

UNITED NATIONS STATISTICS DIVISION
UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE
PACIFIC (UNESCAP)

UNSD/ESCAP Workshop on the 1993 System of National Accounts Update
19 – 22 April 2005
Bangkok, Thailand

Opening statement
by Mr Ilpo Survo
Officer in Charge, a.i.
ESCAP Statistics Division

Mr Viet Vu,

Mr Dippelsman,

Mr Hvidsten,

Distinguished participants, friends and colleagues,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the UNSD/ESCAP Workshop on the 1993 System of National Accounts Update. My thanks go to the governments for sending high-level participants. I would like to pay tribute to the United Nations Statistics Division, Mr Viet Vu and Mr Hvidsten in particular, for their technical input. My thanks also go to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for sending a resource person, Mr Robert Dippelsman.

Distinguished Participants,

High quality national accounts data are a prerequisite for sound economic policymaking. The discussions you will be having during the next four days will contribute to improving methodology for compilation of national accounts and will eventually lead to better economic policies in the region.

The updating of the 1993 SNA began early in 2003. The target is to complete updating by 2008. The issues to be updated are listed on the UNSD website. Most of you will have read the issue papers, the Advisory Expert Group's (AEG) recommendations, and comments by countries on the issues. A number of countries represented in this workshop have already commented on the Expert Group's recommendations. This workshop is another opportunity for you to inform UNSD whether any of the Group's recommendations can be implemented in your countries and what would be their impact on the GDP estimates.

I am sure that UNSD and IMF colleagues will explain in detail how the SNA update will be done transparently and in synchronization with revision of other major frameworks and classifications of economic statistics. Once you go home, I would encourage you to send comments in writing to UNSD on the issues that your countries have not yet commented upon.

Distinguished Participants,

Although this Workshop is on updating the 1993 SNA, not many developing countries have implemented the 1993 SNA fully. Some of you may have seen the recent report of the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts to the Statistical Commission, which lists a number of impeding factors. They include low numbers of staff, especially graduates working on national accounts, and lack of in-country training programmes on national accounts. The Statistical Commission encouraged countries to intensify advocacy and reach out to high-level users and policy makers in order to strengthen their awareness of the importance of national accounts. That would also facilitate increased funding for implementation of the 1993 SNA. I must stress that Governments should not see allocation of such resources as a cost but as an investment.

Many countries in this region have big informal sectors. I am pleased to note you will discuss this important topic. In this regard, I would like to inform you that UNESCAP will be implementing a project aimed at improving the data on informal sector, we will give you more information on this during the workshop.

Distinguished Participants,

One objective of the workshop will be that countries feel ownership of the updating process. I am confident that your contributions to the discussion will ensure that the region's needs are reflected in the 1993 SNA Update and countries in the region feel that they have been adequately consulted.

I wish you all success in your discussions and a very pleasant stay in Bangkok.

Thank you very much.