

# **Minutes**

## **ISWGNA and Regional Commissions coordination meeting**

**United Nations Statistics Division, New York**  
**18 February 2010 (Thursday, afternoon)**

### **Participants:**

#### **In New York**

AfDB: Luc Mbong Mbong  
ECA: Dimitri Sanga  
ECLAC: Luis Beccaria  
INEI Peru: Renan Quispe, Maria Esther Cutimbo  
ESCAP: Jan Smit  
Eurostat: Christian Ravets, James Whitworth  
IMF: Kimberly Zieschang  
OECD: Paul Schreyer  
UNSD: Ivo Havinga (Chair), Herman Smith, Gulab Singh, Ralf Becker, Leonardo Souza  
World Bank: Barbro Hexeberg

#### **By telephone:**

UNECE: Lidia Bratanova, Tihomira Dimova, Carsten Hansen

### **1. Coordination of SNA implementation and supporting statistics program**

1. ESCAP presented a paper on a proposed Core Set of Economic Statistics for Asia and the Pacific to be used in the development of economic statistics in the ESCAP region. The core set of indicators is indicative, rather than prescriptive, comprising seven domains of economic statistics, namely, prices and costs, demand and output, income and wealth, money and banking, government, labour market and natural assets and the environment. The core list is part of the Regional Programme being developed by the ESCAP to strengthen national statistical capabilities of the countries in the region to produce comparable economic statistics of appropriate quality in accordance with international standards required for short and long-term economic analysis and decision making. ESCAP stressed the need for an informal coordination mechanism between development partners for optimal use of resources for the development of economic statistics as well as for continuous monitoring, information sharing and cooperation, towards better decision-making through better national accounts and economic statistics.

2. The African Development Bank (AfDB) presented an overview of the African Strategy for the implementation of the 2008 SNA that was developed by African Group of National Accounts (AGNA) and adopted by the African Statistical Commission in January 2010. The Strategy consists of 7 strategic lines, 16 strategic objectives and 40 related activities. The first strategic objective is the development of an African System of National Accounts (ASNA), aiming at bringing national accounts of African countries

closer to the 2008 SNA, while recognizing specific African socio-economic realities. The cost of the 5-year action plan was estimated at US\$100 million, including setting up a National Accounts Graduate Institute for training national accounts compilers in the region on a sustainable basis.

3. The ECLAC informed the meeting about the work of the national accounts work group for Latin America. This work group has informal coordination mechanisms to keep track of national accounts developments in the region. ECLAC envisage the current round of the ICP as an excellent tool to promote implementation of 2008 SNA in general and improving the scope and quality of the national accounts in particular. ECLAC also reported that they are coordinating the Spanish translation of the 2008 SNA and that the work is progressing well.

4. INEI Peru, as the chair of the Working Group on National Accounts for the Latin American region, recognized the importance of ECLAC for strengthening national statistical systems in the region, as well as the Coordination between ISWGNA and regional commissions. The latest developments were highlighted, such as: the setting up of a virtual library on national accounts and other fields of statistics; the drafting of a user manual on national accounts, which is being developed at the Andean Community; and the plans at the level of the Region for setting up an advanced course on national accounts, which will be available on the internet.

5. UNECE reported on the latest developments in national accounts in their region. The work is focused mainly on South-Eastern European (SEE) and Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) countries. A recently established Steering Group on National Accounts will assist the coordination of statistical activities in the area. It was mentioned that work towards implementation of the 2008 SNA will build on the experience UNECE has in assisting the implementation of the 1993 SNA. UNECE has long tradition in organising expert meetings in national accounts, which include special sessions for transition economies. Over the last years these meetings discussed issues related to the 2008 SNA implementation. Specific workshops and country visits are also carried out. In addition, UNECE organises expert meetings and training in related economic statistics such as business registers, price statistics, and short-term statistics. UNECE is also contributing to the preparation of a number of publications on national accounts and related statistics that would support the implementation of the SNA. UNECE cooperates closely with partners such as Eurostat, OECD, World Bank, EFTA, ESCAP, and the CIS Statistical Committee. It was also reported that the 2008 SNA will be translated in Russian by Rosstat.

## **2. Activities envisaged by the ISWGNA**

6. The ISWGNA briefed members about its deliberations on the 2008 SNA implementation programme, and highlighted the need for an inventory of supporting material and advocacy tools to explain to policy makers the policy relevance of the national accounts and economic statistics and the need for developing standard training

material on national accounts; and on a need to develop a knowledge base on national accounts compilation guidance and training material.

### **3. Synergies between the regional and global programmes**

7. The ISWGNA congratulated the regional commissions for initiating actions for 2008 SNA implementation, including setting up the regional implementation plans; requested views on the need and availability of advocacy materials; requested views on the plans for the UNSD-proposed knowledge base on economic statistics; and requested an overview on manuals currently being developed, information sharing and coordination mechanisms. The ISWGNA also reported about the development of the proposed manuals with a view to provide guidance on national accounts compilation covering each of the milestone levels of the SNA implementation.

8. INEI Peru reported that, together with ECLAC and the Working Group on National Accounts, has elaborated the outline of the Technical Cooperation Project “Strengthening of Statistical Production System on National Accounts”. The Project has as specific objectives: a) to improve the integration and organization of the basic statistics production system required to make the national economic accounting; and b) to develop a supporting course to improve technical capacities of the statisticians responsible for compiling the national accounts.

9. The AfDB stressed the importance for the preparation of an advocacy kit for the implementation of the 2008 SNA, particularly since the ICP will use the 1993 SNA in its 2011 round. The AfDB stated that asserting that the changes from the 1993 SNA to the 2008 SNA are not important might send mixed signals on the 2008 SNA implementation, particularly for African countries.

10. ESCAP highlighted the importance of information sharing, and stressed that the issue of training is not only relevant for training material, but involves also the question as to whom to train and how to retain trained personnel.

#### **3.1 Training**

11. The AfDB reiterated the need for enhanced partnership with the ISWGNA in the area of training in national accounts and assistance with the development of their training initiatives. The AfDB advocated for specific national accounts training centres, but posed two challenges to address: a) to decide whether or not the training centre would be centralized; and b) to identify the training and experience profile of a “National Accountant”.

12. ECLAC reported on a training network of the Statistical Conference of the Americas in all fields of statistics (RED). ECLAC expressed its desire to develop e-learning tools that would incorporate training activities in national languages.

13. The ESCAP reported that training activities in the region are usually undertaken by the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (SIAP), which has been setting up e-learning tools to be made available to the NSOs. ESCAP highlighted the need for identifying the core set of skills needed for compiling the national accounts in order to redesign the e-learning systems, and stressed the need for more hands on approach, rather than formal training.

14. The UNSD proposed developing a dedicated knowledge base on training material to be established jointly by the ISWGNA members, with the aim to include material provided by ISWGNA members, and possible links to regional knowledge bases. For this purpose, an inventory of documents and material and an assessment of similar repositories are to be made.

15. UNECE reported its website of training materials on statistics that were either developed in-house or presented at UNECE workshops, available at: <http://www1.unece.org/stat/platform/display/TRAINSTATS/Welcome+to+the+library+of+training+materials+on+statistics>.

### **3.2 Compilation guidance**

15. The AfDB stressed the need for practical manuals specific to each field/topic of statistics to supplement global documents. ECLAC suggested an open process of sharing compilation guidance, so that all regional commissions could profit from the specific features, if applicable. ESCAP and ECA agreed.

16. On a request for clarification the AfDB reported that the aim of the ASNA would be an Africa-oriented SNA, taking into account the socioeconomic development realities of the region, such as the integration and harmonization of the informal sector, for example. This exercise would include bridge tables to help African countries to eventually move to the 2008 SNA.

### **3.3 Information systems**

17. The IMF noted that the ISWGNA is working on broad guidance for an information structure for technical cooperation and capacity building activities, which would be used to assess source data gaps. It is based on the statistical production process, mapping the CES classification of statistical activities and the IMF DQAF, along with the list of priority indicators mapped to the relevant sections/accounts of the SNA. The information structure will allow a forward looking approach to the ISWGNA to develop national strategies for and monitor progress toward filling source data gaps. The ISWGNA will circulate a guidance document to the ISWGNA and the regional commissions.

#### **4. Link to other related statistical programmes**

18. The AfDB reported on their plan for harmonizing the CPI within its five sub-regions first, and then between them. One sub-region had already achieved CPI harmonization. The Bank stressed again the need for working on a message for policy makers advocating the implementation of the 2008 SNA, since the ICP will use the 1993 SNA in its 2011 exercise. The intention was declared to have parallel series following the 1993 and the 2008 SNA. It requested the ISWGNA to lead the advocacy process.

19. INEI Peru stressed the need for taking into account price differences within countries, as well as possible differences in the same products across countries.

20. ESCAP reported that the Asian Development Bank (ADB) is the agency coordinating the exercise in the region, but that both work in close cooperation. The ESCAP reported that they would not advocate for parallel 1993 and 2008 SNA series at the moment, given the potential for causing confusion, as well as the minimal difference it would entail in national accounts of least developed countries.

21. OECD stressed the existence of a common path from the 1993 to the 2008 SNA between countries, despite differences.

22. To conclude the session, the ISWGNA requested that advocacy material from the AfDB be shared with the participants in order for it to understand their views on the issue.