

UNSD- Regional Commissions Coordination meeting

International implementation programmes for the integrated economic and environmental statistics – 2008 SNA and supporting statistics, trade statistics and environmental economic accounting

**Venue: United Nations Headquarters Building UNDC 2 – Room 2111
Saturday, 19 February 2011 from 2pm to 6pm**

Agenda

1. Introduction- 10 minutes

Introduction: Ivo Havinga

The objective of the meeting is to foster coordination between UNSD and the regional commission on their programmes in integrated economic statistics and environmental accounts. It is foreseen that this collaboration would strengthen our individual work programmes and also ensure that our programmes are build on a universal approach.

Discussion: Are we sharing the same expectations?

2. The implementation programme of the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics with annual and infra-annual frequency -30- 45 minutes

Introduction: Herman Smith

The implementation of an integrated set of national accounts and basic economic statistics at annual and infra-annual frequency has reached a critical milestone as part of the three distinct stages in the multi year programme identified for the change over to the 2008 SNA. Countries are encouraged to finalise their implementation programme as an outcome of a strategic review of their economic statistics programmes. At this critical junction, UNSD and the regional commissions (in collaboration with the other members of the ISWGNA) need to work closely with the countries to support them in completing Stage 1 to adhere to the time table agreed by the Commission for change over to the 2008 SNA by 2014. Meanwhile, we have to offer countries to realise quick wins to demonstrate improved accessibility to already available economic statistics. Also we have to keep in mind that Stage 2 requires adaptations of classifications (ISIC Rev. 4 and CPC ver. 2), business registers, and data sources as part of the adaptation of the production process to allow for a change over to Stage 3 from 2014 onwards.

Discussion: How do the present regional programmes reflect roadmap to achieve the goals of Stage 1, 2 and 3? How might we assist countries to draft their implementation programmes and realise quick wins on accessibility of existing data?

3. The research agenda of the 2008 SNA – 20- 30 minutes

Introduction: Benson Sim

The SNA is designed to give a realistic and compact view of the economy that is suitable for policy and analytical use. As the economy changes and policy and analytical needs evolve, the SNA must be reviewed to see if it is still relevant for these purposes. Work on the research

agenda of the 2008 SNA is coordinated under the auspices of the ISWGNA to ensure worldwide representation in the deliberation of these issues and the proper implementation of the results in international standards or handbooks. Proposals for task forces or expert groups to do research on specific topics should be submitted to the ISWGNA, which will assess the results in accordance with the update procedures for the SNA established by the Commission.

Discussion: What are the present and future regional research topics and what mechanisms should be put in place to increase participation in the research agenda and build the UN capacity in participating substantively in the agenda?

4. Training and Capacity building -45 minutes

Introduction: Gulab Singh

Insufficient training to national accountants and economic statisticians has been identified, by global and regional assessments, as one of the key impediments to the successful implementation of the SNA and economic statistics programmes by countries with less developed statistical systems. The 2008 SNA implementation programme, as endorsed by the Commission, therefore, gives greater emphasis to training and capacity building to meet the challenges of national accounts and economic statistics programmes in countries with less advanced statistical systems to strengthen institutional capacity building and the statistical production process. In this regard, the ISWGNA agreed, in line with regional requests, to ensure that a mechanism is put in place for providing standardised training material across the broad array of statistical domains (in accordance with international classification of statistical activities). The ISWGNA and regional commissions have recognised that this effort is resource intensive and may take some time to produce. As a concrete step, existing training materials from international agencies and countries will be made progressively available through a dedicated knowledgebase on training materials to be established on the dedicated UNSD website. Further initiatives have to be considered such as training for trainers, e-learning, audio-visual training material.

Discussion: What are the present regional initiatives and how can we advance the training and capacity building programme with aligned and collective actions?

5. Environmental Economic Accounts -30-45 minutes

Introduction: Alessandra Alfieri

The revision of the SEEA is on track with the recommendations on the issues related to Volume 1 submitted to the Statistical Commission for its endorsement. The international standard and the part related to its elaboration, interpretation and application will be completed in time for the Statistical Commission in 2012. Countries have widely participated in the global consultation on the issues and the global consultation on chapters is expected to start in April.

The implementation of SEEA Water as interim standard and IRWS as its supporting international recommendation on water statistics have received a positive uptake by many countries spearheading the development of coherent water statistics and their link to the economy. With the expected release of IRES and SEEA Energy and more broadly the SEEA a breakthrough is expected for the energy statistics linked to the economy and for the overall framework. Given this positive uptake of countries to include these statistics and accounts in their official statistics, strategic choices have to be made for the international programme led by UNCEEA. Meanwhile UNSD and regional commission have to build up their capacity to address the increasing demand

for technical assistance as well as understanding to integrate these demands with request for supporting environmental indicators.

Discussion: What is the capacity at regional level in environmental statistics and accounts building on UN and country expertise? What would be the preferred strategy building on the existing capacity and experience?

6. International trade and tourism statistics -30-45 minutes

Introduction: Ronald Jansen

New standards are in place for international merchandise trade and trade in services since 2010, as well as for Tourism statistics (in 2008). Accordingly, compilation guidance is being drafted for all three areas. Commensurate, demand has intensified for country assistance with the implementation of these new recommendations.

There is a clear policy demand to “de-stovepipe” international trade statistics and integrate these with other economic statistics. The recent financial crisis spread to the developing countries mostly through the trade channels (due to a huge decrease of import demand by developed countries). The resulting negative effect on the employment in the export industries of developing countries clearly demonstrated the fragmentation of the global production over many countries and therefore the increased interdependence of economies. International trade in terms of product flows is no longer sufficient for policy makers to understand the trade dynamics and they are demanding more information on the relation between trade and industries, with more information on the role of multinationals and their foreign affiliates.

The recent Global Forum on Trade Statistics focused exactly on all these issues and stated as a shared vision to improve the relevance of international trade statistics by connecting trade information and integrating it with its economic, social, environmental and financial dimensions while minimizing the response burden. Among others, the Forum encouraged countries to develop and maintain a statistical trade information system at micro-level around the enterprise register, including multinational enterprises and their foreign affiliates. Also, aggregate economic activity within the SNA framework can be better constructed from those micro-level data on trade by enterprise statistics.

In short, within the context of implementing the new recommendations for international trade statistics additional effort and emphasis should be placed on linking trade to other economic statistics while staying consistent with the various new recommendations and consistent with the SNA framework. At the international level, UNSD would like to intensify collaboration with Eurostat, OECD, UNIDO, WTO and IMF in close coordination with the regional commissions.

Discussion: What are the plans and programmes of the regional commissions for trade statistics?

7. Conclusions and the way forward -30 minutes