

Seminar on the implementation of the System of National Accounts 2008 for Caribbean countries

14-16 June 2010, Antigua, Antigua and Barbuda

Draft report

Executive summary

The seminar was organised by the United Nations Statistics Division/Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNSD), in collaboration with the CARICOM secretariat. The seminar was hosted by the National Statistical Office of Antigua and Barbuda.

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 Caribbean countries to monitor the integration of their economies. It is expected that this initiative would lead to a multi-year programme to help 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 for Caribbean countries, which include:

- a comprehensive, region-wide assessment of countries' current capacity and needs to produce 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 seminar discussed five topics, namely, i) Main changes in the 2008 SNA; ii) The need for high frequency statistics; iii) An assessment of the scope, detail and quality of the national accounts in the CARICOM region; iv) The implementation programme for the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics; and v) Assessment of the national statistical production process to support the implementation of the 2008 SNA. In each session the presentations were followed by discussions. In each session the presentations were followed by discussions. There was also an opportunity for in-depth discussions on the issues raised in a breakout session. The seminar resulted in concrete proposals for an implementation programme for the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics for Caribbean countries.

The main conclusions of the seminar are presented below.

Participants of the Seminar:

1. Agreed to use the *Implementation programme for the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics*, adopted by the United Nations Statistical Commission, as the framework for formulating their national and regional implementation programmes for the 2008 SNA.
2. Recognised the existing governance structure and the activities of the various technical working groups for statistics that exist within Latin America and the Caribbean to support, advise and direct the development and monitoring the progress of statistical capacity building in the region. These include the CARICOM Advisory Group on Statistics (AGS), the Standing Committee of Caribbean Statisticians (SCCS), the Caribbean Community Council of Ministers (Council), the technical working groups of the Statistical Conference of the Americas (SCA) and CARICOM and the statistical units of the secretariat of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) and the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank (ECCB).
3. Agreed that the implementation programme for the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics fits well within the framework of the Regional Statistical Work Programme (RSWP) for CARICOM countries (particularly the initiatives already undertaken to develop economic statistics in the region) and that the AGS could support, advise and guide the development and monitoring of progress on the regional implementation programme for the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics.
4. 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 review the appropriateness of high frequency indicators in the implementation programme for the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics.
5. Agreed to put the Ottawa data template on the agenda of the July 2010 meeting of the AGS to be considered in their deliberation of a minimum common dataset for the region, including high frequency indicators.
6. Welcomed the proposed implementation tools, the *Statistical System Information* sheet and the *Self Assessment Diagnostic Tool*, and agreed to provide comments on the *Self Assessment Diagnostic Tool* by 15 July 2010 and to update the information in the *Statistical System Information* sheet by 31 July 2010.
7. Welcomed the initiative by the UNSD to establish a dedicated website to track and support the implementation programme for the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics.
8. Welcomed the Knowledge Base for economic statistics and macro economic standards established by the UNSD and agreed to provide material on country practises to be housed in this Knowledge Base.

9. Agreed that a vision document at the country level 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 economic situation instead of writing economic history.
10. Agreed to request the AGS to consider, at their meeting in July 2010, the modalities of how the proposed implementation tools, the *Statistical System Information* sheet and the *Self Assessment Diagnostic Tool*, could be incorporated into the framework of the RSWP for CARICOM countries with the aim to prepare their vision documents preferably by the end of 2011.
11. Recognised the different levels of statistical development in countries of the region and the ensuing challenges to implement the 2008 SNA and proposed that the UNSD continue to support the implementation programme for the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics for Caribbean countries through technical assistance for which services of regional experts may be used.
12. 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 July 2010.
 - ii) Update the Country *Statistical System Information* sheet and submit it to UNSD by 31 July 2010 together with information on:
 - a focal point in the country that can be contacted regarding the 2008 SNA implementation programme;
 - the kind of technical assistance needed, if any, for formulating the vision document.
 - iii) Consideration by the AGS, at their meeting in July 2010 of a) the appropriateness of high frequency indicators, as reflected by the Ottawa data template, in the context of the CARICOM minimum data set; and b) the modalities of how the implementation programme for the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics, as adopted by the Statistical Commission in 2010, could be incorporated into the framework of the RSWP for CARICOM countries, including guidance on the proposed timeline to complete the vision document by the end of 2011;
 - iv) The UNSD will revise the *Self Assessment Diagnostic Tool* in light of comments received from participants and then provide it, with space for comments on each item, to participants by the end of August 2010 who then need to complete the assessment by end October 2010; and
 - v) The CARICOM Secretariat, the AGS and the UNSD would report on the regional programme for the implementation of the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics to the SCCS in October 2010.