



# Stats News & Views

Facts, Figures and Updates from the Statistics Section of the Caribbean Community Secretariat

December, 2003

Volume 3, Issue 2

## Main Events

### Twenty-Eight (28<sup>th</sup>) Meeting of the Standing Committee of Caribbean Statisticians (SCCS)

The Twenty-Eight Meeting of the Standing Committee of Caribbean Statisticians (28<sup>th</sup> SCCS) took place at Providenciales, Turks and Caicos Islands during the 3-5 November 2003. This issue of our Newsletter focuses on proceedings from the 28<sup>th</sup> SCCS Meeting along with a feature on the Statistics Website. As a result, the column, *Past Events and Outcomes*, is subsumed under the feature, *Main Event* for this issue only. We apologise for the late dissemination of this issue.

### The Development of a Draft Statistical Programme for the CARICOM Region

Movement towards establishing a Statistical Programme for the CARICOM Region was discussed at the 28<sup>th</sup> SCCS Meeting. The rationale for establishing such a programme was grounded in the need for statistics for decision-making in a rapidly changing environment, characterised by liberalisation and globalisation and changes in information communication technology. Fundamentally, successful implementation and functioning of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) and the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) require timely, harmonised and reliable data.

It was emphasised that the statistical programme for the Region should be the *minimum* programme to be followed by all Member States with the aim of producing harmonised, relevant and high quality statistics. Activities undertaken in recent years by the Secretariat provide a backdrop for such a programme and include: encouraging Member States to document and

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### The External Hosting of the Statistics Web Site

Recognizing the challenges created by the rapidly changing global environment and the increased thrust towards the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME), the importance of having high-quality, user-friendly statistics readily available for decision and policy making cannot be over emphasized. It is against this background that the Statistics Sub-Programme has developed its Web site where data on Economic and Social Statistics can be disseminated to a wide cross-section of users. The Web site is now externally hosted allowing for greater accessibility by our users, by overriding the problem of limited bandwidth.

The Web site also disseminates methodologies employed by Member States; reports from Statistics Meetings and Statistics Legislation. Since its inception in October 2002, the number of visitors per month averages 1000, and this figure is expected to grow as more data and information are posted on our Web site.

Planned development of the website such as having an on-line trade database that can be queried, requires additional resources. These resources include: skilled human resources, storage space, the use of the latest technologies such as Secure Server functionality, and the availability of greater bandwidth to further improve accessibility. It is anticipated that with access to an online payments facility there will be increased dissemination and marketing of the statistical products through our Web site.

Please visit our Website at: [www.caricomstats.org](http://www.caricomstats.org).

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disseminate their statistical methodologies; ongoing work on the identification of a core set of economic, social, environment and information communication technology statistics; promoting and adopting international statistical standards and initiating the process of setting up Advisory Groups.

The objective of the common statistical programme for the Region is therefore the identification of the *minimum set* of statistical activities to be carried out by the national statistical systems in *all* Member States, consisting of *regionally agreed to frameworks*, that can strengthen and improve the regional and national statistical systems to provide for the statistical needs of the Community.

Preparation of such a programme recognises the important role of the national statistical systems as the cornerstone of the production of statistics in the Region; the urgency of orienting statistics to the needs of users; the ranking of statistical priorities in the context of national and regional priorities and the need for a collaborative culture in the process of statistical development.

The Secretariat will commence an Internet-based forum to further develop and refine the elements of the programme in place of the suggested Web Meeting, prior to advancing the process.

### **Implementation of 1993 System of National Accounts (1993 SNA)**

Efforts by Member States to implement the 1993 SNA appeared to be gaining momentum in 2003. Indications are that work is in progress on the compilation of Supply and Use Tables incorporating the Tourism Sector in the process in a few Member States..

In the area of Tourism Satellite Accounts (TSA) the Secretariat participated in a workshop organised by UNECLAC Santiago, Chile, the World Tourism Organization, and the Canadian Tourism Commission. Eight CARICOM Member States attended, with the participants representing statistical offices and national tourism development agencies. This Workshop was held in Trinidad and Tobago in March 2003.

CARICOM Secretariat also convened a workshop on the TSA under the CARICOM–Spain initiative for Statistical Offices in Member States, in October 2003 in Barbados. Both events served to inform of the

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methodology, experiences and practices of compiling tourism satellite accounts and to encourage the development of the TSA. The Secretariat is giving consideration to the organization of a National Accounts Workshop later this year focusing on the experiences in implementing the Supply and Use Tables. Further information on this workshop will be in our next issue of this newsletter.

### **International Trade in Services**

The Secretariat continued its efforts to source funds to facilitate the development of statistics on International Trade in Services, following the CIDA funded Project of 2001-02. This Project included a situational assessment of the capacity of Member States to produce services statistics and a regional sensitisation workshop.

Member States were urged to give priority to foundation work to enable the production of these statistics commencing with the evaluation of existing data on trade in services from the Balance of Payments and National Accounts. The CARICOM Secretariat has prepared terms of reference to facilitate the production of detailed guidelines that can enable a common approach to the production of statistics on International Trade in Services, as part of a wider Project being considered for funding.

### **The Compilation of Merchandise Trade Statistics**

The experience of compiling the regional Trade database by the CARICOM Secretariat during 2003, has shown that there is modest improvement in the quantum, quality and timeliness of submission of trade data by Member States. Countries were urged to make every effort to submit their annual trade data to the CARICOM Secretariat for a particular year by the end of the first quarter of the following year.

The Secretariat instituted efforts to update the correlation table linking the Harmonised Commodity Description and Coding System, (HS) to the Standard International Trade Classification, Rev 3(SITC, Rev 3).

The EU representative spoke about the New Eurotrace software which is being pilot tested in some countries. It is recognised that training at the regional and national levels is required with respect to the use of the New Eurotrace.

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### Developmental Work Social / Gender Statistics

The 28th SCCS Meeting was informed of the outputs of the Social Gender Component of the “*CARICOM Programme on Strengthening Capacity of Social/Gender and Environment Statistics in the CARICOM Region*”. These outputs included: identification of a *Core List of Indicators*; execution of an *Inventory of Social/Gender Statistics* in Member States; the establishment of the *Social Indicators and Millennium Development Goals (SIMDG) Committees* in most Member States and the conduct of a *Workshop on the Harmonisation of Social Statistics in the CARICOM Region*. The Secretariat urged Member States to fully support the programme commencing with the completion and submission of the *data formats* submitted by the Secretariat to Member States.

### Follow-up to the MDG Conference: Potential for Initiatives in the Region

This presentation by the UNDP outlined the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and their corresponding indicators; the roles of the UNDG and the UNDP in the implementation of those goals; the challenges, recommendations to stakeholders in the areas of MDG and poverty monitoring; and current and potential regional initiatives to improve data and poverty monitoring. The presentation also identified gaps in data collection for monitoring the MDGs and stressed the need for a joint programme to strengthen regional capacity to address these gaps.

### Development Work on the Environment Statistics

Preparatory activities have been undertaken by the CARICOM Secretariat to start the Environment component of the CARICOM Programme on Strengthening Capacity in the Compilation of Social/Gender and Environment Statistics in the CARICOM Region. These activities focused on the immediate next steps identified in the CARICOM/UNSD Project component on the Environment. The UNSD was commended for its involvement in the regional programme to develop Environment statistics through laying the foundation in the Project and supporting the operation of the CARICOM Advisory Group. The Secretariat intends to convene a meeting of this Advisory Group in 2004 to formulate the Environment component of the Programme. It was agreed, that due to resource

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constraints, a minimum list of key indicators in the area of the Environment should be identified. The need for technical assistance to strengthen the capacity of Member States to compile environment statistics was also recognised.

### The Harmonization of Social Statistics in the Region

The CARICOM Secretariat convened its first workshop on the *Harmonisation of Social Statistics* in the Region which was held in Grenada in August 2003. The main objective of the workshop was to start the process of harmonisation through an evaluation of the existing concepts and methodologies in use in Member States. The recommendations arising from this workshop included:

- The crucial need for cooperation and collaboration at the national regional and international levels;
- The need for a vigorous national response in promoting the usefulness of statistics and the use of the SIMDG committees as a viable mechanism to coordinate the collection of data;
- The importance of building on existing mechanisms and guidelines at international levels in the process of harmonisation; and
- the need for working groups of experts to review closely the concepts and definitions across Member States.

### Statistical Strengthening under the Ninth European Development Fund

The potential for strengthening Economic statistics under the Ninth European Development Fund (9th EDF) was discussed at the 28th SCCS Meeting. The overall purpose of this arrangement is to strengthen the capacities of the regional and national statistical systems to achieve sustainable improvement in Economic statistics. The expected outputs of the Project are: Improved programming and coordination; better harmonised and standardised products, and improved production and dissemination. Essentially the Project aims to make available comparable Economic statistics to monitor the integration process, and to contribute to the establishment of the CSME by providing an effective surveillance system for decision makers. The intended activities include long and short-term technical assistance; on the job training; the conduct of regional workshops and the use of study and exchange visits.

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### **Multi-donor Initiative to Support the Collection of Social Data for Poverty Assessment and Reduction—World Bank (IBRD) Trust Fund for Statistical Capacity Building**

Progress has taken place in the area of consensus building among donors engaged in the multi-donor initiative in the Region. Consideration is being given to the design of a Project to support the collection of social data for poverty assessment and reduction in the CARICOM Region. Highlights of this undertaking will include poverty assessments and the conduct of regional and national conferences and workshops for training and dissemination purposes.

It was indicated that out of an estimate of \$US3.2 million which was required to execute this Project, approximately \$US1.5 million has been raised, part of which has been allocated to the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Secretariat to assist the member countries to improve the coverage and quality of surveys of living conditions and the use of these survey results in monitoring poverty and living conditions. The aim is also to build capacity to conduct social policy analysis and to prepare poverty reduction strategies.

It was also indicated that the CARICOM Programme on Strengthening Capacity in Social/Gender and Environment Statistics will also benefit through the World Bank Trust Fund for Statistical Capacity Building (TFSCB).

### **Other issues raised at the 28th SCCS Meeting include:**

- *Progress reports from the National Statistical Offices;*
- *A Review of Statistics Legislation*
- *UNSD initiatives: International Economic and Social Classifications, Progress in 1993 SNA implementation; International Census Symposium 2004; Expert Group meeting on Setting the Scope of Social Statistics-2003*
- *The Statistics Service— Past, Present and Future—The Barbados Statistical Service;*
- *Improving National Statistics through coordination—The Establishment of a Statistical Commission, STATIN, Jamaica*
- *Sources of Data in Social Statistics—Census, Surveys, Administrative records, Population Registers;*

## Question and Answer

*Many users experience difficulty understanding the difference between incidence and prevalence rates. We would like feedback from our readers relative to a succinct explanation of these concepts, which we will feature in our next issue*

## Future Events and Expectations

*The following meetings are planned for this year:*

- ***Meeting to establish SIMDG Committee in Bermuda, 4– 5 May - Increased coordination of statistical agencies and capacity building***
- ***Fourth Advisory Group Meeting, 7-11 June - Reporting and Monitoring of activities/ activating of the Environment Component;***
- ***SIMDG Committees - Follow-up Activities, June— training, capacity building, coordination;***
- ***Second Meeting on Harmonisation of Social Statistics;***
- ***Regional Workshop on International Trade in Services and International Migration-in collaboration with UNSD;***
- ***Workshop on 1993 SNA focusing on Supply and Use.***

## Publications

The following is available from the Documentation Centre of the Secretariat for US\$25.00 on CD-ROM, and US\$35.00 in hard copy:

- 📄 *CARICOM's Intra-regional Trade— Top 20 Commodities 1998-2001.*

*Highlights of the above can be found on our web site,*

Forthcoming publications::

- 📄 *CARICOM's Trade—A Quick Reference to Some Summary Data—1996-2001*
- 📄 *Women and Men in CARICOM Member States: Labour Force Statistics 1980, 1990 & 2000 censuses;*
- 📄 *CARICOM's National Accounts Report —2000-02;*
- 📄 *Balance of Payments of CARICOM Member States: 2000-02*

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