

**MINUTES  
of the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts  
(ISWGNA)**

**New York, UNSD, 7 and 15 December, 2004**

**Participants: C. Aspden (chair, OECD), A. Bloem and Cornelis Nannes (IMF), I. Havinga and Viet Vu (UNSD), L. Bratanova (UNECE), B. Hexeberg (World Bank), B. Newson (Eurostat), Carol Carson (project manager) and Anne Harrison (editor)**

**1. Adoption of the agenda**

The meeting was held in two parts. The first part was held on 7 December and addressed items 3 – 10, except item 6. It was decided not to discuss item 6 and follow it up by email after the meeting instead. The second part of the meeting, held a week later on the evening of 15 December, discussed item 2 and items 12 - 19.

**2. Discussion of the role of the project manager and editor**

The ISWGNA congratulated Carol Carson on her appointment as project manager and Anne Harrison on her appointment as editor. A discussion followed on the roles of each of them which concluded to the satisfaction of all. One important item concerns the editor's responsibilities with regard to associated handbooks and manuals. The editor will liaise fully with the authors of handbooks which are being revised on a similar time scale to the SNA to ensure consistency. There are a number of other handbooks which could be referred to in the revised version of the chapter on satellite accounts. Any problems of consistency emerging from this will also be noted. However, the final responsibility for ensuring that handbooks are brought into line with the changes to be proposed in the update, including in particular those handbooks due for later revision, rests with the authoring institution.

**3. Review action items agreed during the meeting in October 2004**

The only outstanding action item from previous meetings was with respect to item 2(a) – list overlapping issues and send them to the chairs and secretaries of all the task forces. The UNSD had already compiled a draft list, but further overlapping issues came to light during the AEG meeting. The ISWGNA asked the editor to review the list and advise the ISWGNA as to how each should be dealt with. It also decided that it would be best if an individual were identified for each overlapping issue and given the responsibility for ensuring that appropriate coordination took place. .

**4. Determine whether an additional meeting of the AEG in mid-2005 should be held, and if so when and where**

It was agreed that an additional meeting of the AEG was required. Late September 2005 was considered as a possible time, but the ISWGNA decided that further consultation with task force chairs and venue sponsors was required before a proposal could be made to AEG members. Proposals to hold the next meeting in Luxembourg, Frankfurt and Geneva were received from Eurostat, the ECB and UNECE, respectively. The advantages of holding the next meeting back to back with a meeting of the Canberra II Group were also noted.

**5. Review the preparation and conduct of the AEG meeting to begin on the following day:**

Agenda: Some changes were made to who should chair which session and the order of a few items was changed.

Conduct of the meeting: Procedures for the conduct of the meeting were reviewed, and it was agreed that previous decisions should stand.

Compulsory memorandum items: Such items have been proposed in some issue papers but they do not exist in the 1993 SNA. It was agreed that they could serve a very useful purpose, and where appropriate they could be considered an integral component of the accounts. However, it was felt that a different terminology was needed.

Conduct of future AEG meetings: The ISWGNA agreed that there had been some deficiencies in the lead up to the latest AEG meeting. The main ones were: the late receipt by the ISWGNA of some issue papers and the subsequent late distribution to AEG members; the evident lack of coordination between task forces on related issues; and some issue papers did not meet the standards set by the ISWGNA. The ISWGNA agreed that in future: meetings of the AEG needed to be better coordinated with task force meetings so as to ensure that there was sufficient time for task forces to prepare their issue papers; the project manager should ensure that task forces coordinate their work on related and cross-cutting issues; the ISWGNA should remind task force chairs and secretaries of the guidelines for the preparation of issue papers.

#### **6. Review progress of other issues flagged for discussion at the November 2005 AEG meeting**

#### **7. Funding and expected expenditures**

The World Bank reported the current state of funding. Although a substantial amount has been raised there is still a shortfall. It was agreed that expected expenditure should be reviewed by the project manager in the light of the decisions made over the last twelve months and the desired amount of outreach. It was noted that, in accordance with the new governance arrangements, the ISWGNA: National Accountants would no longer consider funding issues. Instead the project manager would deal directly with the ISWGNA: Management Group.

#### **8. SNA News and Notes**

The UNSD informed the meeting that comments from ISWGNA members on the draft sent two weeks earlier had been incorporated in the text, and it was ready to be published.

#### **9. Consider the clarification principles proposed by Germany**

It was agreed that the German proposal should be brought to the attention of the AEG. Accordingly, it was added to the AEG agenda.

#### **10. Handover of the chair to the World Bank in March**

It was agreed that the World Bank should chair meetings of the ISWGNA for the year starting March 2005.

#### **11. Next meeting**

It was tentatively agreed that the next meeting should be held on 21, 22 April 2005 in Washington DC.

## **12. Deadlines for comments on substantive proposals**

The ISWGNA agreed that in future a deadline of 60 days would be set for comments to be made on proposed recommendations for substantive change after they had been posted on the UNSD web site. It was agreed that at the same time the UNSD would distribute all such proposals, by email or fax, to all national statistical offices and central banks. Proposed recommendations flowing from the February 2004 meeting of the AEG should have a deadline of 31 December 2004 for comments.

The ISWGNA agreed that the project manager should review the comments already received and assess whether the associated issues require further consideration by the ISWGNA.

## **13. Issues for clarification**

The ISWGNA agreed that for all major proposals for clarifications an outline should be submitted by the sponsors to the ISWGNA for approval. The UNSD is to inform all taskforces of this decision.

It was also agreed that the editor should liaise directly with the sponsors of clarifications regarding the preparation of the text.

## **14. Outreach**

The ISWGNA reaffirmed that it needed to do all it could to consult with countries on the issues being considered for revision and clarification. It was agreed that the project manager should consult with a representative selection of appropriate persons, such as NSO heads and the heads of regional organisations, to determine what, if any, further steps could be taken.

## **15. AEG membership**

It was noted that several members of the AEG were unable to attend the latest meeting. Accordingly, it was decided that two suitable persons from developing countries should be invited (by UNSD) to join the AEG in order to ensure that developing countries were sufficiently represented.

## **16. Attendance of AEG members from developing countries at meetings of the Canberra II Group**

It was noted that developing countries were poorly represented in the task forces considering issues for the update. This was thought to be a particular deficiency in respect of the Canberra II Group which is considering many issues of particular interest to developing countries. At the AEG meeting several members from developing countries expressed interest in attending Canberra II meetings but said that they required financial support to do so. The ISWGNA asked the World Bank to estimate the cost of funding all the AEG members from developing countries to attend Canberra II meetings, but in doing so recognised that there was no allocation for such expenditure in the project budget. Members therefore agreed to make inquiries with potential sponsors. It was decided to consider the matter further when the outcome of such inquiries and cost information were available.

## **17. Written consultations**

At the latest AEG meeting, as in the previous meeting of the AEG, some issues that could not be completed at the meeting were left for subsequent written consultation. The ISWGNA agreed that a standardised approach was required and asked the project manager to make proposals.

Also, at the latest AEG meeting, it was decided to have a wider written consultation for some issues. The project manager was asked to recommend the best way of undertaking such consultations.

### **18. Informal sector**

The ISWGNA recognized the importance to developing countries of recommendations in the SNA concerning the informal sector. It was agreed that it would be appropriate to hire a consultant to work on this issue with the Delhi Group and the ILO. The project manager was asked to pursue this matter.

### **19. Reporting on the progress of the update to the UNSC and donors**

The project manager outlined her proposals for reporting on the progress of the update to the UNSC, donors and other interested parties. The ISWGNA supported her plans to give face-to-face presentations to donors and other interested parties to coincide with meetings of the UNSC.

## **APPENDIX I**

### **FINAL AGENDA**

#### **Meeting of the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts (ISWGNA)**

**New York, UNSD, 7 and 15 December, 2004**

- 1. Adoption of the agenda**
- 2. Discussion of the role of the project manager and editor**
- 3. Review action items agreed during the meeting in October 2004**
- 4. Determine whether an additional meeting of the AEG in mid-2005 should be held, and if so when and where**
- 5. Review the preparation and conduct of the AEG meeting to begin on the following day:**
- 6. Review progress of other issues flagged for discussion at the November 2005 AEG meeting**
- 7. Funding and expected expenditures**
- 8. SNA News and Notes**
- 9. Consider the clarification principles proposed by Germany**
- 10. Handover of the chair to the World Bank in March**
- 11. Next meeting**
- 12. Deadlines for comments on substantive proposals**
- 13. Issues for clarification**
- 14. Outreach**
- 15. AEG membership**
- 16. Attendance of AEG members from developing countries at meetings of the Canberra II Group**
- 17. Written consultations**
- 18. Informal sector**
- 19. Reporting on the progress of the update to the UNSC and donors**

## APPENDIX II

### Actions agreed upon at the meeting on 7 and 15 December 2004

Agenda item	Action	Responsible	When
3	(a) Update the draft list of overlapping issues prepared by the UNSD and advise the ISWGNA how each should be dealt with.  (b) Appoint suitable person to take responsibility for each overlapping issue	Editor  Project manager	End-January 2005 for both
4	Determine when and where the next meeting of the AEG should be held. Draft an agenda and ensure the necessary arrangements are made.	Project manager	End-February 2005
5	(a) Remind task force chairs and secretaries of the guidelines for the preparation of issue papers.  (b) Ensure that related and cross-cutting issues are properly coordinated.	Project manager  Project manager, TF chairs	End-February 2005 On-going
7	Review the project's budget and prepare an updated version for the consideration of the management group	Project manager	January 2005
12	Distribute all ISWGNA proposals for changes to the SNA as quickly as possible after AEG meetings. In addition to putting them on the UNSD website, proposals should be sent by email or fax to all national statistical offices and central banks informing them that they have sixty days to comment.	UNSD	On-going
13	(a) Inform task force chairs of the need to submit an outline of proposals for major clarifications to the ISWGNA for approval.  (b) Liaise directly with sponsors of clarifications.	UNSD  Editor	End-January 2005 On-going
14	Consult with a representative selection of appropriate persons to determine what additional steps, if any, were needed to ensure a satisfactory level of consultation of proposals.	Project manager	End-March 2005
15	Invite two additional people to join the AEG	UNSD	End-March 2005
16	(a) Estimate the cost of funding AEG members from developing countries to attend meetings of the Canberra II Group.  (b) Seek potential sponsors.	World Bank  ISWGNA	End-January 2005 for both
17	(a) Develop a standardised consultation approach (of AEG members) for issues that could not be completed at meetings of the AEG.  (b) Develop proposals for conducting wider written consultations when required.	Project manager	May 2005
18	Hire a consultant to work with the Delhi Group and the ILO to develop recommendations for the treatment of the informal sector	Project manager	May 2005
19	Provide face-to-face briefings to donors and other interested parties	Project manager	Recurrent

