

Minutes

Informal Meeting between the Regional Commissions and the ISWGNA on the SNA Implementation Strategy

21 February 2009

1. Overview of the SNA Implementation Strategy

A brief overview of the main elements and components of the SNA implementation strategy, to be presented by the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts (ISWGNA) to the fortieth session of the United Nations Statistical Commission, was provided by Pieter Everaers, Eurostat and Chair of the ISWGNA.

2. Use of National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) as the preferred strategic planning framework

An overview of the purposed strategic planning framework and main elements of the NSDS was presented by Shaida Badiee, World Bank

Discussion: Participants agreed on the importance of a strategic framework for the SNA implementation strategy. However, as many countries and regions already use some form of strategic framework, the use of an NSDS framework should not be prescriptive. The emphasis should be on strategic planning to facilitate priorities and to avoid an approach where the SNA is implemented in bits and pieces. Regional Commission representatives elaborated on their role of coordinating statistical cooperation in their regions. Participants agreed that this is a large project that needs good preparation and realistic plans. In order to balance the needs, inputs from all stakeholders should be taken into consideration.

3. Application of the common programme information structure for the 2008 SNA implementation plan

An overview of the proposed common programme information structure for the 2008 SNA implementation plan to enhance the coordination, monitoring and reporting of the SNA implementation programme was presented by Manik Shrestha, IMF.

Discussion: The participants agreed that a common programme information structure would contribute significantly to the cooperation among the stakeholders and track the progress of extending the scope and detail of the national accounts. The implementation milestones currently in use are still regarded as relevant to monitor progress. However, it is important to take into account what source data and technical assistance are needed to attain a particular milestone instead of focussing only on the outcome. Participants emphasised that available information, classification, and monitoring systems should be used rather than creating another level of monitoring, but also indicated that the information system should be accessed at a single point. They broadly accepted the four elements of an information structure for programmes and outcomes, namely the implementation milestones, General Data Dissemination Framework (GDDS) for a country's plans and priorities, information on donor activities using the UNECE

classification of statistical activities as used in the PARIS21 Partner Report on Support to Statistics (PRESS), and Data Quality Assessment Framework (DQAF) for information on quality improvement. However, existing systems may require some refinements. Also, the roles, frequencies, and timelines for establishing and maintaining the information structure for SNA implementation will have to be further elaborated. Participants raised concerns about competition between statistical programmes and emphasised that this matter should be taken into consideration in the development of the implementation programme. Participants favoured a soft coordination rather than a strong coordination of programmes for SNA implementation.

4. The implementation of the main modalities for the 2008 SNA implementation strategy

Ivo Havinga (UNSD) introduced the main modalities to be taken into account in carrying out the implementation strategy. These consist of: training seminars and workshops on SNA and related economic statistics; manuals, handbooks and training material; research; and advocacy. Annette Becker (UNSD) provided an overview of ongoing work in creating a web-based knowledgebase on economic statistics and macroeconomic standards at the UNSD.

Discussion: Participants supported the proposed modalities as part of an SNA implementation programme and emphasised the need to make extensive use of modern and innovative tools. The knowledge base created by UNSD was considered a good example to be worked out further. Two key issues raised were ensuring the quality of the materials posted and the ownership of the documents. From the discussion it was clear that extensive global, regional and national training networks exist. It would be important to mobilize these global and regional training networks. An inventory of programmes and training materials by subject area and their availability in different languages and statistical documentation by economic domain should be incorporated in the knowledge base. Participants stressed the need for standardized training material. The need to develop advocacy material and a joint communication strategy to promote the policy use of national accounts and its dependence on basic statistics were stressed.

5. The mobilization of existing or creation of new mechanism of coordination, monitoring progress and cooperation for the SNA implementation programme

Pieter Everaers introduced a proposed governance structure for the implementation programme and asked participants to consider a coordination mechanisms at the global level (ISWGNA advised by an interagency and intergovernmental advisory group) and at regional level (regional coordination board).

Discussion: Participants from the Regional Commissions were pleased that their role in improving the global statistical system is recognised by the proposed SNA implementation strategy. It was acknowledged that a coordination mechanism is important to ensure the success, but that a “soft” coordination mechanism would be sufficient.

6. The timing and sequencing for a 10-year implementation programme – 2009 to 2018

Ivo Havinga opened the discussion by providing three distinct stages, taking into account the needs for different levels of statistical development by region and sub-region. These are:

- Stage I: 2009-2010 Review of strategic framework and detailing national implementation plans.
- Stage II: 2011-2013 National adaptation of classification frameworks, business registers and frames, surveys and administrative source data.
- Stage III: 2014-2018 Application of data collection instruments and change over to 2008 SNA.

Participants broadly agreed with the principle of sequencing of the implementation programme with the various stages to be worked out further. They, however, noted that development needs for SNA implementation vary between regions and among countries depending on the current level of development and capacity for future work. Due to such a situation, while some countries may be focusing on stage 1, others may be working on stage 2 or 3. Therefore, participants suggested that the dates should not be indicated for the various stages of SNA implementation.