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COMMUNITY

SECRETARIAT

**THIRTY-FIFTH MEETING OF
THE STANDING COMMITTEE OF**

SCCS/2010/35/2

CARIBBEAN STATISTICIANS

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**STATUS REPORT ON NATIONAL ACCOUNTS DATA SUBMITTED TO THE
CARICOM SECRETARIAT**

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper focuses on the status of the Regional National Accounts database, the experience of the submission of data through the use of the common questionnaire with the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD); the data compiled and disseminated, and the challenges observed. It also provides an overview of the developmental work being undertaken regionally in the area of National Accounts and the regional work programme for the period 2011-2012.

2. STATUS OF REGIONAL NATIONAL ACCOUNTS DATABASE

In November 2009, the CARICOM Secretariat in continuing collaboration with the UNSD despatched the United Nations National Accounts Questionnaire (NAQ) to 15 Member States and four (4) Associate Members. The aim of this despatch was to collect final data for the year **2008**, preliminary data for **2009** and any revisions/updates for the earlier years. The deadline for the submission of the completed questionnaires as agreed to by countries was **29 January 2010**.

Table 1 shows the responses by countries for the period 2006-2009. It can be seen that even with the extra time for the completion and submission of the questionnaires, the response rate has continued to fall over the period, with **four (4)** countries responding by the deadline including the Cayman Islands which was submitting data for the first time under this process. To date, **ten (10)** countries have returned the NAQ to the Secretariat and the UNSD compared to 12 countries the previous year, and 15 and 16 respectively the two years prior to that. With respect to the year of the data that were submitted, **nine (9)** countries provided data up to 2008 and **one (1)** up to 2007. Further, of the 10 submissions, **five (5)** also provided 2009 estimates. Eight¹ (8) countries have therefore not yet submitted the 2009 NAQ; however, the Secretariat was able to update the regional database with 2008 data for a total of 15 countries through the use of the NAQs and other sources.

Table 1: Status of National Accounts Data Submission: 2006-2009

NAQ SUBMISSION					Total No. of Countries with Data (Including from other sources)	No. Outstanding /NAQ (other sources)	Remarks
Year of Despatch	Year of Data	No. of Countries submitting NAQ by Deadline	No. of Countries' NAQs Received After Deadline	Total NAQs Submitted			
2006	2005	5	11	16	18	-	
2007	2006	3	12	15	18	-	
2008	2007	9	3	12	16	2	
2009	2008	4	6	10	15	3	

¹ Due to the situation in Haiti following the devastating earthquake in January 2010, this Member State was unable to submit the data to the Secretariat and the UNSD.

3. MAIN CHALLENGES IN THE SUBMISSION OF 2008 DATA

The apparent inability to provide the complete set of the Minimum Required Data Set (MRDS) tables continues to be the major challenge faced by countries. As seen in **Table 2**, most countries have not submitted the *Rest of the World Account* and the *GDP by Expenditure in constant prices* tables, while the submissions of *Output, gross value added and fixed assets by industries* are quite low. On the other hand, except for the National Aggregates table in 2009, for 2008 and 2009 data, more than 75 percent of the countries were able to complete tables of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by Industry in constant and current prices, GDP by Expenditure in current prices and the National Aggregates (2008).

Table 2: Data Gaps in the MRDS Submitted: 2008 and 2009

Table Name	No of Countries Submitting Table		
	2008 (out of 12 Countries)	2009 (out of 10 Countries)	Remarks
Rest of the World Account	1 (8%)	2 (20%)	Tables were incomplete.
GDP by Expenditure in Constant Prices	2 (17%)	1 (10%)	
Output, Gross Value Added and Fixed Assets by Industries	5 (42%)	6 (60%)	Incomplete tables submitted in the case of three countries.
Value Added by Industries in Constant Prices	9 (75%)	9 (90%)	
National Aggregates	9 (75%)	6 (60%)	
Value Added by Industries in Current Prices	10 (83%)	10 (100%)	
GDP by Expenditure in Current Prices	11 (92%)	8 (80%)	

Further, in analysing the tables for the 10 countries submitting NAQ questionnaires, it was noted that few Member States/Associate Members were able to submit more than five of the seven MRDS tables with data for 2008. Only one Member State, Trinidad and Tobago, completed all seven tables while two Member States attempted to submit five or more tables although some of the tables were somewhat incomplete.

With respect to the quality of the data provided in the questionnaires, some of the problems observed during verification were as a result of partial updates/revisions, missing data and discrepancies between totals and sum of the components. It was observed too that there was an improvement in the level of details provided in the methodological notes; six countries supplied more detailed notes than in the past. The importance of detailed notes cannot be overemphasised since they can provide compilers at the regional and national levels and users with a clearer understanding of the data through an examination of the data compilation practices employed. These notes can also be used to facilitate the process of harmonisation of national accounts statistics across the Region.

A summary of the submissions/data gaps, challenges/best practices is contained in the **Attachment** to this Paper.

4. DISSEMINATION OF NATIONAL ACCOUNTS STATISTICS

All available National Accounts data from Member States and Associate Members have been disseminated on the Secretariat's web site. The data include GDP by industry in current and constant prices, GDP by expenditure components in current prices and the national aggregates where available. During the year, the Regional Statistics programme has also been working on an updated National Accounts Digest comprising data for the period 2002-2006; the completed version of this report, which includes tables and data highlights, is now available on the web site.

The despatch of the 2010 NAQs is scheduled for **November 2010** and countries are requested to return the completed questionnaires to **both** the Secretariat and the UNSD

by **29 January 2011**. These questionnaires should provide actual data for **2009**, preliminary estimates for **2010**, if these are available, and any updates/revisions to the data for the earlier years. The Secretariat strongly urges countries to try to meet the deadline for the submission of the NAQ.

5. COMPILATION OF QUARTERLY GDP DATA

The Secretariat continued to collect and compile quarterly GDP estimates from available data published by Member States. Using this approach, data were collected for two Member States, one up to second quarter 2010 and the other first quarter 2010. The level of detail varied from just totals in one case to the industry level in the other.

Based on the information received in response to a questionnaire sent to Member States and Associate Members by the Secretariat earlier this year, it was determined that three countries currently produce Quarterly GDP, namely, Belize, Jamaica and Bermuda, while Dominica and Trinidad and Tobago produce indices; however, only two countries publish this data. Some of the main challenges identified by countries in the production of these estimates were:

- Lack of expertise;
- Data collection issues;
- No system for estimation;
- Lack of capacity; and
- Human resource constraints.

In its second meeting in April 2010 in Barbados, the Technical Working Group (TWG) on National Accounts/Short-term Indicators and International Trade in Services/Investment Statistics had on its agenda the issue of the development of Quarterly National Accounts (QNA). The group noted the importance of these indicators and considered measures for advancing the production of the data. It was recognised that there was an urgent need for technical assistance in most countries and therefore to promote the advancement of the production of QNA, the group proposed that this could be achieved by way of a regional workshop and through South-South Cooperation/attachment

programmes. However the rolling out of this attachment programme in 2010 has been affected by the 2010 Round of Population and Housing Census activities. It was mentioned that support for this approach, as well as the strengthening of source data in Member States, might be possible from the Tenth European Development Fund (EDF).

6. OVERVIEW OF DEVELOPMENTAL WORK UNDERTAKEN IN NATIONAL ACCOUNTS STATISTICS

Developmental work in the area of national accounts continued in 2010 under the Caribbean Integration Support Programme (CISP). Activities that have been implemented included the following:

(i) Work of the TWG in National Accounts/ Short-Term indicators.

As mentioned in the previous section, the TWG on National Accounts and International Trade in Services met in Barbados to discuss a number of technical issues. The agenda for this meeting included the finalising of the draft Integrated Annual Economic Survey Questionnaire and the development of industry specific questionnaires; the development and maintenance of Statistical Business Establishment Registers; the review of short term indicators such as the Consumer Price Index (CPI)/ Retail Price Index (RPI) and the Producer's Price Index (PPI) including challenges and gaps in the production of these indicators, as well as Quarterly GDP; and the sharing of country experiences and best practices relative to the re-basing of constant price GDP and CPI. The TWG also discussed matters related to the development of the area of International Trade in Services and Investment statistics. This will be discussed further in the paper on International Trade in Services. The next meeting of the TWG is planned for November 2010.

(ii) Improvement in Basic Data Production

The Secretariat designed a project under the 9th EDF entitled **Consultancy for the Improvement in the Basic Data Production in National Accounts** and has procured

a firm to undertake work in this area. The purpose of the project is to provide support to Member States to improve the basic sources for data production which can be used to compile more complex national economics statistics. Activities include a review of the framework for the production, operation and maintenance of business registers in Member States; identification of possible sources for improving the coverage and updating of the business register including administrative sources, household surveys and Population and Housing censuses; an assessment of basic data needs for the compilation of National Accounts and preparation of recommendations aimed at providing technical assistance in areas where there are gaps with respect to GDP estimates; preparation of a methodological framework to assist Member States to use the basic data in the compilation of GDP estimates; and training of relevant staff to efficiently and effectively update and maintain the BR database and sustain the production of basic data.

(iii) Use of Help-Desk Facility – Discussion Forum on National Accounts

The National Accounts discussion forum on the Secretariat's online Help Desk facility was seen as an important tool in advancing the work of the TWG and the development and improvement of national accounts statistics as a whole. However, efforts to use the facility to enable discussions by the TWG were not very successful. It is also intended that the Help-Desk facility would provide support to producers of statistics with access to information, guidelines, documents, regional and international manuals and links to statistical sites and directing of queries to relevant resources.

(iv) United Nations Statistics Division/CARICOM Secretariat Seminar on the Implementation of the System of National Accounts (SNA) 2008.

A Seminar on the Implementation of the System of National Accounts 2008 was convened from 14-16 June 2010 in Antigua and Barbuda. The meeting was organised by the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) in collaboration with the CARICOM Secretariat. This meeting was funded by the European Union (EU) under the CISP and participants attending were funded by both the UNSD and the EU. The purpose of the

Seminar was to initiate the formulation of an implementation programme for the 2008 SNA and supporting economic statistics with the objective of developing comparable economic statistics for Member States in the CARICOM Region as a whole to monitor the integration of their economies. It was expected that this initiative would lead to a multi-year programme to move the countries over to the 2008 SNA and to establish a minimum common data set of annual and high frequency statistics.

Further details on this Seminar are presented in Paper **SCCS/2010/35/5** entitled *Implementation of the System of National Accounts 2008 in the CARICOM Region*.

7. OVERVIEW OF NATIONAL ACCOUNTS STATISTICS WORK PLAN FOR THE PERIOD 2011-2012

The Secretariat's 2011-2012 Work Programme in National Accounts will continue to focus on the improvement and harmonisation of these statistics. Efforts will also be made as far as possible to develop a strategic approach for the movement to the 2008 SNA in Member States. It is expected that the implementation of the CARICOM Economic Statistics Action Plan (CESAP) in National Accounts, which the Meeting will recall was developed under another 9th EDF consultancy and was subsequently refined by the TWG at its April meeting this year, would guide the direction of the work over the course of the year. Both the Help Desk at the Secretariat and the TWG would also play integral roles in the exchange of technical knowledge in the area.

Some of the activities expected to be undertaken in 2011/2012 include:

- (i) Continuation of technical assistance to Member States to develop and improve basic data production in national accounts (subject to extension by the European Union);
- (ii) Continued work on the development of a strategy for the movement to the SNA 2008 in collaboration with other agencies;
- (iii) Continued development of a Quality Assurance Framework and implementation of quality standards at the regional level and, by extension, in Member States;

- (iv) Preparation by the TWG and implementation of a programme of attachments/ exchange visits and regional workshops to strengthen capacity in the harmonisation of national accounts practices throughout the Region.

ACTION REQUIRED

The **Meeting** is **invited** to:

- (i) **consider** the results of the collaborative process between the CARICOM Secretariat and the United Nations Statistics Division in the joint administration of the National Accounts Questionnaire to collect these statistics from all CARICOM Member States and Associate Members and specifically the challenges experienced relative to the timelines and the actual completion of the tables;
- (ii) **also consider** the developmental work being undertaken at the regional level to improve and harmonise National Accounts statistics;

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5.1.1 Status Report on National Accounts Data Submitted to the CARICOM Secretariat

AREA OF STATISTICS	DATA PRODUCTION (Tables etc.)	DATA DISSEMINATED	DATA GAPS	BEST PRACTICES/ CHALLENGES	RESOURCES REQUIRED Technical Assistance Training Applied or Required	REMARKS
NATIONAL ACCOUNTS - SNA 93	<p>Annual Data:</p> <p>Database updated:</p> <p>2008: 11 Member States (MS) and 4 Associate Members (AM)</p> <p>2009: 4 Member States (MS) and 1 Associate Member (AM)</p> <p>Countries submitting National Accounts Questionnaire (NAQ):</p> <p>10 NAQs with 2008 data, of which 5 also contained Preliminary 2009 data.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Web site: available 2007-2009 data for all Member States disseminated. 		<p>2 MS and 2 AM met the 29 January 2010 deadline for the submission of the 2009 NAQs.</p> <p>Challenges:</p> <p>1993 SNA Implementation:</p> <p>Need to assess quality of the data relative to conformity to the recommended 1993 SNA;</p> <p>MRDS Compliance:</p> <p>5 or more tables: 3 Member States.</p> <p>Lack of capacity to produce the full set of tables in the recommended MRDS.</p>		<p>2010 NAQs will be despatched in October with deadline 29 January 2011.</p> <p>Ideally should provide 2009 data and preliminary 2010 data, if available, and any updates to the data for the earlier years.</p> <p>The consultancy on Basic Data Production will seek to improve the sources for</p>

ATTACHMENT

AREA OF STATISTICS	DATA PRODUCTION (Tables etc.)	DATA DISSEMINATED	DATA GAPS	BEST PRACTICES/ CHALLENGES	RESOURCES REQUIRED Technical Assistance Training Applied or Required	REMARKS
	<p>Actual 2008:</p> <p>7 Member States (MS) and 3 Associate Members (AM)</p> <p>Preliminary 2009:</p> <p>4 MS and 1 AM</p> <p>Publications: Production of a Report: National Accounts Digest 2002-2006</p>	<p>Completed Report posted on the Secretariat's web site.</p>		<p>Some of the problems encountered during the validation process were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - incomplete updates/partial revisions - missing data - discrepancies between totals and sum of the components <p>Recommended Tables: Capacity Building required in all Member States.</p> <p>Some inroads into the development of Supply and Use tables (precursor to Input-Output analysis) but Implementation of 2008 SNA will pose challenges</p>		<p>basic data production and use the data to improve the reliability of the estimates.</p>

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AREA OF STATISTICS	DATA PRODUCTION (Tables etc.)	DATA DISSEMINATED	DATA GAPS	BEST PRACTICES/ CHALLENGES	RESOURCES REQUIRED Technical Assistance Training Applied or Required	REMARKS
- Quarterly	Q1 2010: 2 Member State Q2 2010: 1 Member States	All the data collected were disseminated on the Secretariat's web site.	Quarterly 2010: 13 Member States outstanding, however, these countries may not be producing QGDP.			Developmental work in this area may be possible under the CISP. The TWG will also keep it on its agenda.