collaboration with the regional commissions

A. Introduction

1. Considerable progress, under the auspices of the relevant regional advisory groups on national accounts and economic statistics, has been made in developing programmes for the implementation of the 2008 SNA and supporting economic statistics in the respective regions of the United Nations regional commissions. These regional programmes are well aligned with the global programme aiming at developing the capacity of countries to produce economic statistics of appropriate quality and coverage required for national accounts compilation and for economic analyses and decision making.
2. In accordance with the principles of the global initiative the regional commissions have initiated assessments of the national statistical systems of countries in their regions to evaluate the adequacy of the national statistical production process supporting national accounts compilation. These assessments are either carried out by the countries themselves, using the self assessment questionnaire developed by the UNSD, or through country missions as in the case of UNESCAP and UNECE. Based on these assessments and concurring with the request of the Statistical Commission of Stage I¹, countries are expected to formulate a vision or statement of strategy document, which articulate the high level implementation goals, priorities and activities and subsequently develop an implementation programme for improving the availability and quality of economic statistics and national accounts according to the 2008 SNA recommendations.
3. The regional commissions, in collaboration with the UNSD, will monitor the progress on the implementation of the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics according to the agreed timelines and set of actions to accomplish statistical and institutional goals for the sustainable improvement of the economic statistics programmes, while ensuring adherence to best practices in official statistics. This paper provides more detail on these regional implementation plans.

B. African region

Strategy of implementation

Regional strategy

4. Developing a strategy and a programme of implementation for the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics as part of Stage I of the global programme. The African Regional Strategy for the Implementation of the 2008 SNA was prepared by the African Group on National Accounts (AGNA), facilitated by the regional organizations, and adopted by the participating

¹ There are three distinct stages in the implementation of the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics through a multi-year programme, irrespective of the level of statistical development, as follows:

- (a) Stage I. Review of strategic framework and detailing of national and regional implementation programmes;
- (b) Stage II. Adaptation of classification frameworks, business registers and frames, surveys, administrative data sources and information technology infrastructure; and
- (c) Stage III. Application of adapted frameworks and source data, backcasting and changeover to 2008 SNA.

countries as well as regional and sub-regional organizations. In general, the Regional Strategy comprises seven strategic lines, sixteen objectives and thirty-nine activities. As an action and implementation plan of the Regional Strategy, a Regional Project Document (Regional ProDoc) was developed and finalized after a series of AGNA meetings in 2011. Given the limited resources and weak capacities in the Member States, it was agreed by the AGNA that there should be a common regional project for the implementation of the 2008 SNA in Africa during the period 2011-2015. The Regional Project will be carried out through six complementary, mutually reinforcing, and parallel components: methodological developments; capacity building (comprising two components: training and technical assistance); institutional setting and strengthening; advocacy campaign; and monitoring, evaluation, and reporting. The Regional ProDoc for the implementation of the 2008 SNA was fully accepted and endorsed by the third session of the Statistical Commission for Africa (StatCom-Africa III) held in January 2012 in Cape Town, South Africa. StatCom-Africa III urged pan-African institutions, regional economic communities, and Member States to take ownership of the Regional ProDoc, for all Member States to work together to allocate resources and for development partners to mobilize necessary funds to support the implementation of the five-year Regional Project as laid out in the Regional Project Document for adoption and implementation of the 2008 SNA. ECA will continue to take the technical leadership and to work as a secretariat to coordinate the activities of monitoring, evaluating, and reporting the status of the implementation of the SNA on the continent.

National strategy

5. For this purpose the African Centre for Statistics (ACS) of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) organized a Seminar on the Implementation of the 2008 SNA in Africa in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on 11-15 April 2011. One of the main purposes and outcomes of the meeting was to demonstrate to the Member States on how to develop a national strategy of implementation for the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics and to request countries to do so, especially to integrate the implementation of the 2008 SNA into the National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) in countries. The Seminar was followed up by a study on the impact of the implementation of the 2008 SNA in African countries launched at the AGNA meeting held in Pretoria, South Africa in July 2011. Cameroon, Guinea, Morocco and Rwanda were willing to be covered by the study and at least six more countries expressed their interest to participate in the study. The report of the study and the national strategies are expected to be released progressively in 2012 and 2013.

Methodological work

6. The African strategy for the implementation of the 2008 SNA in the region calls for the development of African-specific guidance manuals. For this purpose (and also since the subject of compiling Supply and Use Tables is a statistical area that is drawing renewed attention, not only in the context of the ICP but also in the area of integrated economic statistics and environmental-economic accounting and statistics), a *Handbook on SUT: Compilation, Application, and Practices Relevant to Africa*, is being developed. To review the drafting of the handbook an Expert Group Meeting (EGM) was organized by the ACS in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 24 to 28 October 2011. The objectives of the EGM were to review and discuss each of the chapters of the Handbook and to get experts' opinions on how to improve the Handbook; to share good experience and practice of the member States and regional economic communities (RECs);

and to propose ideas on how to design a training and technical assistance programme to strengthen the capacity of the Member States in the area of SUT. Towards the end of the EGM, all the participating countries volunteered to contribute country technical notes to share country experiences and strengthen the Handbook. To support this participatory approach to advance the technical capacity in this technical area and in this region, a follow-up consultative meeting will be organized early 2012 to share and exchange country experiences and good practice on the basis of the country technical notes; review and discuss the revised chapters of the Handbook; and incorporate the country technical notes to finalize the Handbook.

7. The Development Account Project on “Interregional Cooperation on the Use of Data on Informal Sector and Related Information to Achieve Exhaustiveness of National Accounts” will be implemented during the biennium 2012-2013. Led by UNECA, the main objectives of the project will be to improve the availability of timely and comparable data on informal sector and informal employment and to use these data and related information to achieve exhaustiveness of national accounts in support of evidence-based policy formulation and implementation. The objective will be achieved through regional and inter-regional meetings for training and knowledge sharing, the development of a handbook, the establishment of a knowledge sharing platform, and support missions to selected pilot countries in the regions of ECA, ECLAC, ESCAP, and ESCWA. The project provides for exchange of knowledge among participating regions. It has capacity building components to train national survey statisticians in national accounts data compilation in support to exhaustive measurement of GDP and to induce national accountants to extensively use direct survey data related to the informal sector and employment. In addition to better coverage of the informal sector, the project will also show national accountants how to fully cover other components of the “non-observed economy.” This will be done using the tabular approach to exhaustiveness.

8. Accordingly, there is a plan to undertake activities on methodological development of a *Handbook on Informal Sector: Towards Exhaustiveness in the National Accounts of Developing Countries*. The purpose of the handbook is twofold: firstly to provide a practical guidance on how to carry out the activities in the pilot countries and secondly to compile the experience and good practice from the pilot countries. The Handbook will focus on practical aspects of what is actually being done in various regions and countries for achieving the exhaustive coverage of GDP, including both the experience with the 1-2 and 1-2-3 surveys with their survey procedures, questionnaire design and use of results for national accounts; and what countries in Africa and other regions are now actually doing to achieve exhaustiveness of GDP by using information other than that from 1-2 or 1-2-3 surveys.

Other related work on economic statistics

International trade

9. For the development of a Compendium of Intra-African and Related Foreign Trade Statistics the ACS organized an Expert Group Meeting (EGM) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 5 to 7 October 2011. The EGM has achieved its objectives, namely to review in detail the tables that had been included in the Compendium; to suggest which tables in the Compendium to be retained, removed, new tables to be added and advise on the overall format of the publication; to review the data sources used in the production of the Compendium and to come up with additional and alternative data sources that could be used; to review the methodology followed in

order to fill the data gaps and suggest ways on how to improve it; and to give feedback on the relevance of the data included in the Compendium.

10. The ACS and the Regional Integration, Infrastructure and Trade Division (RITD) of UNECA organized a Regional Seminar on International Merchandise Trade Statistics (IMTS) 14 to 18 November 2011 at the United Nations Conference Centre (UNCC), in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The purpose of the Regional Seminar was to introduce various international standards and tools for producing merchandise trade statistics to African countries that had not provided much of their external trade statistics to the public domains yet. The issues and topics introduced and discussed included the following: (i) Use of international merchandise trade statistics; (ii) The 2010 IMTS; (iii) HS 2012; (iv) EUROTRACE software; (v) ASYCUDA software; and (vi) Completion of self-assessment questionnaire and preparation of a country's Action Plan. The participating countries prepared their Action Plans with regard to the recommendations and encouragements contained in IMTS 2010 by indicating the responsible office(s) and the target date of implementation. They agreed to revise the Action Plans after discussing with all concerned government departments in their respective countries and to submit the revised Action Plan to UNECA after six months (May 2012). UNECA was requested to follow up with a consultative meeting and field advisory missions to support the participating countries to finalizing the Action Plans on IMTS 2010 in July 2012.

International classifications

11. Apart from a Training Workshop on the Handbook on SUT, planned for May 2012, a series of other activities will also be organized (including a preparatory meeting; technical preparation and desk work; and expert consultation and field work; and follow-up training activities to exchange, share, and disseminate countries' knowledge and practical experiences) to develop a Handbook on implementation of the international classifications in products and activities as well as to help Member States to move to the new international classifications as part of the implementation of the 2008 SNA.

C. Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia and South East Europe countries

Strategies of implementation

Regional strategies

12. UNECE actively works with the countries from the region towards implementation of the System of National Accounts 2008 (2008 SNA). The activities are coordinated by the regional advisory body – the Steering Group on National Accounts, established by the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) in early 2010. The work includes: (a) contribution to the SNA research agenda through methodological work on developing guidance and recommendations and (b) support to the countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) and South-East Europe (SEE) for setting up national implementation programmes for the 2008 SNA and (c) other work to improve the quality and comparability of related economic statistics.

National strategies

13. Particular focus of the UNECE work is the implementation of the 2008 SNA in the EECCA and SEE countries, where efforts have to be made to ensure that the availability, quality and international comparability of their statistics does not lag behind the other countries in the region. This is achieved by organizing specialized workshops and developing practical guidance and recommendations.

14. In 2011 the UNECE finalized a survey on the main problems and priorities for implementation of the SNA in EECCA and SEE region, identifying the areas where support in terms of capacity building is needed. In addition country profiles were prepared. They present the current status of implementation of SNA, major issues in national accounts and related source statistics, ongoing work and technical assistance and progress in setting up programmes for developing of economic statistics and national accounts. This detailed information was summarized in the paper “Implementation of the 2008 SNA in the EECCA, SEE and Mongolia (2011 Update)”, which outlines the steps to be followed in the development of national strategies for the 2008 SNA.

15. The survey results and the paper were used as background documents for the workshop on Implementation Plans for the 2008 SNA in EECCA and SEE countries, organized jointly with UNSD and EFTA in Kiev (Ukraine) at the end of 2011. The workshop included discussion and recommendations for further work on specific topics that are of importance for improving the quality of national accounts in the region: exhaustiveness of national accounts and coverage of the non-observed economy; measuring of financial services; institutional sector accounts; etc. The workshop also provided forum for countries to share their action plans for developing of economic statistics and implementation of 2008 SNA. Concrete stages, priority areas for future work, activities and timeframe were proposed. As a follow-up to the workshop the special session for EECCA and SEE countries, organized back-to-back with the May 2012 National Accounts Meeting, will further discuss selected topics.

Methodological work

16. In the course of 2011 the UNECE Group of Experts finalized the Guide on *Impact of Globalization on National Accounts*. It provides comprehensive guidance to both producers of national accounts and balance of payments statistics and to those who use the data for policy analysis and research. It brings together a description of the effect of globalization on national measures, and highlights those areas that will increasingly need attention and resources to maintain the quality of the accounts, examines the behaviour of multinational enterprises and how this may affect the compilation of national statistics and includes examples showing how countries have responded to statistical challenges brought by globalization. The Guide was endorsed by the CES in June 2011 and will be published in the first months of 2012.

17. During the broad consultation of the Guide a number of conceptual and practical issues related to the implementation of the 2008 SNA and BPM6 for global manufacturing arrangements were identified. These issues were placed as the major priority for future work. Statistics Netherlands in consultation with the Steering Group on National Accounts conducted an in-depth review of global manufacturing. As a result, in November 2011, the CES Bureau established a Task force (TF) on Global Production. The objectives of the TF are twofold. The

first goal is to develop guidance on the unresolved conceptual issues arising from 2008 SNA and BPM6. The second goal is to provide further guidance on implementation aspects. In doing so, the TF will study the existing practices of countries in relation to the different types of global production arrangements.

18. The biennial meeting of the Group of Experts on National Accounts (organised jointly with Eurostat and OECD) will take place in May 2012. The meeting provides forum for the countries of the region to discuss issues related to the implementation of the 2008 SNA, to exchange experience and best practice. In 2012 the following topics will be considered: measuring of financial services including FISIM; volume measurement of services; measuring global manufacturing and other globalization issues; household sector and unincorporated enterprises. A special session for EECCA and SEE countries will take place back-to-back with the main meeting.

19. In 2011 UNECE also finalized two publications addressing related issues in economic statistics: the Canberra Group *Handbook on Household Income Statistics, 2011* (second edition) and the *Practical Guide to Seasonal Adjustment, 2011* (both in English and in Russian language).

20. Many countries face an emerging need for further integration of economic statistics due to scarce resources and growing user demand for more consistent statistics. In the end of 2011 the CES Bureau established a TF on *Statistical Business Registers*, to which UNECE will provide the secretariat. The TF will produce a set of international guidelines and recommendations of good practices in order to help countries in developing and maintaining their statistical business registers. A survey on statistical business registers will also be conducted in 2012 to shed light on the possibilities of using them for integrating data from a variety of sources.

Other Related Work in Economic Statistics

21. Another workshop that took place in May 2011 was the Joint IMF/EFTA/UNECE workshop on Links between Government Finance and National Accounts Statistics. It brought together experts from the ministries of finance and national statistical offices of the EECCA and SEE countries. The purpose of the workshop was to improve the quality and cross country comparability of data for the public and government sectors by training the compilers of both sets of statistics on the recommendations of the *Government Finance Statistics Manual 2001* and the 2008 SNA, their relationships and possible implications stemming from the 2008 SNA update. A follow-up workshop on the same topic is planned jointly with EFTA and IMF in the fall of 2012.

22. Two workshops aiming at improving economic statistics in Central Asia and other countries in the region were held in the course of 2011: Short-term Statistics and Seasonal Adjustment (Kazakhstan, March 2011) and Consumer Price Indices (Turkey, October 2011). A further workshop on Seasonal Adjustment Methods will take place in February 2012. All three workshops are organized in the framework of the UNECE Capacity Building Project on New Challenges in Economic Statistics, benefiting from the financial support of the World Bank. The project answers to the call of the UN Statistical Commission for a response to the global economic and financial crisis.

23. Monitoring the development of prices is especially important in times of economic turbulence. In 2012, UNECE in cooperation with the ILO will organise a meeting on Consumer Price Indices to discuss the upcoming international *Manual on Residential Property Price Indices*. It will also address ways of streamlining measurement of consumer prices, as well as other issues of particular interest to the EECCA countries.

24. In order to improve the basic data for National Accounts compilation, a workshop on classifications is planned to be organized jointly with UNSD, to be held in late 2012. The workshop will target specialists in the statistical offices of EECCA countries with the purpose to present and discuss in more detail criteria for adapting national classifications; addressing specific changes; implementation tools and processes (including business register recoding etc.); and back casting issues. The main focus will be on the economic classifications such as NACE, ISIC, CPC and COICOP.

D. Asia and Pacific region

Strategies of implementation

Regional strategies

25. The 2008 SNA Implementation Programme in the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) region is a part of a regional initiative aimed at improving the capacity of ESCAP member States to produce basic economic statistics in accordance with international standards and good practices. Following the decision of the ESCAP Committee on Statistics in 2009, ESCAP in close cooperation with key global, regional and sub-regional development partners and through direct consultation with member States developed a Regional Programme for the Improvement of Economic Statistics in Asia and the Pacific² (hereunder referred to as the “Regional Programme”). The Regional Programme was endorsed by the Committee on Statistics at its second session in 2010, paving the way for its implementation in the region. A detailed implementation plan for the Regional Programme is being developed under the guidance of the Bureau of the Committee, with advice from the Steering Group for the Regional Programme on Economic Statistics³ (SGRPES) established by the Committee, and in close cooperation with key global, regional, sub-regional and national partners.

26. The primary aim of the programme is to develop the capacity of ESCAP members and associate members to produce a core set of economic statistics⁴ by 2020 of appropriate quality and coverage required for short and long-term economic analyses and decision making by both government and non-government agencies/organizations. The Committee, at its second session, endorsed the core set as a guideline for developing the capacity of national statistical systems. The core set has also subsequently been endorsed in the form of Resolution 67/10 by the Commission (ESCAP). It is expected that developing the national capacity to produce the core

² E/ESCAP/CST(2)/5 “Proposed regional programme for the improvement of economic statistics in Asia and the Pacific”, available at <http://www.unescap.org/stat/cst/2/CST2-5E.pdf>

³ More information available at <http://www.unescap.org/stat/econ/steering-group-econ-stat.asp>

⁴ E/ESCAP/CST(2)/4 “Proposed core set of economic statistics”, available at <http://www.unescap.org/stat/cst/2/CST2-4E.pdf>

set will also provide countries in the region with the sufficient capacity to produce a comprehensive set of national accounts statistics in accordance with the 2008 SNA.

27. The efforts to improve economic statistics in the region are part of the broader strategy of the Committee on Statistics which aims to ensure that all countries in the region by 2020 have the capability to provide an agreed basic range of population, economic, social and environmental statistics. In this context a number of other bodies which have been established under the Committee on Statistics met during the 2011 and which work will strengthen the capacity of the region to produce economic statistics.

- In November (21 -23) 2011 ESCAP in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) organized the First meeting of the Steering Group for Agricultural Statistics⁵ (SGAS), Manila. The SGAS was established as subgroup to the SGRPES following a decision of the Committee on Statistics in December 2010, which endorsed the proposal of the FAO to develop a Regional Implementation Plan for the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics (agreeing that the regional implementation plan should be integrated into the Regional Programme for the Improvement of Economic Statistics in Asia and the Pacific). The meeting facilitated a broad consultation on the development of a regional implementation plan for the Global Strategy which is intended to among others result in increased availability in the region of agricultural statistics necessary for compilation of comprehensive national accounts.

- During this period, ESCAP also organized a Second Meeting of Partners for Statistics Development in Asia-Pacific held in Luxembourg on 9 September 2011. The Partnership was established in 2009 and is a regional coordination mechanism of all international, regional and sub-regional organizations and bilateral donors concerned with the improvement of statistics in Asia and the Pacific. During its second meeting the Partnership recognized the importance of developing core sets of statistics; considered the coordination of statistical training a top priority; and supported the regional programmes to improve economic, agricultural and rural statistics. It is hoped that the Partnership will among others, contribute to better coordination between development partners of activities aimed at implementation of the SNA in the Asian and the Pacific region.

- In October (10-11) 2011, ESCAP organized a Meeting of the Working Group to develop a strategy for the coordination of statistical training in Asia-Pacific, Greater Noida, India. The Working group on the Regional Coordination of Statistical Training was established by the Committee on Statistics, in December 2010, to develop a strategy for the coordination of statistical training in Asia and the Pacific. During the meeting, the Working Group agreed to: recommend a regular forum for coordination of training to be set up with representation of training providers and donor agencies, besides a selected representation of member States; and establish a network of training providers – for sharing training calendars, curricula, training materials and resource persons.]

28. The implementation plan for the Regional Programme will be considered by the Committee on Statistics at its third session. Following its expected endorsement the Regional

⁵ More information available at <http://www.unescap.org/stat/agri-stat/steering-group.asp>

Programme will be implemented under the guidance of the Bureau of the Committee, with advice from the SGRPES, and in close cooperation with key global, regional, subregional and national partners. The Regional Programme consists of seven components: core set to be endorsed as regional guideline, statistical advocacy, development of human resource skills, improved statistical infrastructure, improved coordination, review and monitoring, and knowledge sharing.

National strategies

29. The main ESCAP activities aimed at the SNA implementation in the Asian and the Pacific region were related to the formulation and execution of the previously mentioned implementation plan for the Regional Programme. Under this initiative ESCAP, in collaboration with the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), organized a *Seminar on developing the capacity to produce economic statistics, including national accounts in accordance with the 2008 SNA, in the Asian and Pacific region*⁶. The seminar was held in Bangkok from 10 to 13 October 2011. The seminar facilitated a broad consultation on the implementation plan to ensure that it meets priorities and needs of the majority of countries in the region. It consisted of two parts: Part 1 – which aimed at providing an overview of the global initiatives for the implementation of the 2008 SNA and tools for developing a national implementation plan for the 2008 SNA within the framework of improving economic statistics; and Part 2 – which aimed at developing the implementation plan for the Regional Programme.

30. As part of the efforts to ensure relevance and guide identification of priorities for the Regional Programme and as a tool for the National Statistical Systems (NSSs) for furthering the national strategy on economic statistics, ESCAP conducted assessments⁷ of the capacity of Bangladesh, Bhutan and Lao PDR to produce the core set of economic statistics. The three assessments consisted of four components, namely pre-mission assessment, in-country interviews (Bangladesh 7-10 January 2011, Bhutan 28-30 March 2011 and Lao PDR 5-7 April 2011), national consultative meetings (11 January 2011, 31 March 2011 and 8 April 2011 respectively), and review of statistical publications, websites and other relevant information. The assessments aimed to cover all aspects of NSSs involved in the production of the core set of economic statistics; including collection and processing of data; compilation, analysis and dissemination of core set of economic statistics; statistical infrastructure; human resources; and relationships between data providers and producers. The assessments identified constraints limiting the capacity of NSSs to produce the core set of economic statistics and their needs for capacity development.

31. The Regional Programme and its implementation plan will be the main documents guiding the future work of ESCAP in the area of economic statistics. ESCAP is currently working with the SGRPES on developing the implementation plan and plans to initiate the implementation of the Regional Programme in early 2012, with the initial focus on advocacy and securing political commitments for the improvement of economic statistics in the region. ESCAP also plans to, with support of countries and other development partners to “nationalize” the implementation plan through the development of country implementation plans which would become an integral part of the implementation strategy. The country plans will be developed

⁶ Report and other materials available at <http://www.unescap.org/stat/econ/seminar-Oct2011/index.asp>

⁷ Synthesis report of assessments is available at <http://www.unescap.org/stat/econ/seminar-Oct2011/11-Synthesis-report-ESCAP-assessment.pdf>

based on relevant assessments (including in-country assessments) and will aim to incorporate the development of the capacity of countries to produce the core set into the NSDSs or other national strategic plan. The country implementation plans will leverage existing plans, also bearing in mind United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAFs).

Other Related Work in Economic Statistics

32. During this period the United Nations Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (SIAP), which is also a part of the ESCAP statistics sub-programme, provided a range of training activities aimed at improving countries' capacity to produce economic statistics including national accounts. Key events organized during the 1 November 2010 – 31 October 2011 period included:

- Regional Training Course on the System of National Accounts, Daejeon, Republic of Korea, 13 – 17 June 2011
- Regional Course on the System of National Accounts 2008, Greater Noida, India, 17 – 22 October 2011
- Distance Training Course for the National Statistical Office for Mongolia, 23 February 2011
- First group training course in production and development of official statistics in support for national development including the achievement of MDGs, 15 November 2010 -15 March 2011, Japan [Module II: National Accounts and Economic Statistics]
- Second group training course in production and development of official statistics in support for national development including the achievement of MDGs, 22 August – 22 December 2011 [Module II: National Accounts and Economic Statistics]
- Country Course for Iraq in production of official statistics to monitor achievements of MDGs, 1 – 19 August 2011 [Components on: Introduction to GDP aggregates; and Household based surveys such as HIES and LFS]
- Country Training Course on Survey Methodology with special reference to Industrial Statistics, 30 May – 3 June 2011

33. As with other regions the International comparison Programme (ICP) in Asia and the Pacific is a key component of the strategy to strengthen the region's capacity to produce national accounts statistics. In accordance with the 2001 decision of the UN ESCAP Working Group of Statistical Experts the Asian Development Bank (ADB) through its Economics and Research Department (ERD) coordinates the ICP work in the Asia and Pacific region under the overall guidance of the ICP Global Office at the World Bank.

34. Work on the ICP in the Asia Pacific commenced in late 2009 and is slated to end in December 2013. ADB set up a Regional Research and Development Technical Assistance (R-RDTA) – specifically to implement the 2011 ICP in the region. This R-RDTA, which started in March 2010 and is expected to end in December 2013, will compute 2011 Purchasing Power Parity- based (PPP) gross domestic product (GDP) measures for Asia and the Pacific. R-RDTA activities include: (i) setting up the governance structure; (ii) presurvey preparations; and (iii)

data collection and validation; and PPP computation. ADB also undertook two regional technical assistance projects upon the conclusion of the 2005 ICP round in 2007: RETA 6482 which focused on updating the 2005 PPP estimates to 2009; and RETA 6483 which focused on developing the Supply and Use Framework according to the System of National Accounts 1993.

35. Within the Asian and Pacific region, a number of other global, regional and sub-regional development partners have also conducted activities that have directly contributed to the improvement of member States capacity to produce national accounts in accordance with the SNA. FAO, IMF, UNSD, EC, ASEAN Secretariat, SPC and many other development partners provided technical assistance and/or capacity building activities aimed at strengthening the member States capacity in this field.

E. Latin American region

Strategies of implementation

Regional strategies

36. In the UN-ECLAC region, activities in national accounts continued under the traditional mechanisms put in place by the organization and, as far as possible, in the same framework of other high-priority outputs involving national accounts, such as the 2011 Round of the International Comparison Program (ICP).

37. The sixth meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas has recently reviewed the activities in national accounts carried out in the period 2010-2011, and approved the work program of the Working Group on National Accounts for the biennium 2012-2013, which includes amongst other things fostering international coordination, regional harmonization, and the development of methodologies and standards for basic statistics and national accounts with a view to contributing to the 2008 SNA implementation and incorporating the new methodological recommendations.

38. Although the 2011 UNSD-ECLAC Seminar on National Accounts has been largely dedicated to methodological and practical aspects concerning the ICP, a complete session has been addressed to development of an implementation strategy for the 2008 SNA and supporting economic statistics with a thorough discussion of the supporting tools and guidance documents in the drafting of the implementation strategy.

Methodological work

39. The three Task Forces on FISIM, the Informal sector and the treatment of Goods for processing have completed their mandate, and resulted in three finalized or forthcoming publications by the UN-ECLAC⁸. Finally, the translation of the 2008 SNA into Spanish has been completed and is now under final review of the Spanish National Statistical Institute.

Other Related Work in Economic Statistics

⁸ CEPAL (2011), “Servicios de Intermediación Financiera Medidos Indirectamente (SIFMI) en el SCN 2008”, Serie Estudios Estadísticos y Prospectivos, Octubre, Santiago.

40. In the same framework of the 2011 ICP, an Expert Group Meeting on National Accounts has been organized for 21 Caribbean Countries in September 2011, and another will be organized in the first quarter of 2012. Although these events aims mainly at increasing capacities of member countries towards addressing the main data requirements of the 2011 ICP, they represents an important instrument to understand the actual situation in the region and prepare for the implementation plan of the 2008 SNA.

41. During 2012, activities directly addressed to the global project for 2008 SNA implementation will continue and follow-up on the work already started at the regional level⁹. These will include the finalization of the national action plans and the subsequent definition of a regional framework for the implementation of the new system.

F. Western Asia

Strategies of implementation

Regional strategies

42. Within its regular work programme, as well as extra budgetary project proposals, UNESCWA regards the implementation of the 2008 SNA and the development of national accounts as one of the priority areas, under a multi-year regional programme.

43. During an expert group meeting on National Accounts held in 2009, UNESCWA initiated the process for a smooth transition to the 2008 SNA by identifying the main challenges and obstacles faced by the countries in the region during the implementation of the 1993 SNA. Highlighting those obstacles was considered a first step in anticipating potential challenges that might hinder the transition to the 2008 SNA and ought to be addressed and eliminated whether the change over to 2008 SNA would be from the 1968 SNA or the 1993 SNA.

44. UNESCWA then developed the outline of a regional strategic plan for the implementation of 2008 SNA which was presented in a publication on the status of SNA implementation in Western Asia Region along with the sources and methods followed by countries in the compilation of national accounts statistics, shedding the light on the challenges and obstacles hindering the effective implementation. The regional strategic plan proposed by UNESCWA closely resembles the organizational structure put in place for the International Comparison Program (ICP) to promote sound macroeconomic management and evidence-based policy formulation through a sustained regionally and internationally consistent process of compilation and reporting of national accounts. The plan tackled the relevant challenges, such as financial and human resources required, as well as coordination and linkage to the overall ESCWA National Accounts and Economic Statistics activities. The main idea of the proposed plan was to establish a coordinating governance structure that would guide the development, implementation and monitoring of the 2008 SNA.

⁹ As discussed during the “Seminar on the Implementation of the System of National Accounts 2008 in the Latin America and the Caribbean Region”, Lima, Perú, 9-12 November 2010.

45. The Statistics Division at ESCWA, in collaboration with UNSD and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), organized a seminar on the implementation of the System of National Accounts 2008 in the Western Asia Region in May 2010 in Oman. Senior managers of economic statistics and national accounts programmes from national statistical offices in the ESCWA region, together with experts from ESCWA SD and UNSD created a forum for discussion and agreement on the regional and national implementation programmes.

46. The regional plan was endorsed by all participants at the seminar. The regional implementation programme for the 2008 SNA and supporting economic statistics has the objective of developing comparable economic statistics for member states in the Western Asia region to monitor the integration of their economies.

47. During the 9th session of the ESCWA Statistical Committee in October 2010, the implementation of the 2008 SNA was discussed and identified as a priority area. The Statistics Division at ESCWA presented to the member countries the governance and coordination structure of the regional strategic plan for the implementation of the 2008 SNA in the ESCWA region.

48. The regional implementation plan and the overall strategy was further developed, discussed and agreed upon during an Expert Group Meeting on National Accounts and Economic statistics held in July 2011, followed by a meeting of ESCWA Statistical Bureau in December 2011.

49. UNESCWA has thus proposed a project during 2012-2013, with the objective to initiate the formulation of an implementation programme for the 2008 SNA and supporting economic statistics with the objective to develop comparable economic statistics for member states in the ESCWA region as a whole to monitor the integration of their economies. It is expected that this initiative would lead to a multi-year programme to move the countries over to the 2008 SNA and to establish a minimum common data set of annual and high frequency statistics. The regional action plan will mature and result as an outcome of the project following several advisory missions and meetings between UNESCWA and its member countries.

50. Within the same framework, the 2011 ICP round continuous have a crucial regional role in the development of the national accounts statistics and the capacity building in the Western Asia region. The initiatives taken by the Statistics Division at UNESCWA to secure extra budgetary funds and propose additional projects and activities for the improvement of data sources of national accounts statistics, its compilation, the transition to the 2008 SNA and the improvement of short term economic statistics indicators are heavily weighed in the overall work plan. Moreover, ESCWA is planning to take part in the Development Account Project on “Interregional Cooperation on the use of Data on Informal Sector and Related Information to Achieve Exhaustiveness of National Accounts” led by UNECA, to enhance exhaustiveness of GDP and improve the coverage and comparability of national accounts.

51. The Statistics Division at UNESCWA has also submitted to UNSD a Development Account proposal on “Short Term Economic Statistics” which have a great positive impact on the overall regional capacities of national statistical offices in the field of economic statistics in general. Also, among the other activities worth mentioning is the development account

project on energy statistics which will promote the implementation of SEEA energy (2011-2013), and other activities that will be conducted in 2012 on International trade in services and industrial statistics.

National strategies

52. Representatives of ESCWA member states, together with ESCWA, reached a consensus that, due to the diversity of the National Accounts systems and different levels of implementation among countries of the region, the implementation plan should start at the national level among 4 pilot countries to represent the national accounts situation in the entire ESCWA region. Each of the four pilot countries will represent a sub-region of ESCWA in terms of the situation of the national accounts compilation and system implementation. This will require separate advisory missions to each country for assessment and tailoring a national strategic action plan that best fits its needs.

53. As each of the four pilot countries initiates its national implementation plan, a regional workshop will be conducted to share the experience, knowledge and implementation techniques of the four pilot countries with the rest of the region and with the sub-regions that each pilot country represents, and discuss difficulties and challenges encountered and recommendations to overcome potential obstacles. The outcome of the regional workshop will provide material that will be documented into a guidance manual for the ESCWA region on the implementation of the 2008 SNA, leading to development and initiation of a concrete regional action plan, in collaboration with the national accounts experts involved in the implementation of the national implementation plans in the 4 pilot countries.

54. UNESCWA has thus proposed a project during 2012-2013 to support the development of a national strategic plan for implementing the 2008 SNA in each of the 4 pilot countries, conducting national advisory services, organizing a regional workshop and an expert group meeting in collaboration with UNSD and international experts, and documenting a guidance manual for the implementation of 2008 SNA in the region.

Methodological work

55. A prerequisite for the implementation of 2008 SNA in the Western Asia region is the availability of an Arabic version of the 2008 SNA. The national statistical office of Kuwait has put a great effort into translating the updated System of National Accounts and submitted to UNESCWA a first draft of an Arabic version of the 2008 SNA in July 2011. Gratitude and acknowledgment are extended on behalf of UNESCWA and all member countries in Western Asia to Kuwait for the great work done and the efforts exerted. The translation of the glossary of 2008 SNA has also been reviewed by UNESCWA to assure the consistency of technical terms.

56. A study on “Economic Statistics in the ESCWA Region: Sources and Methods” was published in 2011 highlighting the importance of the different sources of data and the mechanism for updating the data, with reference to international recommendations and best practices. The study provides an assessment of the regional situation of source data availability for national accounts estimation in Western Asia, based on the responses of ESCWA member countries to a questionnaire that was specifically designed for the study. The publication also highlights the

importance of high frequency indicators and their benefit in economic analysis, and identifies a limited set of short term statistics specific for Western Asia region.

Other Related Work in Economic Statistics

57. Under the framework of the 2011 round of the International Comparison Programme, a regional meeting for the National Accounts experts of ESCWA member countries was held on the fringe of the 4th ICP regional workshop in November 2011. The meeting discussed the road map to be followed and the importance of initiating the regional implementation plan for 2008 SNA in Western Asia region, starting with a revised draft of the Arabic translation of the 2008 SNA as a prerequisite for its implementation in the region.

58. In November 2011, a regional workshop on "Industrial Statistics for the Arab Countries" was jointly organized between the Statistics Division of UNESCWA and the Statistics Administration of the League of Arab States, United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), and the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD). The workshop took place in Lebanon and it aimed at increasing participants' knowledge in the area of collecting, compiling and disseminating industrial statistics.

59. In January 2011, the Statistics Division at ESCWA organized a regional workshop on "Statistics of International Trade in Services (SITS)" in Oman, in cooperation with the World Bank Institute (WBI), the World Trade Organization (WTO), the League of Arab States and the Sultanate of Oman's Ministry of National Economy. The workshop aimed at improving the quality of statistics in the Arab region in the emerging field of international trade in services to better serve the needs of policy makers.

60. ESCWA has been active in the preparation of the International Recommendations for Energy Statistics (IRES), and the System of Integrated Environmental and Economic Accounts for Energy (SEEA-E) by providing inputs and discussing them with its member countries. The development account project on environment statistics and accounts which was implemented in 2007-2010 jointly with UNSD and ECLAC has strengthened the capacity of national statisticians and water and environment officials in environment statistics and accounts with a focus on water accounts as per international standards. The development account project on energy statistics (planned for 2011-2013) will also act in promoting the implementation of SEEA energy.

61. In June 2010, the Statistics Division at ESCWA organized a national training workshop on the measurement of informal sector and informal employment in Jordan. The workshop provided the national statistical office of Jordan with information and training on the basic concepts of underground economy in national accounts, the estimation of employment in the informal sector and its contribution to total GDP, and the application of the 1-2 survey approach method. The training workshop also aimed at sharing with DOS the Palestinian experience as a pilot country in the implementation of the development account project on informal economy and informal employment.