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National Accounts

Background document  
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**Implementation of the 2008 SNA  
Activities of the regional commissions**

**Prepared by the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts**

## **A. Activities of the regional commissions**

1. The regional commissions in collaboration with the countries and sub-regional organizations and the ISWGNA members have established advisory groups on national accounts and economic statistics. The purpose of the advisory groups is to assist the regional commissions in formulating regional implementation programmes for the System of National Accounts 2008 (2008 SNA) and the supporting statistics. Almost all of these advisory groups have already prepared implementation programmes for their respective regions which have been, or are in a process of being approved by the respective regional statistical commissions/committees. These regional programmes are well aligned with the global implementation programme for the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics, covering the three stages for the change over to the implementation of the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics through a multi-year programme. The three stages are:

- (a) Stage I. Review of strategic framework and detailing of national and regional implementation programmes;
- (b) Stage II. Adaptation of classification frameworks, business registers and frames, surveys, administrative data sources and information technology infrastructure; and
- (c) Stage III. Application of adapted frameworks and source data, backcasting and changeover to 2008 SNA.

2. A common theme of these programmes is a consensus among the countries to have an assessment of their current capacity and needs to produce the supporting statistics for national accounts compilation; a roadmap to enhance the scope and quality of basic economic statistics and national accounts for improved policy and decision making; and to have a minimum common data set of annual and high frequency statistics with meta data descriptions for monitoring progress on the implementation. It is expected that the progress on the implementation of the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics will be monitored by the regional commissions, according to the milestone and MRDS measures and the common data set with meta data descriptions.

## **B. African region**

3. To foster the implementation of the SNA in the African region the African Group on National Accounts (AGNA) was established, consisting of the AfDB, AUC, ECA, and a group of member countries. AGNA has prepared a regional strategy for the implementation of 2008 SNA entitled the “African Strategy for the Implementation of the 2008 SNA.” The regional strategy document lays a good foundation for the implementation of 2008 SNA in this region. In the coming year it will be followed by the preparation of a detailed work plan for carrying out and implement the Strategy. It is recognized that AGNA provides a useful network and sets a good way of working in this region. The region is committed to uphold this position and continue the collaboration among the regional institutions as well as with other key stakeholders.

4. In recent years, technical resources and capacity of ECA in the area of Economic Statistics and National Accounts have been substantially strengthened with the appointment of

regional advisors on NSDSs and Informal Sector Satellite Accounts & Employment Matrix and the newly established ECA-ACS Economic Statistics and National Accounts Section.

5. In the region, ICP-Africa 2011 is taken as one of the major components of the Regional Strategy for the implementation of 2008 SNA. It is not enough to just get data of the particular years for ICP but also the whole ICP process should be taken as a capacity building process for building up the capacity in National Accounts and supporting economic statistics in the national statistical systems of the countries in this region.

6. Other activities planned for the implementation of the 2008 SNA to be undertaken between 2011 and 2014 include the “Strategy on the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa” (SHaSA). The aim is to gather policy support and to have relevant stakeholders to position and commit themselves according to the “Strategic Lines” and “Objectives” outlined in the Regional Strategy document.

7. As the UN regional arm, UNECA will take up more activities to play the important role of coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the SNA on the regional level with a network with other UN agencies and partnership with member countries: Making assessment of the country situation and statistical development, evaluation of the impacts from moving to 2008 SNA, monitoring and reporting actions at the regional and sub-regional levels.

### **C. Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia and South East Europe countries**

8. UNECE actively supports the implementation of the 2008 SNA in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) and South-East Europe (SEE). The Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) in early 2010 established a Steering Group on national accounts with the purpose to (a) Advise UNECE in its work to support EECCA countries in their implementation of 2008 SNA, taking into consideration the specific circumstances in these countries that are not members of the European Union or the OECD; (b) Participate in the formulation and planning of technical assistance activities in national accounts and related source statistics; and (c) Contribute to the organisation of meetings and workshops in the field of national accounts and propose research and agenda items.

9. In 2010 UNECE conducted a survey of the EECCA and SEE countries. The survey identifies the main problems and priorities for implementation of the SNA and the areas where support in terms of training and technical assistance is needed. The results of the survey will be used to guide the activities to help countries in implementing SNA.

10. UNECE is preparing two regional workshops on national accounts in 2011. The first workshop will be organized jointly with EFTA and IMF and focus on the use of government finance statistics in national accounts. The workshop is expected to take place in spring 2011. The second workshop, organized jointly with UNSD, is expected to take place in autumn 2011 and will focus on the 2008 SNA and the development of national implementation plans.

11. UNECE has prepared a capacity building programme on challenges in economic statistics for 2011-2012 for Central Asia and other countries in the region. The programme, which is financed by the World Bank, will include regional workshops on (a) Short-term economic

statistics, to take place in Kazakhstan in March 2011; (b) Seasonal adjustment methods in practice (early 2012); and (c) Consumer price indices (autumn 2011).

12. UNECE is preparing the publication *Practical Guidance on the Impact of Globalization on National Accounts* that is being drafted by an expert group organised jointly with Eurostat and OECD. It is expected to be published in 2011. UNECE also provides secretariat support for the Task Force to update the Canberra Group Handbook on Household Income Statistics. It is the intention to have the revised handbook endorsed by the CES in June 2011 and subsequently published and distributed.

#### **D. Western Asia**

13. To respond to the challenge of improving the quality and coverage of national accounts and, more generally, economic statistics in the region, requires a range of interventions by various stakeholders. In various meetings with countries of the region, ESCWA has proposed a regional governance structure for 2008 SNA implementation that closely resembles the organizational structure for other global initiatives in statistics, such as the International Comparison Program and which was subsequently approved during the last session of the UN-ESCWA Statistical Committee (Beirut, October 2010). The primary aim of the regional governance structure is to guide the development, implementation and monitoring of the action plan for 2008 SNA implementation at the national and regional level.

14. The success of the regional programme will depend on the collective commitment of all national, regional and international partners in mobilizing adequate financial resources, providing technical assistance and ensuring support in terms of statistical capacity-building initiatives. In recognition of the importance to the region of successful implementation, ESCWA will continue to include initiatives to strengthen the skills of national statistical office staff and to promote consultation, the exchange of experience and the sharing of best practice in its regular programme of work, the regular programme for technical cooperation and (whenever feasible) extra-budgetary activities. An Expert Group meeting on national accounts and economic statistics is expected to be held at the end of March 2011 as a follow-up to the expert group meeting held from 12-14 May 2009 in Cairo. Other activities with a direct impact on the implementation programme will also be undertaken, including two training regional workshops, one on industrial statistics and classifications (2011) and another on short-term economic statistics and their use for policymaking in (2011).

15. ESCWA will continue to provide regional advisory services, offering support in the main areas of economic statistics, including national accounts, international trade, sectoral and environment statistics and indicators, sampling, classifications and business surveys. A regional advisor expert in national accounts and economic statistics has been recruited in October 2010 with the aim of further developing the modalities to help member countries in the implementation of international recommendations. Advisory services will be also provided in areas related to the improvement of national institutional frameworks for official statistics.

16. In addition to the annual recurrent publication *Bulletin on National Accounts Studies of the ESCWA Region*, a non-recurrent publication entitled *Study on Economic Statistics in the ESCWA Region: Sources and Methods* will be finalized, based on an ad-hoc questionnaire sent

to member countries. Two Expert Group meetings will be held during the biennium 2010-2011, one on data and metadata reporting and dissemination, and another on measuring employment and its social and economic implications in ESCWA member countries. Finally, ESCWA act as regional coordinator for the International Comparison Program (ICP 2011), a global initiative directly linked to national accounts.

## **E. Asia and Pacific region**

17. In the ESCAP region the implementation programme for the SNA forms part of a wider regional initiative aimed at improving the capacity of ESCAP member States to produce basic economic statistics in accordance with international standards and good practices. The Regional Programme for the Improvement of Economic Statistics in Asia and the Pacific (hereunder referred to as the “Regional Programme”) was developed in close cooperation with key global, regional and sub-regional development partners and through direct consultation with member states. The primary aim of the programme is to develop the capacity of ESCAP members and associate members to produce a core set of economic statistics of appropriate quality required for short and long-term economic analyses and decision making. It is expected that developing the national capacity to produce the core set of economic statistics will also provide the countries with sufficient capacity to produce a comprehensive set of national accounts statistics in accordance with the 2008 SNA. This ESCAP initiative supports the global initiatives of promoting the implementation of an international framework for integrated economic statistics while targeting the specific needs for improvement, particularly in producing basic source data in the Asia-Pacific region.

18. The Regional Programme will be the main document guiding the future work of ESCAP in the area of economic statistics. The Regional Programme will be considered by the Committee on Statistics at its second session in December 2010. Following its expected endorsement the Regional Programme will be implemented under the guidance of the Bureau of the Committee, with advice from the Regional Programme Steering Group (RPGS) established by the Committee, and in close cooperation with key global, regional, sub-regional and national partners. The Regional Programme consists of seven components: core set to be endorsed as regional guideline, statistical advocacy, development of human resource skills, improved statistical infrastructure, improved coordination, review and monitoring, and knowledge sharing.

19. The United Nations Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (SIAP), which is also a part of the ESCAP statistics sub-programme, provided a range of training activities aimed at improving the countries statistical capacity to produced economic statistics including national accounts.

20. ESCAP established (at a meeting held on 14 December) the Partners for Statistics Development in Asia-Pacific. The Partnership will act as the coordinating body for statistical development activities in the region. The Partnership enables a common direction for regional capacity building activities and the development of national statistical systems, which supports aid effectiveness through enhanced synergy and complementarities among programmes and activities of the partner agencies. It is expected that the Partnership will among others, contribute to better coordination between development partners of activities aimed at implementation of the SNA in the Asian and the Pacific region.

21. As with other regions, the ICP in Asia and the Pacific is a key component of the strategy to strengthen the regions capacity to produce national accounts statistics. In accordance with the 2001 decision of the UN ESCAP Working Group of Statistical Experts, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) through its Economics and Research Department (ERD) coordinates the ICP work in the Asia and Pacific region under the overall guidance of the ICP Global Office at the World Bank.

22. Within the Asian and Pacific region, a number of other global, regional and sub-regional development partners have also conducted activities that have directly contributed to the improvement of member states capacity to produce national accounts in accordance with the 2008 SNA. The Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), IMF, UNSD, European Commission, ASEAN Secretariat, SPC and many other development partners provided technical assistance and/or capacity building activities aimed at strengthening the member states capacity in this field.

#### **F. Latin American region**

23. ECLAC continued its collaboration with the National Accounts Working Group of the Statistical Conference of the Americas (NAWG-SCA) in support of the implementation of the SNA 2008. These regional implementation activities are based on the NAWG-SCA Diagnosis on the Current State of Economic and National Accounts Statistics and the Regional Plan for the Implementation of the 2008 SNA in Latin America and the Caribbean, which was approved in Santiago on 10 December 2009.<sup>1</sup>

24. The conclusions of the three task forces that were launched during the 2009 Latin American and Caribbean National Accounts Seminar in Montevideo, Uruguay, were presented in the UN-ECLAC/UNSD Seminar on the Implementation of the System of National Accounts 2008 in the Latin America and the Caribbean Region that took place in Lima, Peru from 9 to 12 November 2010. These task forces addressed specific methodological issues related to the 2008 SNA treatment of FISIM, goods for processing and informal sector.

25. Other actions include advances made by ECLAC with the support of Spanish-speaking countries in the translation of the 2008 SNA into Spanish. A draft version of the Spanish text is available on the ECLAC website and the translated text is expected to be submitted for publication during the first half of 2011.

26. In addition, ECLAC continued with the preparation of the 2011 Round of the International Comparison Program (ICP) in Latin America and the Caribbean, leveraging on synergies with the Regional Plan for the Implementation of the SNA 2008 in the region. Two technical meetings in the field of national accounts were organized by ECLAC in the framework of the ICP, one for Latin America (held from 28 to 30 September in Santiago, Chile) and one for

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<sup>1</sup> The Regional Plan for the Implementation of the SNA 2008 in Latin America and the Caribbean is organized around three basic dimensions: (a) actors (i.e., users, NSOs, Central Banks, international agencies, and donors); (b) topics (i.e., basic statistics, the general SCN framework, and special topics like goods for processing, FISIM, etc); and (c) actions (i.e., training, technical assistance, south-south cooperation, research and methodological development, and international expert group meetings).

the Caribbean countries (held from 30 November to 1 December in Nassau, The Bahamas, with the support of CARICOM Secretariat).

27. Various technical assistance missions have been carried out during 2010 as part of the activities of ECLAC's Regional Advisor in national accounts and economic statistics. These missions had the goal of providing technical support to national agencies in their change of base year programmes as well as in the adoption of new recommendations from the 2008 SNA. Also, in cooperation with the IMF, ECLAC has organized training courses in National Accounts that have the 2008 SNA as a framework.

28. The main challenges faced by countries in the region in relation to the 2008 SNA implementation, as identified by the NAWG-SCA, continue to be the lag in the development of basic economic statistics and insufficient funding for strengthening statistical capacity. In this regard, there is a clearer recognition among stakeholders that the efficient implementation of the 2008 SNA and its supporting economic statistics requires closer cooperation between the national statistical offices and central banks, especially when the responsibility for collection of basic economic statistics and the compilation of national accounts is shared between both institutions.

29. As a result of the discussions that took place in the framework of the Seminar on the Implementation of the System of National Accounts 2008 in the Latin America and the Caribbean Region that took place in Lima, Peru from 9 to 12 November 2010, the invitation to central banks and other institutions responsible for the collection of economic statistics and compilation of the national accounts was again extended to fully participate in the activities of the SCA and its Executive Committee. In addition, the SCA has recognized the need to carry out high-level advocacy and outreach actions to explain the use of national accounts to data providers, policy makers, academia and other users.