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**Progress on the implementation programme for the
System of National Accounts, 2008 and supporting statistics**

Prepared by the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts

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Progress on the implementation programme for the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics

I. Introduction

1. The Implementation Programme for the System of National Accounts 2008 (2008 SNA) and supporting statistics represents a global statistical initiative, which was mandated by the Statistical Commission at its fortieth session following the adoption of the 2008 SNA as the international standard for compilation and dissemination of national accounts and its support for the implementation strategy of the 2008 SNA proposed by the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts (ISWGNA).

2. This background document to the ISWGNA report to the forty-first Session of the Commission provides further details on the global initiative for the implementation of the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics.

3. After presenting the objective and elements of the global initiative in the Section II, the document highlights the work undertaken by the ISWGNA and the regional commissions in Sections III and IV. The envisaged links of the 2008 SNA programme with other global statistical initiatives such as the International Comparison Programme (ICP), the global strategy for agricultural and rural statistics and the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-first Century (PARIS21) are briefly described in Section V.

II Objective and elements of the global statistical initiative

4. This global initiative has the dual objective in assisting countries in developing the statistical and institutional capacity to (a) make the conceptual change over from the 1993 SNA to the 2008 SNA and (b) improve the scope, detail and quality of the national accounts and supporting economic statistics.

5. With the adoption of the 2008 SNA, the Statistical Commission encouraged all countries to change over to the concepts of the 2008 SNA for a better measure of their economic progress. By way of example, countries with innovative industries might be able to better explain the main drivers of economic growth by recognizing the contribution of research and development to value added and capital formation; while countries with informal financial markets might measure the production from financial services provided by money lenders to realize a better measure of GDP. It is foreseen that this global initiative will ensure that the measures of economic progress based on the GDP and other national accounts aggregates remain internationally comparable and that the changes in production, consumption and accumulation in a global economy remain fully explained.

6. With the 2008 SNA being flexible to accommodate all countries and economies, regardless of their level of statistical development, each country has to review with its users the relevant changes from the 1993 SNA to the 2008 SNA that are applicable to the country and consider its adoption. At the same time, user consultation should revisit the scope, detail and

quality of the accounts and supporting economic statistics by taking a view on which socio-economic and financial policies have to be informed by the structural and short-term economic statistics, including annual and quarterly national accounts.

7. The efficiency and sustainability of the global statistical initiative for the implementation of the 2008 SNA rest on the agreed principles of the implementation strategy, namely: (a) strategic planning, (b) coordination, monitoring and reporting; and (c) improving statistical systems. The strategy takes as a starting point the different levels of implementation of the SNA in various countries. It acknowledges the need for coordinated action, not only at the international level but also at regional and sub-regional levels and emphasizes the need for close cooperation with regional commissions. And finally, it is a response to the expressed need by countries for technical assistance in changing over to the 2008 SNA.

8. *Strategic planning* is a key principle in mobilizing political and financial support for investment in statistics for which strategic planning frameworks should be used to connect national development objectives with a programme of work for statistical capacity-building. Strategic planning can identify the current strengths and weaknesses of statistical capacity to produce key economic indicators and basic source data, and in consulting users. This approach could also lay out a schedule of tasks to mitigate weaknesses. Many developing countries already have or are updating their NSDS planning tool while other countries are drafting similar frameworks for the same purpose.

9. The principle of *coordination, monitoring and reporting* ensures that international and regional organizations, other donors and recipient countries have clear roles and that their actions are complementary and effective. An information system that is commonly accepted is in the interest of effective project programming, monitoring and reporting, especially in the SNA context. This is of particular importance in a multi-stakeholder environment.

10. The principle of *improving statistical systems* is undertaken through the strengthening of the national statistical system covering each of the building blocks of the statistical production process. The ISWGNA refocused the modalities used in the implementation strategy for the 1993 SNA for providing training and technical cooperation, preparing manuals and handbooks, and sponsoring research. The aim is to focus more on the various stages of the statistical production process that precede the integration of the data into the national accounts, namely, the collection and processing of basic source data and the institutional context. Advocacy has been added as an additional modality to play an important role in encouraging national support for the acquisition and maintenance of viable economic statistics and national accounts programmes and in communicating the policy relevance of the 2008 SNA.

11. The principles of the implementation strategy are operationalised in the implementation programme for the 2008 SNA, which comprises four elements, namely: (a) use of National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) as the strategic planning framework, (b) the programme information structure built around the statistical production process, scope and compliance for the national accounts and supporting economic statistics, (c) the modalities of statistical capacity building through training and technical cooperation, publication of manuals and handbooks, research and advocacy, and (d) the stages of implementation leading to the change over to the 2008 SNA. Each of these elements are briefly presented in turn.

12. Use of National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDS): NSDS is the most widely used tool for statistical planning in developing countries. Many already have or are updating their NSDSs to include the implementation of the 2008 SNA. The members of the ISWGNA will work via PARIS21 to further develop the guidelines for the elaboration of NSDSs to offer guidance on the use of the strategic planning framework for economic statistics. Developing countries should review their NSDS to ensure that they incorporate the 2008 SNA implementation needs.

13. The regional commissions, in consultation and cooperation with their (sub) regional development partners, should coordinate this review of the NSDS for the implementation needs of the 2008 SNA and, where necessary, supplement this information with other national and regional assessments. For this review of national strategies and the subsequent formulation of national and regional SNA implementation plans, it is envisaged that existing regional coordination mechanisms, such as statistical committees or working groups will be mobilized, with the regional commissions acting as secretariat.

14. The programme information structure: The ISWGNA proposes to use a programme information structure to facilitate the coordination, monitoring and reporting on the SNA implementation in this multi-stakeholder environment.

15. The ISWGNA already reports to the Commission about the scope of national accounts compilation and the conceptual compliance with the 1993 SNA in terms of milestones and a Minimum Required Data Set (MRDS) based on the United Nations National Accounts Questionnaire (UN-NAQ). Although the milestone and MRDS measures are deemed to be adequate to assess the scope and compliance with the 2008 SNA they will be subject to review to accommodate also the need for a broader scope of economic statistics and high frequency data including quarterly national accounts for early warning of exposures and risks. In addition, the UN-NAQ needs to be reviewed to comply with the new concepts of the 2008 SNA. The ISWGNA organisations also apply other generally accepted frameworks in performing or facilitating data quality assessments for national accounts and supporting data sets. The sources of methodological and institutional descriptions used to perform these assessments include IMF GDDS and SDDS metadata, information gleaned in the discovery process during quality assessment reviews, including self assessments, peer reviews, as well as IMF data modules of the Reports on Observance of Standards and Codes, and periodic international surveys.

16. The ISWGNA observes that a broadly common structure to summarize the activities and outcomes of national accounts improvement projects could significantly promote coordinated technical cooperation and capacity building activities at country and regional level. The taxonomies for this structure should include statistical process and data quality dimensions. Together, the two dimensions will allow the ISWGNA organizations, in collaboration with their regional partners to coherently organize and assess flows of information on project design and programming as well as project activities and milestones at different levels of consolidation. The statistical process dimension, in conjunction with the well-established Classification of Statistical Activities of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES), will be used to organize programme design and implementation progress, and the IMF Data Quality Assessment Framework (DQAF) will be used to organize information to evaluate and report on outcomes. The detailed items of the statistical production process taxonomy can be aggregated into a five-

part structure: (a) institutional setting; (b) registers and frames; (c) surveys and administrative sources; (d) integration frameworks; and (e) dissemination.

17. Critical to the success of using this information structure to coordinate effectively is the buy-in from the countries and regional partners in adopting compatible information taxonomies for projects supporting the national accounts. The regional commissions can play a prominent role in characterizing the programming, coordination and reporting of the regional programmes using this international structure, in close partnership with their member countries and regional agencies.

18. The modalities of statistical capacity building: In order to meet the challenges of national accounts development along with the supporting statistics, the members of the ISWGNA like to initiate a dialogue with the regional commissions and other development partners to consider programmes for four modalities: (a) training and technical cooperation, (b) manuals and handbooks, (c) applied research and d) advocacy. It is expected that these four modalities will be applied flexibly by ISWGNA members.

19. *Training and technical cooperation*: When considering the activities for this modality, a more holistic view on the elements of the statistical production process could assist in structuring the possible areas of intervention: the creation and maintenance of statistical business registers and other frames, the design of surveys and use of administrative information systems to generate relevant source data, the integration of source data, the dissemination of statistics and the building of the institutional and IT infrastructure.

20. Where possible and relevant, it is envisaged to mobilize the existing regional knowledge and training networks to take part in an internationally agreed training and teaching programme for the SNA and supporting economic statistics. If mutual beneficial relationships can be ascertained, those regional networks will be invited to collaborate in developing and delivering standard training and teaching programmes (including distance learning programmes).

21. *The publication of a series of manuals and handbooks*: This modality has been introduced to provide methodological support in the implementation of the 2008 SNA for countries at different stages of development or milestones. More emphasis is expected on the practical nature of the methodological guidance and more consideration is envisaged for fundamental issues of data sources and quality. In addition to possible updating of existing normative manuals, new guidance might be needed, both for national accounts and on other fields of economic statistics.

22. The 2008 SNA website (hosted by the United Nations Statistics Division) has been extended to include a web-based knowledge base on methods and country practices in economic statistics, sourced from and hyperlinked to other relevant organizations, to facilitate easy access to statistical standards, manuals, handbooks, textbooks, compilation guidance and best practices on the implementation of the 2008 SNA.

23. *Research*: Research has already been initiated for the treatment of permits and aspects of globalization such as the treatment of goods for processing. Other topical areas have been

identified and will be progressively undertaken in support of the implementation of the new concepts of the 2008 SNA.

24. *Advocacy* to support an ongoing dialogue among statistical producers and users has been recognized as a critical element in the promotion of the statistical capacity building. For this purpose, the statistical advocacy tool kits maintained by Paris 21 Secretariat could be a point of departure. In general, the tool kits should be instrumental in supporting a dialogue among statistical producers, the various levels of government, the business sector, the academic community, and the general public about the role of official statistics in evidenced based decision and policy making.

25. The stages of implementation: During 2009, the ISWGNA members and regional commissions held numerous technical workshops and high-level consultations to familiarize national accounts experts, users and policymakers with the 2008 SNA and to discuss the implementation strategy adopted by the Commission.

26. The consultations identified three distinct stages in the implementation of the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics through a multi-year programme, irrespective of the level of statistical development, as follows:

- (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.

27. Each country will determine the duration of the various stages of its statistical development according to its predetermined scope of the required data set formulated in the implementation plan. However, it is expected that from 2014 onwards, many Member States will change over to the 2008 SNA following a gradual transition for each stage.

28. The ISWGNA and its partners will identify common criteria of achievement for each stage of implementation based on the required data sets and indicators for different milestones by scope of national accounts and supporting economic statistics including quarterly national accounts and high frequency statistics for early warning of exposures and risks.

III. Global initiatives by the ISWGNA

29. The ISWGNA made good progress in finalizing handbooks, such as those on *measuring capital* and *intellectual property products*. Countries have requested supplementary compilation guidelines for the various milestones, to which the members of the ISWGNA have responded favourably. Advocacy tool kits have also been requested for the different policy applications of the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics to assist in the user dialogue on the relevant scope of the 2008 SNA. Furthermore, the 2008 SNA research agenda on issues such as globalization and emission permits are being advanced through the preparation of guidelines.

30. Due attention is placed on coordination between ISWGNA members providing technical assistance and training based on more effectively sharing information on their work programmes supporting national accounts development. These coordinated technical assistance activities will incorporate a targeted focus on elaborating the accumulation as well as current accounts by institutional sector at both annual and quarterly periodicity, as appropriate to national statistical capacities.

31. The United Nations Statistics Division and Eurostat, in partnership with Statistics Canada and Statistics Netherlands, organized two international seminars during 2009 on the development of a framework for high-frequency statistics and a related analytical framework for early warning and business-cycle indicators. The international meetings led to a proposal to submit a multi-tier data template of high-frequency statistics, which was the subject of a global assessment in September and October 2009. A third international seminar is planned for fall 2010 to review progress. In 2010 the ISWGNA will consider how high-frequency statistics could fit in with the 2008 SNA implementation and supporting statistics programme.

32. More detail regarding the progress made by the ISWGNA is reported below in terms of training and research, training and technical cooperation activities and publication of manuals and handbooks

Training and research

33. The ISWGNA recognized that it is essential to conduct such key elements as training and research in a coordinated way in the implementation of the 2008 SNA. In this regard the ISWGNA agreed to promote development of standardized training material among its members, to coordinate research, and incorporate research results in the international standards or guidance handbooks.

34. The ISWGNA will pursue developing standardized training material on the 2008 SNA and related topics like classifications, statistical registers and basic economic statistics, but recognizes that it is resource intensive and may take some time to produce. These training materials will be made available progressively through a dedicated knowledgebase on training materials to be established jointly by the ISWGNA members. In consultations with the regional commissions and countries, the translation of these materials to official United Nations languages will be pursued.

35. To further coordinate the implementation of the results of research on the research agenda of the 2008 SNA into international standards or handbooks, research need to be coordinated under the auspices of the ISWGNA. Proposals for task forces or expert groups to undertake research on specific topics should be submitted to the ISWGNA. The ISWGNA will assess the results in accordance with the update procedures for clarifications and interpretations and changes to the SNA established by the Statistical Commission at its thirtieth session in 1999. When the outcome would necessitate a change to the SNA the ISWGNA will present it to the Commission for adoption.

36. To support its work, the ISWGNA proposes the continuation of an Advisory Expert Group (AEG) on National Accounts. The aim of the AEG is to assist the ISWGNA in resolving

issues on the research agenda of the 2008 SNA and emerging research issues, and to assist the ISWGNA in the review of the implementation programme. It is foreseen that the AEG would meet annually, or as the need arises, with the ISWGNA in addition to electronic consultations. The terms of reference and composition of the AEG will be adequately revised to reflect the purpose of this group.

Training and technical cooperation activities

37. Implementation issues affecting Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Member States will be addressed in their annual meetings on national accounts and financial statistics. Since countries in the OECD will follow a staggered implementation of the 2008 SNA, a strategy is being adopted to deal with the temporary reduction in international comparability during the transition phase. In assisting SNA implementation in developing countries and countries in transition, the OECD will continue organizing jointly with the National Bureau of Statistics of China and the Indian Central Statistical Office annual workshops on national accounts. In addition, the OECD is working with new and prospective members and other significant economies such as Brazil, India, Indonesia and South Africa.

38. Training on the new European System of Accounts (ESA) will be organized by Eurostat for specialists of member states working with national accounts during 2011-2013. Eurostat will support the MEDSTAT initiative for North Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean. During 2010-2013, Eurostat will continue to support the organization of four one week regional workshops in the ACP/ALA regions on the use of the ERETES tool for the compilation of national accounts data. Moreover, Eurostat will support the organisation of regional workshops on ERETES for SADC, ECOWAS and UNECA in 2010. The ERETES information system will also be upgraded to comply with the guidelines of the 2008 SNA.

39. The regular biennial Joint UNECE/Eurostat/OECD Meeting on National Accounts will provide a forum for the national accounts experts in the area to discuss issues related to the implementation of the 2008 SNA. Future meetings are planned in 2010 and 2012. Back-to-back with these meetings, special sessions will be organized for the Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA), and other interested countries with focus on the implementation of specific issues of priority to these countries.

40. During 2009 the International Monetary Fund (IMF) conducted the first national accounts course based on the 2008 SNA. National accounts technical assistance projects with IMF member countries comprising about 210 missions in fiscal year 2010 (May 2009-April 2010) from regional technical assistance centres, externally funded capacity building projects, and IMF headquarters.

41. In addition, the IMF will also have conducted, by the financial year ending April 2010, 3 missions to assess countries' statistical systems, i.e. as reported in the data ROSCs. Furthermore, over that period, the IMF will also have undertaken many missions to support its data dissemination standards, the General Data Dissemination System and the Special Data Dissemination Standard.

42. IMF's extensive technical assistance and training programme in the national accounts integration framework is supported primarily through its execution of projects for a range of external funding agencies. A smaller amount of TA and training activity is supported through the IMF budget. The principal vehicles for externally funded project execution are regional technical assistance centres (RTACs) and modular topical projects. There are currently six RTACs (with more RTACs in the planning stages):

- The African Technical Assistance Center – East (AFRITAC-E), Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania
- The African Technical Assistance Center – West (AFRITAC-W), Bamako, Mali
- The African Technical Assistance Center – Central (AFRITAC-C), Libreville, Gabon
- The Caribbean Technical Assistance Center (CARTAC), St. Michael, Barbados
- The Middle Eastern Technical Assistance Center (METAC), Beirut, Lebanon
- The Pacific Financial Technical Assistance Center (PFTAC), Suva, Fiji

The work programmes of each of the RTACs' covers, among other areas, statistics, with a particular emphasis on national accounts.

43. The Fund is working with donors on new topical trust fund-based programmes. The approach to these programmes is based on a recently completed statistical programme for 21 Anglophone African countries plus Mozambique that the IMF and World Bank executed for the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID). These programmes are structured according to a set of topical modules managed by a module manager, who executes the module work programme with the help of short-term experts. One of the topical modules covers the 2008 SNA.

44. Together with other key donors, the World Bank is working towards scaling up support to developing countries. It has initiated a new programme called Statistics for Results Facility which includes a trust fund for countries to use. This new facility complements the other existing mechanisms available through the World Bank, namely the multi-donor Trust Fund for Statistical Capacity Building (TFSCB) and the STATCAP lending programme. Overall, these support mechanisms available to countries are broad based to improve their statistical systems. However they could be used to address countries specific priority needs aimed at 2008 SNA implementation.

45. The United Nations Statistics Division is collaborating closely with the UNECA, UNECE, UNECLAC, UNESCAP and UNESCWA and other regional partners in developing regional SNA implementation strategies based on national implementation strategies. United Nations Development Accounts projects are in place in various regions to strengthen the statistical capacity in national accounts and related source data through multi-year programmes. The technical assistance and training activities of the UNSD from their regular technical assistance programmes are aligned with these projects to support and supplement capacity building undertaken in the development accounts projects.

Publication of manuals and handbooks

46. In the European Union, the 2008 SNA will be implemented in the form of the revision of the European System of Accounts (ESA), with its adoption and publication planned for 2012.

Related manuals planned by **Eurostat** include: *Manual on Supply Uses and Input Output Tables* (2008), *Manual on Government Deficit and Debt* (update, 2008), *Manual on Regional Accounts* (2011), *Handbook on Quarterly National Accounts* (update, 2012). Eurostat has started in November 2009 a 12 month project aiming at the preparation of the handbook "Essential SNA: building the basics" to support Least Developed Countries and micro-states (including small-islands) in the implementation of milestone 0 and a minimum required national accounts data set.

47. The new **OECD** manual *Handbook on Deriving Capital Measures of Intellectual Property Products* was released in 2009. It provides guidance on the treatment of expenditures on research and development (R&D), mineral exploration and evaluation, software and databases, and entertainment, literary and artistic originals. During 2009 the OECD also released the revised *Manual on Measuring Capital* (2009), and a *Handbook on the Measurement of Volume Output of Health and Education*.

48. Planned and recently published manuals by the **IMF** supporting the 2008 SNA implementation include the *Balance of Payments and International Investment Position Manual* (BPM6, 2008), and updates of the *Compilation Guide to Balance of Payments and International Investment Position Statistics*, *Government Finance Statistics Manual*, *Monetary and Financial Statistics Manual* and *Quarterly National Accounts Manual*. Other relevant manuals are the *Compilation Guide for Monetary and Financial Statistics* (2008) and the *Compilation Guide for Balance of Payments, Export and Import Price Index Manual*.

49. The **World Bank** plans to develop a– *Concepts in Brief* and an accompanying implementation guide, *2008 SNA – Implementation in Brief*, during 2010.

50. The **UNECE** is preparing the *Practical Guidance on the Impact of Globalization on National Accounts* that is being developed by a joint UNECE/Eurostat/OECD Group of Experts on the Impact of Globalization on National Accounts (GGNA) to be published in early 2011. The publication aims to help users and producers of national accounts statistics to understand how globalisation affects the measures of national accounts and to support the implementation of the 2008 SNA. The Handbook will also provide the operational guidelines for the implementation of the new treatment of goods for processing and merchanting recommended by the 2008 SNA. In 2009, the UNECE published a *Practical Guide to Producing Consumer Price Indices. A Supplementary handbook to the Consumer Price Index Manual*. The Handbook, which was drafted under the aegis of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics, provides practical guidance on all aspects of compiling a CPI, and offers advice on operational issues in data collection, processing and publication.

51. The **United Nations Statistics Division** is engaged in drafting supplementary guidance through its handbook series on national accounts such the *Handbook of National Accounting: Financial Production, Flows and Stocks* (jointly with ECB); the *Handbook of National Accounts: Accounting for Production*; and *Handbook of National Accounting: Integrated Economic Statistics* (in collaboration with the Friends of the Chair led by the US Bureau of Economic Analysis).

52. Also the **UNSD** programme of work includes the revision of existing international recommendations on basic economic statistics such as the *International Recommendations on*

Index Numbers on Industrial Production, 2009 following the drafting of the revision of the *International Recommendations for Industrial Statistics, 2008*, the *International Recommendations for Distributive Trade Statistics, 2008*, the *International Recommendations on Tourism Statistics 2008* (jointly with UNWTO), and the *Tourism Satellite Account: Recommended Methodological Framework, Revision 1, 2008* (jointly with UNWTO, Eurostat, and OECD). In the area of international merchandise trade and trade in services, revisions are under preparation such the *Manual on Statistics of International Trade in Services, Revision 1* (as a part of TFSITS) due in 2010 and *International Recommendations of Merchandise Trade Statistics* (as part of the TFIMTS) due in 2011.

53. With the revision of the *International Standard Industrial Classification for all Economic Activities (ISIC) Revision 4*, the *Central Product Classification (CPC) Version 2*, the *Standard International Trade Classification, Revision 4*, additional supplementary documents are prepared such as the *Companion Guide for ISIC and CPC* and *Implementation Guide for ISIC Revision 4* on the national adaptation of the ISIC classification, the adaptations of the business registers and surveys and back-casting of time series.

54. With the recognition of the statistical link between the economy and the environment, work is underway in the drafting of the revision of the *System of Environmental Economic Accounting* due in 2012/2013. Other standards are also being drafted for the subsystems such as for *Water (SEEA-W)*, 2007, *Energy (SEEA-E)* and *Material Flow Accounts (SEEA-MFA)*; and standards that provide guidance on the data items for *Water Statistics (IRWS)* and *Energy Statistics (IRES)*.

55. In each of the above mentioned areas (i.e. national accounts, industry, distributive trade, international trade, classifications, environmental-economic accounting, etc.) UNSD will collect national compilation and dissemination practices from individual countries. These national practices will be made available electronically through the *United Nations Knowledge Base on Economic Statistics – Methods and Country Practices* along with other best practices in other statistical domains and activities.

56. The Knowledge Base forms part of UNSD's programme to improve the quality and availability of economic statistics. It builds on efforts to implement the 2008 SNA and to improve the collection of basic economic statistics. It is intended to become a single web-based access point for dynamic and centralized repository of information on all aspects of methodology and best country practices for the collection, compilation and dissemination of economic statistics. By providing an authoritative single UN access point for information on economic statistics, the user will be able to rationalize the search for information on the World Wide Web. Countries have responded well to UNSD's request to provide material for the Knowledge base. The Knowledge base can be accessed at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/EconStatKB/>

IV. Regional initiatives

57. The 2008 SNA implementation strategy endorsed by the Commission as its fortieth session recognises the important role of regional commissions in advancing the implementation of 2008 SNA recommendations in their constituencies. In particular, the regional commissions would advance the coordination of the assessment of the requirements for robust national

economic statistics programmes and their implementation in consultation with their regional development partners. A summary of initiatives of regional commissions and regional organisations for the 2008 SNA implementation is presented in turn by region.

Asia and the Pacific

58. The first session of the Committee on Statistics of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in February 2009 recognized the urgent need for the improvement of economic statistics in the Asian and Pacific region.

59. In light of: (a) the limited compliance with the MRDS in the region, (b) the renewed demand for better economic statistics because of the global economic crisis, (c) the realization that ongoing and past capacity building efforts for economic statistics had been less than optimal because of — among others — a lack of information sharing and cooperation between development partners; and (d) the role that the ISWGNA foresees for regional commissions to play in the implementation of the 2008 SNA, the Committee tasked the ESCAP secretariat with the development of a Regional Programme for the Improvement of Economic Statistics in Asia and the Pacific (hereunder referred to as the “Regional Programme”), to be guided by a Technical Advisory Group (TAG) consisting of representatives from national, subregional, regional and global partners.

60. The Regional Programme is aimed at being an effort of all these partners to increase national capacities to produce basic economic statistics in accordance with international standards and good practices. Cornerstones of the Regional Programme are (a) a core set of economic statistics — required for short and long-term economic analyses and decision-making by both government and non-government agencies and organizations — of appropriate quality that each country (to the extent relevant for the size and structure of the economy) in the region should be able to produce by 2020, (b) a comprehensive, region-wide assessment of countries’ current capacity to produce economic statistics, and (c) an informal mechanism to coordinate activities to build capacity in economic statistics. These cornerstones, among others, were discussed at the Workshop to Develop a Regional Programme for the Improvement of Economic Statistics in Asia and the Pacific (9-11 December 2009, Bangkok, Thailand).

61. A proposal for the core set of economic statistics, with explicit relevance to the SNA, has been developed by the TAG for consideration of the Committee at its next session in December 2010.

62. The Regional Programme is expected to be finalized in early 2010 with the completion of the assessment and the establishment of the informal coordination mechanism, to be followed by the identification of, for each country, remaining gaps in the capacity to produce economic statistics and priorities for filling the gaps. Subsequently, national work plans to address these priorities will be developed, including through the integration of capacity building requirements for economic statistics in NSDSs and the mobilization of national and internationally resources

Eastern Europe and Central Asia

63. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) works closely with the Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS-STAT) and other regional partners to ensure cooperation and coordination of the activities in support of the

implementation of the 2008 SNA. The Conference of European Statisticians (CES) is establishing a Steering Group on National Accounts to help finalise the regional 2008 SNA implementation plan for twenty three countries in the region that are not members of the European Union or the OECD. The tasks of the Steering Group include (a) to advise ECE in the formulation of a sub-regional implementation plan for 2008 SNA, taking into consideration the specific circumstances in the ECE countries that are not members of the European Union or the OECD; (b) to assist and advise the ECE on the formulation and planning of technical assistance activities in national accounts and related source statistics; and (c) to assist the ECE in the organisation of meetings and workshops in the field of national accounts and to propose agenda items, taking into consideration the specific needs of the ECE member countries.

64. The UNECE is currently conducting a survey of the EECCA and South East European countries to collect information for the development of a regional implementation plan. The results of the survey will be presented to a special session at the forthcoming Joint UNECE/Eurostat/OECD Meeting on National Accounts, on 26-29 April 2010 in Geneva. The session aims to identify the main difficulties, including gaps in existing source statistics, and establish priorities in the implementation of the 2008 SNA. The information will also be used to identify the need for training and technical assistance in the region.

65. The UNECE has developed a capacity building programme on the New Challenges in Economic Statistics for 2010-2011 for Central Asia and other countries in the region. The programme, which is financed by the World Bank, will focus on current problems and challenges in the economic statistics supporting the production of national accounts. The training will focus on time series methodology of short-term statistics, seasonal adjustment methods, price indices and dissemination.

66. In 2009 a wiki-based website was established containing training material on economic statistics, national accounts, business registers, price indices, and short-term economic statistics. The website also provides updated training materials and links to other relevant online materials.

67. The UNECE also provides the secretariat for a Task Force updating the Canberra Group Handbook on Household Income Statistics. The Handbook will reflect recent advancements in income measurement in specific areas, including the national accounts, and provide practical guidelines to compiling income statistics.

Western Asia

68. The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) Statistical Committee is the specialised subsidiary intergovernmental committee and represent the apex forum for regional consultation and decision in the field of statistics. The ESCWA has established an Expert Group on National Accounts and Economic Statistics which meets biennially and provides a forum to discuss issues relating to compilation of national accounts statistics and implementation of SNA by countries in the region.

69. The ESCWA has recently conducted an assessment of country practices for the compilation of national accounts and the extent of the implementation of the SNA by its Member Countries. Based on this assessment ESCWA plans to publish in 2011 a publication titled “Study

on Economic Statistics in the ESCWA region: Sources and Methods”. This publication aims to report on the status of the implementation of national accounts in the region and to provide the starting point to evaluate the impact of future actions in the field.

70. The Statistical Committee and its Regional Working Group will formalise the design and the phases for the implementation of the regional plan, the training and technical assistance needs for Member Countries, the organization of regional meetings to discuss the latest progress on the 2008 SNA implementation, and the expedition of the process of translating the 2008 SNA into Arabic. The time frame envisaged for the project is as follows: (a) baseline: 2010, (b) intermediate assessments: yearly 2011-2014, and (c) final assessment: 2015.

Africa

71. To develop the document on the African Strategy for the implementation of the 2008 SNA in the African region, the African Group on National Accounts (AGNA) held six meetings in Lusaka, Zambia, from 07 to 11 April, 2008; in Tunis, Tunisia, from 02 to 04 July, 2008; in Durban, South Africa, from 12 to 13 August, 2008; in Addis-Ababa, from 21 to 23 October, 2009; in Dakar, Senegal, from 20 to 22 November, 2009; and in East London, South Africa, from 7 to 12 December, 2009. These meetings were attended by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), African Development Bank (AfDB), African Union Commission (AUC), African Regional Economic Communities [ECCAS, ECOWAS, COMESA, SADC, AMU (Arab Maghreb Union)], AFRISTAT; and about twenty African Experts in national accounts.

72. Developing a system of national accounts, in line with the 2008 SNA, appropriate for the socio-economic realities of the African countries is part of the strategy. The AGNA have agreed to a governance structure for the monitoring of the implementation similar to the ICP governance model. The implementation of the 2008 SNA will follow a coordination mechanism chart in line with the Reference Regional Strategy Framework (RRSF) for Statistical Capacity Building in Africa. The continental Coordinators of the Strategy are; AfDB (lead institution), AUC and UNECA. The five RECs (ECCAS, ECOWAS, COMESA, SADC, UMA) will have the role of sub regional Coordinators, and AFRISTAT the role of Technical Adviser

73. During its second meeting held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 17-22 January, 2010, the Statistical Commission for Africa (STATCOM-Africa) : (a) adopted the African strategy for the implementation of the System of National Accounts 2008; and (b) made it the first pillar of the African Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa (SHaSA); STATCOM-Africa urged pan-African institutions, regional economic communities and Member States to take ownership of the strategy and mobilize the necessary funds for its implementation; and urges Africa’s development partners to support its implementation.

Latin America and the Caribbean

74. ECLAC took various actions towards the implementation of the 2008 SNA in the region in close collaboration with the National Accounts Working Group of the Statistical Conference of the Americas (NAWG-SCA). These actions build on the NAWG-SCA Diagnosis on the Current State of Economic and National Accounts Statistics and the draft Regional Plan for the Implementation of the 2008 SNA in Latin America and the Caribbean prepared by ECLAC, both of which were presented at the Fifth Meeting of Conference of the Americas in Bogota from 10-13 August 2009.

75. The NAWG-SCA was strengthened with the new incorporation of several countries from the region and the designation of the National Statistical Office of Peru as its coordinator, with ECLAC continuing acting as Technical Secretariat.

76. The draft Regional Plan was discussed in several international meetings, including the 2009 Latin American and Caribbean National Accounts Seminar held in Montevideo, Uruguay, from 19 to 21 October. In this Seminar participated National Statistical Offices and Central Banks responsible for the compilation of National Accounts in the region, as well as representatives from international and sub-regional agencies including UNSD, IMF, Eurostat, IADB, Andean Community, the Central American Monetary Council, and CARTAC. Following the conclusions of the Seminar, three task forces were launched to address specific methodological issues related to the implementation of the 2008 SNA.¹

77. During its meeting in Santiago on 10 December 2009, the NAWG-SCA approved the Regional Plan for the Implementation of the SNA 2008 in Latin America and the Caribbean, which 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 SNA 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).

78. Other actions include advances made by ECLAC with the support of Spanish-speaking countries in the translation of the 2008 SNA into Spanish, which is currently in its technical revision stage. In addition, ECLAC has started the preparation of the 2011 Round of the International Comparison Programme (ICP) in Latin America and the Caribbean, leveraging on synergies with the Regional Plan for the Implementation of the 2008 SNA in the region.

79. The main challenges faced by countries in the region in relation to the 2008 SNA implementation, as identified by the NAWG-SCA, are related to the lag in the development of basic economic statistics and insufficient funding for strengthening statistical capacity.

Other regions

Eurostat

80. The 2008 SNA will be implemented in the European Union in the form of the revision of the European System of Accounts (ESA), which is the European version of the SNA. In Europe,

¹ These tasks forces will work on the goods for processing, informal sector, and FISIM.

there have been extensive discussions that have led to the following implementation plan and milestones. This implementation plan has been approved by the European Statistical System Committee (ESSC), which brings together Eurostat and the national statistical institutes of EU member states.

- (a) April 2008 to November 2009: Drafting of revised ESA chapters; Review of Member States' comments; Presentation of revised draft chapters; Discussions in NAWG (National Accounts Working Group); FAWG (Financial Accounts Working Group); ESA 95 Review Group in the form of joint meetings of NAWG and FAWG; Committee on Monetary Financial and Balance of Payments Statistics (CMFB); Discussions within the European System of Central Banks;
- (b) April to September 2008: Report on the Evaluation of Implementation of the present ESA in EU and Preliminary Report on the Impact Assessment of the introduction of the new ESA in EU;
- (c) March 2008 to May 2009: Five meetings of the Task Force on satellite accounts of Research & Development in order to define supplementary tables on R&D to be implemented as from 2011/12
- (d) July 2009 to February 2010: Discussion on the draft amended transmission programme in the NAWG; FAWG; ESA Review Group; CMFB;
- (e) 16 September 2009: Conference on national accounts in Brussels. A large part of the conference was dedicated to the new ESA.
- (f) December 2009 to June 2010: Drafting of the new ESA Regulation and discussion in the various groups concerned (NAWG, FAWG, ESA 95 Review Group, etc). Finalisation of the draft Regulation. Discussions with the Directors of Macro Economic Statistics of EU countries, and in the relevant committees and launching of the EU Commission inter-services consultation, adoption of the EU Commission proposal for a new ESA Regulation
- (g) First quarter 2010: Report on the Impact Assessment of the introduction of the new ESA in EU.
- (h) 2012: Adoption of the new ESA Regulation by the European Parliament and the Council and publication of this new Regulation in the Official Journal of the EU.
- (i) Summer 2012: Publication of the new ESA Regulation in the Official Journal of the EU
- (j) 2011 to 2013: Training on the new ESA organised for Eurostat and the Member States civil servants working in/with national accounts.

- (k) 2014: Implementation of the new ESA methodology and transmission programme by EU member states. This implementation will be largely supported by preparatory work and discussions on specific topics in working parties and expert groups.

OECD

81. Majority of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development and (OECD) Member States have planned the 2008 SNA implementation between 2009 to 2015.

V. Links to other global statistical initiatives

82. The ISWGNA in collaboration with regional commissions will actively pursue and foster appropriate cooperation with the 2011 round of the ICP Programme, the global strategy for agricultural and rural statistics led by FAO and the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-first Century (PARIS 21), where relevant.

83. Link to ICP Programme: It will be investigated whether participating countries could align the sequencing of activities of the ICP programme with the global programme on the 2008 SNA implementation. Notwithstanding the fact that the *1993 System of National Accounts* will be used in the 2011 ICP round as the reference framework for the determination of detailed GDP expenditures required to aggregate purchasing power parities, the ICP programme will assist participating countries in strengthening their statistical know-how in compiling national accounts. Where possible, this capacity building component in national accounts compilation of the ICP programme should be leveraged beyond the detailed GDP expenditures for the final demand components consistently with prices collected in the programme's surveys. Appropriate sequencing of capacity building activities should use the increased statistical capacity and quality of the national accounts realized through the ICP round for the change over to the 2008 SNA and improving the quality and scope of the national accounts.

84. The 2008 SNA and supporting economic statistics programme might also benefit from the synergies with the ICP Programme through its development of the quality assurance framework. A common quality framework with a common set of principles could be envisaged to guide operations at the country, regional and global levels.

85. Link to Global Strategy for Agricultural and Rural Statistics: Agriculture and rural statistics are an essential body of statistics for national accounts and supporting economic statistics. This global initiative for agriculture and rural development has the objective to improve the scope and quality agricultural and rural statistics. The SNA along with the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting has been incorporated in the conceptual framework and thus a building block of the Strategy. Subsequently, the related concepts, definitions, classifications, and accounting rules and principles of the SNA will be applied to guide the integration of agricultural and rural statistics into the national statistical system. There is an urgent need to improve and strengthen the scope and quality of economic accounting and statistics components for agricultural sector. The critical role of good agricultural and rural statistics in the national statistical system and national accounts is evident, especially in many developing countries where the agricultural sector and rural area still dominate the economy.

86. There will be a module in the implementation of the Global Strategy for Agricultural and Rural Statistics to advocate and support countries to build the above components into their agricultural and rural statistics systems. The ISWGNA will coordinate, where appropriate, with the FAO led programme in sequencing the steps to improve statistical capacity through the national strategies for the development of statistics, to coordinate resources provided by donor organizations and to support the national advocacy efforts to improve agricultural and rural statistics.

87. Link to Paris 21: The Partnership has a important role in promoting the use of better statistics through assistance to countries in the design, implementation and monitoring of national strategies for the development of statistics, in preparing advocacy tool kits and in encouraging donor collaboration in statistical support programmes.

88. The ISWGNA and its regional partners will seek engagement with the Partnership in extending the scope and guidance of the NSDS as strategic planning framework for a broad set of economic statistics and national accounts. Moreover, mutually beneficial collaboration should be explored in the development of joint monitoring and reporting tools for improved donor coordination (drawing, for example, on the results from PARIS21's Partner Report on Support to Statistics - PRESS) and joint development of advocacy tool kits for user consultations on evidenced based economic policy making.