

ADVISORY GROUP ON STATISTICS (AGS)

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Bearing in mind the essential and ever increasing need for reliable official statistics for policy formulation and informed decision-making, with an indisputable nexus to positive sustainable development;

Recalling inter alia the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics as adopted in 1994 by the United Nations Statistical Commission, which include recognition of statistics as an indispensable pillar in the information of a democratic society

Mandated by the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community to create a CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) and a Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) to fit the Region for advantage in the new environments and to provide the statistics to favourably achieve this fit;

Recalling also that in January 2005, in a meeting chaired by Suriname's Minister of Foreign Affairs at that time, the Honourable Marie E. Levens, The Community Council of Ministers passed the resolution on the Strengthening of Statistical Capacity (Resolution) in the Region and approved the concomitant Regional Statistical Work Programme.

Recalling also that the SCCS had instated the AGS to enable the implementation of the approved RSWP and the Resolution.

The updated RSWP has come into effect and needs to be executed over the period 2012/2013 up to 2016/2017

For a proper execution of the Resolution and the updated RSWP, the SCCS will continue to support the functioning of an Advisory Group on Statistics in the Region with the following objectives:

I. OBJECTIVES

- i. Develop a supporting framework to enable the implementation of the updated Regional Statistical Work Programme in CARICOM Member States and Associate Members in a manner that will result in the production and dissemination of a common core of harmonised, high quality and timely information on the Region.
- ii. Implement the Resolution on strengthening the national statistical systems.
- iii. Promote the increased use of the Statistics produced and disseminated across the Region
- iv. Promote the development and adoption of Standards conducive to the production and dissemination of high quality statistics in the region.
- v. Develop a mechanism for monitoring and evaluating the adherence of member countries to the RSWP and to relevant statistical standards

II. OPERATING ACTIVITIES

The Operating activities of the AGS in support of the Objectives are:

- i. Facilitate periodic assessments at the national level of the current state of the national statistical system in each member country through an understanding of:
 - a. Users' current and perceived future requirements for statistical information; their assessment of the adequacy of existing statistics and of where there are gaps in existing and planned data; their priorities; and their ability to make effective use of statistical information;
 - b. the statistics that are available, their sources and how quickly they are made available to users (publication and dissemination policies);
 - c. The linkages and coordination arrangements among producers and between producers and users of statistics and how priorities are set across the NSS;
 - d. The legal and institutional framework in which key producers of statistics operate;
 - e. Organisational aspects, including how the NSS is managed, human resource policies; and strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats;
 - f. The quality of statistics and how they are produced (methods and procedures, use of international standards, constraints and problems) and processed, analysed and archived (IT policies, databases) ; and
 - g. Current capacity of the NSS (physical, statistical, and ICT infrastructure; human and financial resources; and dissemination policies and strategies).

- ii. Facilitate Periodic Self Assessment utilizing CARICOM's Good Statistical Practices tool

- iii. Periodically Assess the legal status of the national statistics systems and how the Agencies manage themselves, to include, inter alia, a review of:
 - a. The statistical Legislation and authority under which the agencies operate
 - b. To determine the status, stature and role of the head of the NSO
 - c. The positions and status of statistical agencies within government
 - d. The mechanisms for consultations between users and producers of statistics
 - e. The clarity of mission and strategies, institutional culture and structures and the extent to which agencies adhere to professional ethics and international standards
 - f. Human resource development policies and training facilities
 - g. Financial resources and infrastructure
 - h. Information and communication technology.

- iv. To perform the activities under (i), (ii) and (iii) it is envisioned that the AGS will
 - 1) Design the survey instrument for the gap analysis
 - 2) Conduct the gap analysis
 - 3) Report the findings of the gap analysis
 - 4) Collect all legislation pertaining to the collection and dissemination of statistics and conduct an in depth review to determine inadequacies, if any
 - 5) Design short to medium term projects aimed at " filling the gaps"

- 6) Prepare operating budget for the Advisory Group and costs of project implementation over the three- year period
 - 7) Seek to identify funding that will support project implementation
 - 8) Monitor and assess the achievements of outputs
 - 9) Identify opportunities and devise strategies for the training of statisticians in Statistics in general and particularly in Social/Gender and Environment Statistics
- v. Design and develop those strategies and projects that will facilitate the implementation of the Regional Statistics Work Programme through the filling of the gaps that have been identified in the assessment processes. The development of strategies to bring about the outcomes embodied in the Resolution will also be addressed.
 - vi. Maintain linkages with Regional and International agencies in the area of statistics, promote participation of CARICOM countries in the UN Statistical Commission and ensure the collaboration and integration of the statistical initiatives of Regional and International Organisations
 - vii. Provide a taxonomy and identify critical areas of statistics where there may be a need for more technical working groups to work on specific issues and to report at appropriate time frames.
 - viii. Propose ad hoc sub groups necessary for work to be done in critical areas of statistics and formulate / recommend the work to be done by these subgroups
 - ix. Provide guidance and assistance to the process of Harmonization and Quality assurance of Regional Statistics¹
 - x. Monitor and evaluate the progress of implementation of the RSWP in all countries
 - xi. All other functions deemed necessary to achieve the objectives.

III. CHARACTERISTICS of the AGS

Members, Associate Members and Observers

The Advisory Group will consist of
Eight Heads of Statistics from Member States
One Head of Statistics from the Associate Members
The Head of Statistics of CCS and at most three others from CCS

OBSERVERS

A Representative from the ECCB
A Representative of the OECS
Other Representatives from Regional and International Partners, such as CARTAC, CDB, UN Organizations, as necessary

¹ Statistics should be: **Relevant, Accurate, Timely and Punctual, Accessible and Interpretable, Coherent and Comprehensive.**

,Other Observers , such as Experts in Statistics and Related Fields, allowed in with a simple majority vote of AGS members

CHAIRMANSHIP

The AGS members will elect among themselves a Chairperson and a Deputy Chairperson, from among the Member States represented in the AGS, whose Term of Office will coincide with the Term of Office for the AGS

Term of Office of the AGS:

The original AGS having served for six years since 2007; as of 2014 will be subject to a rotation of a three year term of office, based on the following proposed configuration: 2-3 OECS and 5-6 Other members (non-OECS) and 1 Associate Member.

Frequency of Meetings:

Meeting will be held twice yearly at a place to be determined. In the interim, the work of the Advisory Group will be facilitated through the use of the electronic forum.

Funding:

Since 2007 funding for the work of the group was obtained from member countries, regional and international organizations, but as of 2014 the membership is encouraged to source funds from their government.

Secretariat:

CARICOM will be the secretariat for the Advisory Group. In addition, every Advisory Group meeting may elect a Rapporteur from the Member States who together with CCS would be responsible for reporting on summary/conclusions & recommendations for the pertinent meeting. Alternatively, the Chairperson, the Deputy Chairperson and CCS will jointly be responsible for the summary/conclusions & recommendations.

V. REPORTS

Reports on the activities of the Group are to be presented at its own meetings. The AGS is required to report on an annual basis to the Standing Committee of Caribbean Statisticians on the progress of the implementation of the activities to institutionalise the compilation and dissemination of the statistics and indicators.
