Main Events

Approval of The Draft Regional Statistical Programme and Resolution By the Fifteenth (15th) Meeting of the Community Council of Ministers.

On January 5th 2005, the Community (Council) of Ministers gave approval to the Regional Statistical Programme to support the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) and the Resolution on Statistical Development at the Fifteenth (15th) Meeting of Council that was held in Georgetown Guyana. The backdrop to the presentation of the Regional Statistical Programme to Council followed a preparation on the Status and Role of Statistics in the Region at the Eight (8th) Meeting of the Resumed Session of the Community Council of Ministers that was held in Nassau, The Bahamas in 2001. At that Meeting, Council mandated the Secretariat to prepare, along with the Standing Committee of Caribbean Statisticians (SCCS), a three year plan for the improvement of the quality and range of statistics available to the region in response to the increasing demands being made on statistical agencies. The SCCS drafted a resolution on statistical development which called on Governments of the region to give priority to the strengthening of the national statistical systems to undertake the collection, processing, analysis and dissemination of statistics.

The main objective of the Regional Statistical Programme is to focus on the statistical needs, to establish, monitor and evaluate the CSME, to make available, statistical information for decision making, to monitor the international arrangements and agreements and to provide the inputs into negotiations at the various

Main Events

Twenty-Ninth (29th) Meeting of the Standing Committee of Caribbean Statisticians (SCCS)

The Twenty-Ninth Meeting of the Standing Committee of Caribbean Statisticians (29th SCCS) took place in Hamilton, Bermuda during the 22nd to 24th November 2004. Some highlights presented during the meeting are contained in this column.

Measurability of the Information Communication Technology (ICT) Sector

The 29th SCCS Meeting was informed that the need to develop Statistics on ICT is particularly significant in light of the decisions arising out of the First Special Meeting of Ministers with responsibility for ICT, held in Antigua and Barbuda on 15 May 2002. This Meeting reiterated the need to develop a Draft Policy on ICT to guide its development and to recognise the impact of the advances in ICT on the economies and societies of all Member States and the benefits that can be derived. An outlined proposal to enable the measurement of ICT was presented.

Implementation of The Statistical Research Agenda - Reconciliation of Merchandise Trade

During the process of establishing the regional trade database by the CARICOM Secretariat, queries on perceived anomalies in the data are submitted to Member States. Additionally, the analysing of data on intra-regional trade often shows inconsistencies in the corresponding imports and exports among Member States. As a consequence of these experiences, the Secretariat has included in its Work Programme, the reconciliation of trade data aimed at improving the

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levels.

Included in the Work Programme are themes such as:
- Economy Finance Investment;
- Population, Demographic, Social and Living Conditions;
- Environment;
- Information Communication Technology;
- Public Relations, Data Dissemination and Statistical Coordination and
- Modernisation of National Statistical Systems.

Programme Areas, Objectives, Expected Outputs and Actions required to achieve the objectives are identified in the Work Programme. The actions are further allocated over a three (3) year period to produce the three year plan requested by Council.

The Resolution which was prepared by the SCCS recalled the Fundamental Principles of Official statistics as adopted in 1994 by the United Nations Statistical Commission which include the recognition of statistics as an indispensable pillar in the information of a democratic society; it also recalled the principles outlined in the United Nations Millennium Development Goals and the need for indicators to measure the achievement of these goals; the trade processes at the global and hemispheric levels which required statistics to enable meaningful participation in negotiations and the critical role that complete, accurate, reliable, timely and relevant statistics, accessible to all, will play in successful implementation of the CSME and CARICOM Court of Justice (CCJ) and as a cornerstone to our democracy.

Among the decisions of the 15th Meeting of Council were that regional governments agreed to invest in the national statistical information systems; to update their statistical legislations to obtain the information required for decision making; to adopt the regional statistical programme and the Resolution prepared by the Secretariat and the SCCS and to establish an intensive sensitisation programme to encourage participation from all stakeholders – users, producers and suppliers – to enable the production of relevant, reliable and timely statistics.

The full text of the presentation to Council, the Regional Statistical Programme and the Resolution are found at www.caricomstats.org.

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quality of the data of Member States and also to achieve greater harmonization.

Status of Merchandise Trade Statistics

The experience with the submission of Merchandise Trade data to the Secretariat revealed that as at 20 October 2004, ten Member States submitted data for 2003 towards the compilation of the regional trade database. Seven Member States submitted data before the end of April 2004 with one submission in March 2004.

The Common External Tariff (CET) that was revised based on the Harmonised Commodity and Description Coding System - HS 2002 was distributed to Member States for implementation at the beginning of 2004. To date, only a few Member States have implemented the updated CET.

Other issues raised at the 29th SCCS Meeting include:
- *Compilation of Regional Database in National Accounts and the Implementation of the 1993 Systems of National Accounts (1993 SNA)*
- *Progress Reports on the Fourth and Fifth Advisory Group Meetings – Development of the Social, Gender Component*
- *Status Report – National Statistical Offices – General Progress of Work and the Compilation and Submission of Core/MDG Statistics and Indicators and the Operations of the SIMDG*

Implementation of Component 2 - Government Procurement project

The CARICOM Secretariat is engaged in implementing a project component on Government Procurement statistics which is part of a project on Government Procurement Frameworks in the Caribbean Community- Towards a Regional Best Practice Regime for the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME). Data collection deficiencies in the area of Government Procurement have hampered the Community Efforts in negotiations at the hemispheric level of the Free Trade Area Of the Americas and also at the global level of the World Trade Organization. The initiative is geared to support the establishment of a

framework of rules under the revised treaty establishing the CSME. The Statistics Component seeks to collect data on Government Procurement in Member States with respect to the procurement of goods, services and works. The Component is being executed by the CARICOM Secretariat in collaboration with the Caribbean Regional Negotiating Machinery (CRNM) and is being funded by the Inter American Development Bank (IADB) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

Data Collection Experts and a Senior Data Collection Consultant have been recruited by the Secretariat to collect detailed statistics across Member States.

Meeting with the Bureau of Statistics (BOS)-Guyana

Under the CARICOM Programme to strengthen capacity in the areas of Social and Gender Statistics a meeting was held in October between the CARICOM Secretariat Statistics Sub-Programme and the Bureau of Statistics (BOS) to follow up on the progress made with coordinating Social, Gender and Environment Statistics through the establishment of the Social Indicators and Millennium Development (SIMDG) Committee.

Outcomes:
Some of the main outcomes of the meeting were:

– Identification of some of the main difficulties being encountered with the compilation of data for the social indicators and MDGs specifically the inaccessibility of data from Ministries;
– Duplication of efforts, with the same indicators being requested by other agencies;
– Plans for the development of a website were being discussed with assistance from the UNDP.

Recommendations:

– The CARICOM Secretariat representatives indicated that CARICOM would be willing to assist in whatever capacity they were requested and that the BOS should submit to the Secretariat whatever data have been compiled to date.
– The BOS would convene a meeting with the key stakeholders of the Ministries of Health and Education and the CARICOM Secretariat to further sensitize them to the need for submitting the data and to identify solutions to the constraints being faced in data compilation.

DevInfo 4.0 Regional Roll Out Workshop for Latin America and The Caribbean, 9 - 13 August 2004

CARICOM Secretariat attended a workshop on DevInfo 4.0 which was organised by UNICEF and was held in Panama City, Panama. The workshop brought together 83 participants from Statistics Offices and UN Offices throughout Latin America and the Caribbean Region.

DevInfo 4.0 is a powerful database software tool that helps countries to track and monitor their progress towards the Millennium Development Goals. The database maintains indicators by time periods and geographic areas and generates tables, graphs and maps for reports and presentations.
Some of the main objectives of the workshop were as follows:
- To provide initial training to introduce DevInfo and its features in use and administration.
- To identify a potential group of DevInfo Trainers for the Regional DevInfo Trainers' Roster to train users and data managers in DevInfo. This training of trainers was held in Panama on 6th -10th December 2004

Free Movement Database Training

A Microsoft Access database was developed by the staff of the Statistics sub-programme, which captures required statistics for persons applying for the Skills Certificate under the CSME Free Movement of Persons provision.

The database consists of a main form and reports divided into two sub categories: Summary and Control totals. The main form has three categories namely general information, personal information and certificate of skills information.

On the 8th October 2004, several officials from different Ministries/Agencies of Member States that are involved in the issuing of skills certificate which enables CARICOM nationals to move, were trained in Basic Microsoft Access and in the use of the Free Movement Database System. This training was held in the CARICOM Secretariat's Conference Room at the Bank of Guyana Building, Georgetown, Guyana.

It was decided that the statistics resulting from free movement of persons would be transmitted to the Secretariat on a quarterly basis. Further developmental work will be required in the future in this area.

The New EUROTRACE Training Workshop

The New EUROTRACE Training Workshop was held at the Rex Saint Lucia Hotel, Saint Lucia in September 2004. The major objective of this Workshop was to train trade statisticians and computer experts from National Statistical Offices of CARICOM Countries and Curacao on the use and management of the new EUROTRACE Windows-based software. The new software can lead to an enhancement in the Processing of Trade data at the national level and lead to more timely compilation and dissemination of the regional trade statistics. The topics included:

–   End-User Training - Using Eurotrace Windows for data importation, correction and management.
–   Designer Training - How to gather all the necessary information that is required to define and parameterise a complete Eurotrace Domain.
–   Trainer Training - How to install the software, train users and use existing information to create a Eurotrace Domain.

The Eurotrace software package was developed in 1987 with the first version (Eurotrace DOS) being released in 1991. By 2000 it was installed in more than 60 Countries. In 2000, Users expressed the need for a Windows Version to be developed, hence the New Eurotrace. The workshop was funded by Eurostat and Caribbean Regional Technical Assistance Centre (CARTAC)

Achieving The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

A workshop on the Millennium Development Goals was held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Trinidad in September 2004. It was jointly convened by the Caribbean Development Bank and the United Nations Development Programme to integrate the MDGs into the development plans of CARICOM Member States. The overall objective of the Workshop was to monitor the progress of the MDGs.

Some of the outcomes of the workshop include:
–   Participants were able to obtain insights into the situational analysis of the MDGs in the Region. Statistics showed that progress to halt the spread of HIV/AIDS was present in the Bahamas and Barbados.
–   Issues surrounding the Environment were also discussed.
–   An overview of statistics in the Region was

presented, highlighting efforts at strengthening statistical capacity and the importance of strong data collection mechanisms to produce the MDGs.
–   The need for human resources relative to improvement in the quality, efficiency, access to services and new capabilities in areas such as the environment and policy and programme development were articulated.

Note: The questions and answer segment will appear in the next issue.

Future Events and Expectations

Project to enhance Trade Data Dissemination in the CARICOM Region: The facilitation of online access to users

The Statistics Sub-programme of the CARICOM Secretariat maintains a Trade Information System (TradSys), created to process, compile and report detailed Merchandise Trade data at the commodity level from Member States into a comprehensive regional database since the 1980s.

The Secretariat is about to implement a project to enhance Tradsys. The general objective of the project is to make trade data more easily accessible to users by improving the dissemination processes through the use of an online searchable trade facility. In addition the Project has as another objective, the establishment of efficient database systems in Member States through making recommendations on the streamlining of the existing procedures on data compilation. The project will also seek to provide a common format for the submission of trade data to the Secretariat.

Publications

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*