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Manuals on Macroeconomic Statistics: A Stocktaking to Guide Future Work

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IMF Working Paper

Statistics Department

Manuals on Macroeconomic Statistics: A Stocktaking to Guide Future Work¹

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Abstract

The views expressed in this Working Paper are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent those of the IMF or IMF policy. Working Papers describe research in progress by the author(s) and are published to elicit comments and to further debate.

Over the last decade, a number of methodological manuals on macroeconomic datasets were produced by the international community. For a number of reasons, these manuals could be viewed as fragmented, disconnected, and branching in various directions. This paper groups by topics and broad classifications a critical mass (some 40) of manuals that have been published since 1993 or that are nearing completion. Viewing the manuals in an integrated framework prompts a reflection with four broad types of issues to be addressed for future work: awareness and accessibility of the manuals; their relevance; the need for further harmonization, and the need for updating procedures.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Over the last decade, international and supranational organizations³ made major advances in methodological work on a number of macroeconomic datasets. Much of this work was generated from the research agenda⁴ established in the *System of National Accounts, 1993*. The work covered a wide variety of topics. The resulting manuals, which are taken as the embodiment of the methodological work, range across national accounts, input-output tables, balance of payments, monetary accounts, government finance, household accounts, expenditures classification, price and volume measures, tourism, trade in services, non-observed economy, globalization, and environment accounts.

Now that the work has proceeded over a number of years, the time has come to step back. The purpose of this document is twofold: take stock of what has been done so far and, with that stocktaking as a basis, raise questions to help guide the future work on manuals.

Some of the questions are as follows: What has been covered in terms of macroeconomic sets? Are there gaps? Was there enough guidance provided in these various areas and was that guidance appropriate? Is there an adequate degree of harmonization among the guidelines?

The first section uses a framework to map the manuals and organizes them into four broad categories. For each category, the manuals are outlined with a view to shedding light on the questions raised above. The second section reflects on the experience in order to help set out the way forward. The document ends by raising issues for discussion.

II. THE MANUALS OF THE LAST DECADE: AN OVERVIEW

The manuals presented here pertain to the purely macroeconomic phenomena of society and, hence, exclude socio-demographic guidelines and micro-oriented standards, such as microeconomic statistics, business accounting standards, and banking supervisory codes.

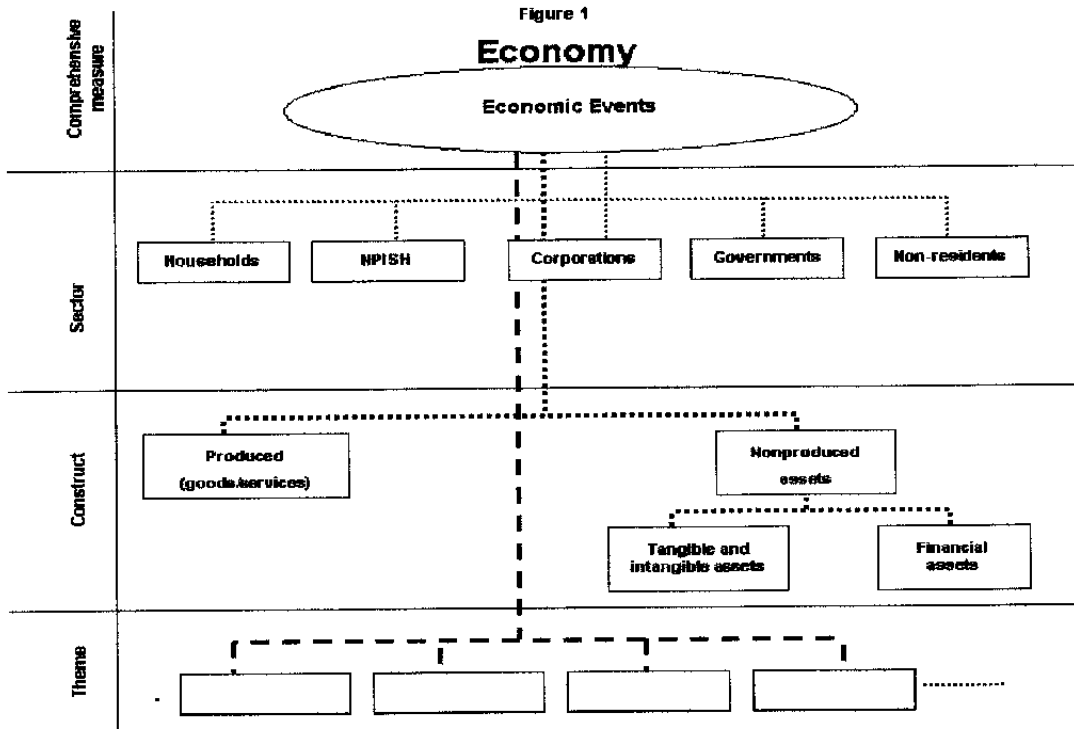
They include both those that have been published since 1993 and those that are nearing completion. The intent is to draw on a group of manuals that provide a critical mass rather than an exhaustive list of manuals. The manuals referred to in this document are listed in Annex I.

Any categorization of macroeconomic phenomena is bound to focus on specific aspects, obscuring others. For instance, a simple categorization between the real and financial economy would focus on economic events, but would tend to obscure the role of economic agents involved in such events. In order to encompass the wide range of economic phenomena and their complexity, a multicategory approach has been selected (Figure 1). Economic phenomena

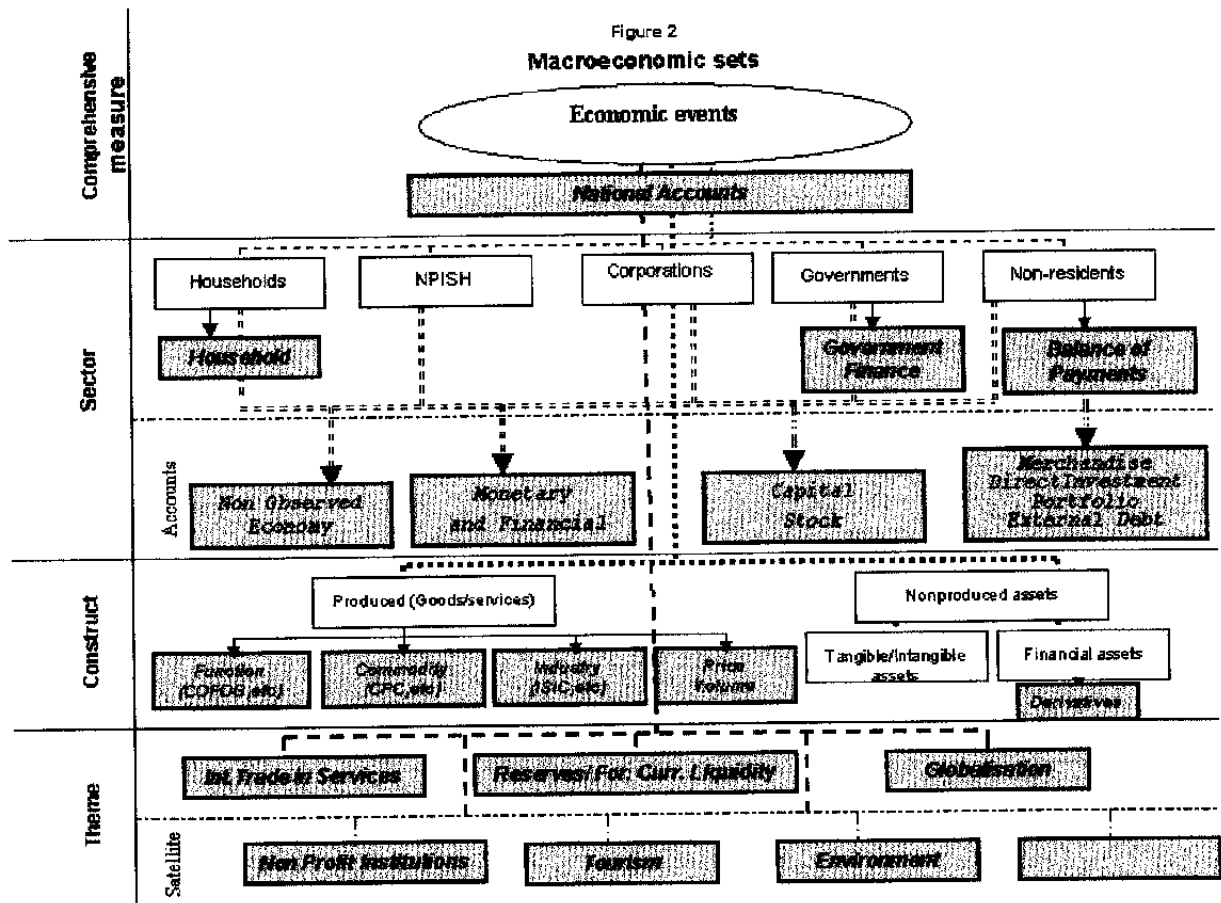
³ These will be referred to as international organizations for the remainder of the text.

⁴ The research agenda of the *1993 SNA* is reproduced in Annex II.

are grouped under four headings: comprehensive view, by sector of economic agents, by construct, and by theme.



These four headings are used to categorize the manuals based on the topics they cover (shaded boxes in Figure 2). The manuals may be guidelines exclusively on concepts, definitions, and classification; compilation guides; a mixture of these two; or classification.



- The manuals that provide for a comprehensive view of the economy are those that deal with national accounts at large.
- The sector-based manuals present the economy from a sector perspective (unlike the comprehensive framework where sectors are viewed as parts of a whole and, as such, conform to one another). One manual covers the full range of economic activities with nonresidents (shown for simplicity under the nonresident sector)⁵ while two others present those of the government and the household sectors, respectively. Insofar as they are presented against a sectoral backdrop, and as part of a broader account presentation, manuals on specific accounts

⁵ Technically speaking, the manuals should be under the resident sectors but they are shown as nonresident to illustrate that they represent dealings with nonresidents.

are also included in this category. Under the nonresident sector, four manuals deal with, respectively, merchandise trade, direct investment, portfolio investment, and external debt as part of a balance of payments presentation (inclusive of the international investment position). For all sectors, three manuals describe, respectively, capital stock, production accounts not measured elsewhere (the non-observed economy), and the financial accounts.

- The construct-based manuals focus on the “what” of the question, “Who does what with whom?” The “what” refers to constructs that arise from productive activities as well as from other types of activities. Constructs comprise produced goods and services and nonproduced assets. Nonproduced assets are made up of tangible and intangible assets as well as financial assets. Produced goods and services are extensively covered by manuals. Except for the supplement to a manual that deals with financial derivatives, there is currently no manual exclusively on nonproduced assets. However, it should be noted that nonproduced assets are extensively covered in the framework of environmental accounts (referred to under theme-based manuals). The manuals on goods and services elaborate on specific aspects such as functions of goods and services, their composition, the industries that produce them, and their prices and volumes. With the exception of the manuals on prices and volumes that are complete sets of accounts, these manuals take the form of a classification, that is, of structured sets of categories.
- The theme-based manuals respond to specialized analytical needs, largely by using existing guidelines as building blocks and expanding upon them. The manuals in this category can be grouped as miscellaneous macroeconomic sets and satellite accounts. The three miscellaneous macroeconomic manuals—international trade in services, international reserves and foreign currency liquidity, and globalization—cut across existing broad accounts and across sectors, and rearrange them in components that fit their own specific frameworks. The manuals on satellite accounts may use concepts and definitions that differ from existing accounts; add detail or other information about a particular aspect of the economy to that in existing accounts; and rearrange information differently, using classification that differs from the primary guidelines. To the extent that they can be adapted to conform to existing guidelines, the accounts from the theme-based manuals can also be used as building blocks for other datasets.

Comprehensive manuals

By far, the most encompassing macroeconomic set in scope is the *System of National Accounts, 1993 (1993 SNA)*. *1993 SNA* groups resident economic agents, or institutional units, into five resident sectors, and nonresident units in the rest-of-the-world sector. It groups the related economic events, both flows and stocks, into three broad accounts. The current accounts and the accumulation accounts cover economic flows (transactions and other flows), and the balance sheet accounts cover stocks. These three broad sets of accounts are fully integrated through sequential accounts that range from production up to balance-sheet accounts. The *European System of Accounts 1995 (1995 ESA)* is broadly consistent with the *1993 SNA* with

regard to definitions, accounting rules, and classification, although it incorporates certain differences that make it more in line with use in the European Union (EU).⁶

These two manuals, the *1993 SNA* and *ESA 1995*, deal primarily with guidelines on concepts and definitions. The quarterly versions of national accounts are fully consistent with the *1993 SNA*. Although they are compilation guides, they also include guidelines on concepts and definitions. For instance, the *Quarterly National Accounts Manual* deals extensively with practical and theoretical issues that are specific to the quarterly accounts. The *Handbook of National Accounting: Use of the System of National Accounts in Economies in Transition* is largely a compilation guide to provide help on the application of the *1993 SNA* in transition economies and other countries introducing market mechanisms. Two other manuals provide, respectively, a systems approach to the compilation of national accounts, such as methods for data collection, estimation techniques and data processing, and guidelines for the use of macro-accounts for policy analysis.

The *Handbook of Input-Output Table Compilation and Analysis* covers the conceptual and statistical integration of the supply-and-use table. It provides conceptual guidelines and is also a compilation guide. It is fully harmonized with the *1993 SNA*.

Sector-based manuals

The *Balance of Payments Manual (BPM5)* provides an integrated framework to record the economic activities of all residents of an economy with nonresidents. It is a manual that deals with guidelines on concepts, definitions, classification, and a standardized presentation. This manual is complemented by a compilation guide and textbook. Substantial efforts were made to harmonize the *BPM5* and *1993 SNA*, as the guidelines were developed at the same time. As a result, both sets use the same definition of resident units, the same characteristics of accounts in terms of valuation, timing of recording and accounting principles, and the same integrated nature of the three broad sets of current accounts, accumulation accounts, and balance sheet. Differences remained, however, in terms of presentation of accounts within the broad sets, treatment of financial intermediation services indirectly measured (FISIM), and supplementary functional and term-to-maturity detail that belongs exclusively to balance of payments. Except for FISIM, the differences essentially represented additional information on selected accounts. The experience of harmonization of these two sets provided criteria (sector, common accounts as building blocks, and integration of broad accounts) against which harmonization efforts of subsequent macroeconomic sets can be assessed.

International Merchandise Trade Concepts and Definitions (IMTS2) provides guidelines to record the cross-border trade in merchandise. It is a manual on definitions and classification; a compilation guide is underway. Merchandise trade broadly corresponds to the exports and imports of goods in *BPM5*. However, there are major differences between the two sets in the

⁶ Hereafter, selective use is made of the manuals of this organization.

principles used to build the accounts. Such differences are largely attributable to the extensive use of customs practices in *IMTS2* reflecting the long history of data collection through customs administration.

OECD Benchmark Definition of Foreign Direct Investment (BD3) provides guidance on how to compile direct investment statistics. It is a compilation guide, with concepts and definitions fully consistent with the *BPM5*.

The guidelines provided in the *Coordinated Portfolio Investment Survey: Survey Guide* are in full agreement with the *BPM5*. Nonetheless, as financial markets continually evolve, the manual refers to a database on financial instruments,⁷ which is periodically updated to reflect new instruments, including their treatment according to the *BPM5* methodology. The manual is a compilation guide as it provides practical advice on conducting the national portfolio surveys that are coordinated at the international level.

External Debt Statistics: Guide for Compilers and Users provides a framework to record the liabilities to nonresidents that require payments of interest and/or principal by the debtor at some point in the future. It is a manual on concepts, definitions, classification, and uses, as well as a compilation guide. While maintaining the core links with the *BPM5* and *1993 SNA*, the manual extends the characteristics of financial instruments, provides more details on debt, supports the valuation of tradable debt instruments on a nominal value (a deviation from market valuation) as well as on a market value, and introduces remaining term-to-maturity (deviation from original term of existing account). The manual includes a complete reconciliation with the relevant elements of the *1993 SNA* and *BPM5*.

Government Finance Statistics Manual (GFSM) presents an integrated framework to record government economic activities. It provides guidelines on concepts and definitions; a compilation guide is in prospect. *GFSM* is fully harmonized with the concepts, definitions, sector, and broad account presentation of *1993 SNA*. Compared to the latter, however, *GFSM* excludes own account capital formation from current account (showing it exclusively as part of the accumulation accounts), does not delineate the financial services component (FISIM) of investment income, classifies taxes on an administrative rather than economic basis, and recognizes unfunded pension liabilities. *GFSM* provides bridging links to the *1993 SNA*.

The *Handbook For Measurement of the Non-Observed Economy (NOE)* covers production activities that are not included in the basic statistics because they are informal, illegal, underground, or otherwise missed by the statistical system. It is largely a compilation guide. It identifies the activities by sector, and presents them according to the framework of the *1993 SNA*. In fact, this manual responds to one of items in the research agenda included in the *1993 SNA*.

⁷ Bank of England, *Financial Terminology Database*, London, 1997.

Measuring Capital: A Manual on The Measurement of Capital Stocks, Consumption of Fixed Capital and Capital Services is fully consistent with the 1993 SNA. The definitions of the net capital stock and consumption of fixed capital are identical with those in the 1993 SNA. However, the manual goes beyond the 1993 SNA in explaining the measurement of capital services.

The *Monetary and Financial Statistics Manual (MFSM)* provides guidelines on concepts, definitions, and classification of monetary and financial statistics; a compilation guide is underway. The *MFSM* contains separate frameworks for monetary and financial statistics. Monetary statistics consist of stock-and-flow data for the financial corporations sector, whereas financial statistics consist of stock-and-flow data for all sectors of an economy. Both frameworks are harmonized with the definitions, concepts, and methodology of the 1993 SNA. The *MFSM* contains a few concepts not found in the 1993 SNA, as well as more detailed treatment of some concepts contained therein.

For corporations, except for the manual *Links Between Business Accounting and National Accounting* that deals largely with country practices with references to methodological issues, there are currently no guidelines that pertain exclusively to concepts and definitions. As most of the data sources for that sector come from businesses, a manual could be useful in promoting harmonization of business and national accounts at the international level, as was beneficially experienced between *GFSM* and the public sector accounting of the International Federation of Accountants. It would also help in linking the macroeconomic corporate statistics with their microeconomic counterparts, as was done in the case of labor income.⁸

As for the household sector, it is covered in the *Handbook on Household Accounting: Experiences in the Use of Concepts and Their Compilation*. Also, some of the activities of the household are covered in a manual that is underway on nonprofit institutions (presented below under theme-based manuals).

Construct-based manuals

The construct-based manuals on goods and services expand on the classification of goods and services by function, by commodity, and by industry. They also include manuals that focus on the prices and volumes of goods and services. The documents on classification were part of the research agenda of the 1993 SNA, where some functional classifications were identified as provisional. As for the manuals on prices and volumes, they basically elaborate on issues covered in the 1993 SNA.

The construct-based manuals dealing exclusively with nonproduced assets are on financial derivatives, one for national accounts and the other for balance of payments. These two manuals, which are fully consistent with one another, represent clarification and changes to the

⁸ *Expert Group on Household Income Statistics*, the Canberra Group, 2001.

1993 SNA and BPM5, and have been incorporated as amendments to these two macroeconomic sets. It should be added, however, that nonproduced assets are extensively dealt with in the framework of environmental accounts (referred to under theme-based manuals).

Theme-based manuals

The *Manual on Statistics of International Trade in Services (TIS)* places special emphasis on the statistical needs of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). *TIS* encompasses trade in services in the conventional sense of transactions between residents and nonresidents (balance of payments) as well as services delivered through locally established enterprises (Foreign Affiliates Trade in Services, or FATS). It is a manual on concepts and definitions, and a compilation guide will follow. The differences from the *BPM5* and *1993 SNA* lie in the presentation as well as in the more extensive dimension of accounts in *TIS*. The accounts presented in *TIS* have been bridged to accounts of the *BPM5* and *1993 SNA*, and a concordance has been established with the Central Product Classification and the International Standard Industrial Classification.

Operational Guidelines for the Data Template on International Reserves and Foreign Currency Liquidity (IRFCL) provides guidelines for compiling information on the external liquidity of a country's authorities. *IRFCL* covers reserve assets and other foreign currency assets as well as short-term foreign currency liabilities and off-balance sheet activities of the authorities. It is a compilation guide. While the concept of reserve assets and reserves-related liabilities is the same as that in the *BPM5*, *IRFCL* extends the dimensions of these accounts and covers sectors and accounts beyond those in the *BPM5*. The differences have been extensively documented in *IRFCL*, including descriptions on how to bridge to the reserve assets of the *BPM5*.

The *Manual on Economic Globalization Indicators* will provide methodological and statistical guidelines for constructing indicators for monitoring the worldwide economic integration over time. The indicators will be developed for the foreign controlled and direct investment enterprises of the *1993 SNA* and *BPM5*, respectively. In that sense, the coverage does not fully correspond to the majority-owned affiliate coverage of *TIS*.

The satellite accounts include the *Tourism Satellite Account: Methodological References (TSA)*. Unlike the *BPM5* and *1993 SNA*, *TSA* does not view as visitors students and medical patients who stay abroad for more than one year, and cross-border workers. This means that the accounts need to be adjusted for use as building blocks for macroeconomic statistics purposes.

The *Handbook on Non-Profit Institutions in the System of National Accounts* develops and implements a system on nonprofit entities. It is both a manual on guidelines and a compilation guide. In order to consolidate the information on the nonprofit entities, the manual groups not only the small subset of nonprofit institutions identified as NPISH in the *1993 SNA*, but also all of those in other sectors.

The *System of Integrated Environmental and Economic Accounting (SEEA-2000)* is a manual on guidelines on concepts, definitions and classification, with an annex showing the links to the

1993 SNA. It provides a complete and extended set of economic accounts with full consideration of environmental assets, along with techniques for policy analysis purposes. A compilation guide that provides a step-by-step approach to compile the accounts supplements it.

III. THE MANUALS: WHAT'S NEXT?

In looking forward, a number of questions will need to be addressed. First, now that the manuals on most macroeconomic sets have been developed or are being finalized, a logical next step is to promote their awareness and accessibility, inclusive of facilitating their implementation. Second, the process that was used to harmonize the manuals needs to be assessed to see if more harmonization could be achieved in the future. Third, to ensure that the gains from harmonization are maintained, and further promoted, procedures in terms of updating the manuals would need to be developed.

Awareness and accessibility of manuals

For each particular set, manuals offer a way to summarize numerous and heterogeneous events into common elements. While this makes them potentially useful, their authoritative value comes from being known and recognized. The sharp increase in the number of manuals developed in recent years has made it more challenging to make the manuals known and recognized. Not only were existing manuals being revised, but a new vintage of manuals was also being developed. Manuals that came under revision cover national accounts, input-output, balance of payments, merchandise trade, government finance, and external debt as well as most construct-based manuals. Newly produced manuals include direct investment, capital stock, money and financial accounts, the non-observed economy, all of the theme-based manuals (trade in services, globalization, reserves); and all of the satellite manuals (tourism, environment, productivity).

One way that producers and users of data are made aware of the manuals is through their direct involvement in the development of such manuals. By its very nature, this approach, however, can reach only a limited audience.

The promotion of manuals is carried out directly by the international organizations through their respective dissemination channels. However, they each have specific manuals to promote using their own practices and policies on a range of issues, such as pricing, accessibility, and languages in which the manuals are made available. This setting may constrain the availability of manuals.

A recent initiative that may promote manuals has been to list on a common website⁹ the past and ongoing methodological documentation of international organizations in economic, social,

⁹ <http://esa.un.org/unsd/progwork>, set up in response to a request from the thirtieth session (New York, March 1-5, 1999) of the Statistical Commission.

demographic, and environment statistics. This common website constituted a natural outcome of the last decade of efforts by the international organizations in coordinating their activities in the development of manuals. In fact, the manuals are increasingly viewed as products of the international community, and this helps them to reach a broader audience.

A very important means of promoting manuals is for international organizations to conduct seminars, provide technical assistance, and devise guides on methodological work toward implementing the macroeconomic sets of statistics. Various methods are used in developing such guides, ranging from description of best country practices to clarification and interpretation of manuals on concepts, definitions, and classification. Compilation guides may not be as authoritative on conceptual matters, especially where they have not been the results of intensive consultation with expert producers and users of data.

Relationship and harmonization among manuals

From a theoretical viewpoint, the various macroeconomic sets should be fully integrated as they shed light on selected aspects of the same macroeconomic reality. It is on the basis of such a relationship that efforts were made over the last decade to harmonize the various manuals. Harmonized accounts can be used interchangeably across sets, saving time and money for data producers, and as importantly, empowering users to compare and integrate various sets of data. In practice, however, manuals have been produced over a number of years, by various international organizations, and on a number of various subjects. Such conditions have affected the extent to which harmonization was achieved among manuals.

Using the manuals themselves as a starting point, the present document attempted to capture the extent of harmonization among manuals. It used a framework to situate the topics covered by manuals, distinguishing the conceptual and definition manuals from the compilation guides, and showing how they relate to one another. The exercise shows that national accounts have been extensively used as a backbone of the harmonization of macroeconomic manuals. The comprehensive measure provided by the national accounts system made it a natural anchor for all the other sets. This was further reinforced by the decade-long groundwork where concepts, definitions, classification, and presentation frameworks of the system were completely revisited and made consistent throughout. This central role for the system was actively promoted by the United Nations Statistical Commission. It recommended that international organizations consider and endeavor to achieve consistency with the *1993 SNA* in their review of standards in particular fields of economic statistics.

The experience also shows that harmonization efforts can be maximized when manuals are developed during the same period. At the time the national accounts were developed, the guidelines on balance of payments were also being revised, and this greatly facilitated the harmonization among these two frameworks. The elements that had been harmonized in these two frameworks were in large part adopted in the macroeconomic sets that were subsequently developed.

The exercise also shows that needs arose, especially in the financial areas, that had not been considered at the time the national accounts were developed, and that manuals now reach topics well beyond the more traditional macroeconomic sets. Some of the emerging needs were accommodated by updating the national accounts and balance of payments, as was the case for financial derivatives. In some cases, the accounts of specific sets were extended in dimensions not found in the core accounts, such as remaining term-to-maturity of debt and identification of counterpart. In other cases, manuals were created (e.g., theme-base manuals) as they use frameworks not readily available in existing manuals. For instance, for the newly developed manual on international trade in services, the coverage for the foreign affiliate trade in services is based on majority-owned foreign affiliates, instead of the direct investment, or foreign controlled firms coverage of existing sets. There were also cases where manuals were created to respond to specific needs of selected areas, such as the EU and the North American Free Trade Agreement.

Updates to manuals

If the national accounts are to remain the centerpiece of all macroeconomic sets, that is, harmonization is to be maintained and further promoted, three major types of concerns will have to be addressed in the future.

First, if the national accounts are to be more actively promoted as a central reference set for the other sets, a certain amount of adjustment to national accounts may be needed. The work to identify the amendments would at the same time provide an organized forum where issues of harmonization can be fully discussed, as was the case for financial derivatives. The agenda for such a forum could use as a starting point the *1993 SNA* research agenda,¹⁰ and update it with methodological issues that arise from other macroeconomic sets. Even if the issues remain unresolved, this would at least provide a central repertory from which topics could be defined and formalized, prioritized, and allocated for further research.

Second, a formal procedure has to be developed to update the manuals with a transparent updating mechanism. A procedure exists for the national accounts,¹¹ with provision for a series of gradual updating steps, such as editorial amendment, clarification, interpretation and changes, as well as methods to disseminate the changes. There is currently no procedure for the other sets, and this is especially important for guidelines that have been produced prior to *1993 SNA* and from which extensive statistics are currently produced.¹² While it may be felt too early to adopt an updating procedure, especially for sets where statistics have not yet been

¹⁰ Reproduced in Annex II.

¹¹ See *SNA News and Notes*, Issue 7, January 1998.

¹² For instance manuals pertaining to labor statistics produced by the International Labour Organization (referred to in Annex I).

implemented, the existence of such procedures would however ensure that harmonization is promoted, especially if coordinated with that of the national accounts.

Finally, closely related to updating procedures, is the need for criteria to assess if and when updating is warranted. In order to develop such criteria, a number of factors would need to be considered, such as identifying the sources of pressures to change guidelines, and recognizing the factors that may have led in the past to adopting guidelines specific to one set only. It would also mean taking into account the trade-off between conceptual consistency, and countries' statistical capacity, cost and other implementation considerations.

IV. ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

The manuals on macroeconomic data sets could be viewed as fragmented, disconnected, and branching in various directions for a number of reasons, such as their larger number, the span of time over which they are produced, their multiple authorship, and the increasing variety of subjects they cover. A more integrated view emerges when they are presented by topic, assembled by broad category, with a focus on their common and specific features, and by delineating them as conceptual and compilation manuals. Viewing the manuals in such a framework prompts a reflection on issues that would need to be addressed for the future work to proceed in a systematic fashion. Some of these issues are presented below for consideration of the heads of national statistical offices and other leaders of the international statistical community.

Awareness and accessibility of manuals

What has been their experience with the process of developing the manuals? Were they sufficiently involved and made aware of the development of manuals? What has been their experience in accessing the manuals? In what format, print or electronic, do they prefer to access the manuals? Is there a need to modify and coordinate the dissemination practices of international organizations on manuals? If so, what could be the principles and modalities of such dissemination?

Relevance of manuals

In developing the manuals, the focus has been on conceptual, methodological, and implementation issues. What should be the next priority? Are there areas in need of more conceptual work, such as for the corporate sector and on nonproduced assets? Should the work focus on instruction and guidance to facilitate the implementation of the manuals? As the ultimate objective of manuals is to respond to users' needs for information, should there be more work on the purposes and needs that the manuals purport to respond?

Relationships among manuals

The present document highlighted how the various manuals map against one another on the basis of the topics they cover. Do national statistical authorities feel that they are sufficiently

aware of the relationship among manuals? Is there a need to elaborate further on such relationships, especially by highlighting the areas that were harmonized from those that remain specific to the various sets? Is there a sufficient amount of harmonization to facilitate the use of the same statistics across macroeconomic sets?

Updates to manuals

The national accounts were used as the overarching standards for the other macroeconomic sets. Should consideration be given to adjust the national accounts to meet requirements common to several macroeconomic sets? Procedures are in place to modify the national accounts, but not all the other macroeconomic sets. Should there be coordination of updating procedures across the various macroeconomic sets, such as agreements on shelf life of the manuals, and their amendment and clarification? What should be the criteria to assess if modifications are needed?

MANUALS REFERRED TO IN THE DOCUMENT

Comprehensive View Manuals

Name	Organization	Date
<i>System of National Accounts, 1993 (1993 SNA)</i>	Prepared under the auspices of the Inter-Secretariat Working Group on National Accounts. Commission of the European Communities–Eurostat, International Monetary Fund, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, United Nations, and World Bank.	1993
<i>European System of Accounts (ESA 1995)</i>	Eurostat.	1996
<i>Handbook of National Accounting: Use of the System of National Accounts in Economies in Transition</i>	United Nations.	1996
<i>Handbook on a Systems Approach to National Accounts Compilation</i>	United Nations.	1998
<i>Handbook of Input-Output Table Compilation and Analysis</i>	United Nations.	1999
<i>Quarterly National Accounts Manual</i>	International Monetary Fund.	2001
<i>Handbook on Quarterly National Accounts</i>	Eurostat.	1999
<i>Quarterly National Accounts: Sources and Methods Used by OECD Member Countries</i>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.	1996

Sector-Based Manuals

Name	Organization	Date
<i>Balance of Payments Manual (BPM5) Fifth Edition</i>	International Monetary Fund.	1993
<i>Balance of Payments Textbook</i>	International Monetary Fund.	1996
<i>Balance of Payments Compilation Guide</i>	International Monetary Fund.	1995
<i>International Merchandise Trade: Concepts and Definitions (IMTS2)</i>	United Nations.	1998
<i>Merchandise trade statistics: Provision of explanations and advice on the implementation of the revised UN guidelines on international merchandise trade</i>	United Nations.	Work-in-progress
<i>OECD Benchmark Definition of Foreign Direct Investment, Third Edition (BD3)</i>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.	1996
<i>Coordinated Portfolio Investment Survey: Survey Guide, Second Edition</i>	International Monetary Fund.	Work-in-progress.
<i>External Debt Statistics: Guide for Compilers and Users</i>	Prepared by the Inter-Agency Task Force on Finance Statistics (TFFS). The TFFS is chaired by the International Monetary Fund and the work involves representatives of the Bank of International Settlements, the Commonwealth Secretariat, the European Central Bank, the Eurostat, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the Paris Club Secretariat, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, and the World Bank.	Work-in-progress

Sector-Based Manuals (continued)

Name	Organization	Date
<i>Government Finance Statistics Manual (GFSM)</i>	International Monetary Fund.	2001
<i>Monetary and Financial Statistics Manual</i>	International Monetary Fund.	2000
<i>Links Between Business Accounting and National Accounting</i>	United Nations.	2000
<i>Expert Group on Household Income Statistics</i>	Canberra Group.	2001
<i>Handbook on Household Accounting: Experience in the Use of Concepts and their Compilation, Volume 1. Household Sector Accounts</i>	United Nations, International Labor Organization, Johns Hopkins University.	1998
<i>Surveys of economically active population, employment, unemployment and under employment: An ILO manual on concepts and methods</i>	International Labor Organization.	1990
<i>Handbook for Measurement of the Non-Observed Economy (NOE)</i>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, International Monetary Fund, International Labor Organization, the Commonwealth of Independent States and contributors from national statistical organizations.	Work-in-progress
<i>Measuring Capital: a Manual on the Measurement of Capital Stocks, Consumption of Fixed Capital and Capital Services</i>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.	2001

Construct-Based Manuals

Name	Organization	Date
<i>Inflation Accounting: A Manual on National Accounting Under Conditions of High Inflation</i>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.	1996
<i>Consumer Price Index Manual</i>	Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics made up of Eurostat, the International Labor Organization, the International Monetary Fund, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, and the World Bank.	Work-in-progress
<i>Producer Price Index Manual</i>	Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics made up of Eurostat, the International Labor Organization, the International Monetary Fund, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, and the World Bank.	Work-in-progress
<i>The New International Standards for the Statistical Measurement of Financial Derivatives, Changes to the Text of the 1993 SNA</i>	International Monetary Fund.	2000
<i>Financial Derivatives, A Supplement to the Fifth Edition (1993) of the Balance of Payments Manual</i>	International Monetary Fund.	2000
<i>Price and Volume Measurement in National Accounts Manual</i>	International Monetary Fund.	Work-in-progress
<i>Consumer price indices: an ILO manual</i>	International Labour Organisation.	1989 (new and expanded edition under preparation)

Theme-Based Manuals

Name	Organization	Date
<i>Manual on Statistics of International Trade in Services (TIS)</i>	Task Force convened by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, and consisting of members from the European Commission, the International Monetary Fund, the United Nations, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, and the World Trade Organization.	Being finalized
<i>Operational Guidelines for the Data Template on International Reserves and Foreign Currency Liquidity (IRFCL)</i>	International Monetary Fund.	2001
<i>Manual on Economic Globalization Indicators</i>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.	Work-in-progress
<i>Tourism Satellite Account: Methodological References (TSA)</i>	Eurostat, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, World Tourism Organization, and United Nations.	2000
<i>Measuring the Role of Tourism in OECD Economies: The OECD Manual on Tourism Satellite Accounts and Employment</i>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.	2000
<i>Handbook on Non-Profit Institutions in the System of National Accounts</i>	United Nations, in cooperation with the Johns Hopkins University Center for Civil Society Studies.	Work-in-progress
<i>OECD Productivity Manual: A Guide to the Measurement of Industry-level and Aggregate Productivity Growth</i>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.	2001
<i>System of Integrated Environmental and Economic Accounting (SEEA)</i>	United Nations.	1993 (revised version, commonly referred to as <i>SEEA-2000</i> , is close to finalization)
<i>An Integrated Environmental and Economic Accounting: An Operational Manual</i>	United Nations.	2000

EXCERPT FROM "SYSTEM OF NATIONAL ACCOUNTS 1993"¹

Looking ahead: the research agenda

The 1993 SNA, like its predecessors, represents a stage in the evolution of national accounting. To continue that evolution, further research will need to be carried out. Consensus must be reached on certain topics before they can be incorporated into international guidelines and standards. Although there is substantial agreement on the topics to be addressed, a research agenda has emerged along several lines during the final steps of the revision process.

In 1993, the Statistical Commission agreed that the highest immediate priority was to develop practical guidelines for the explicit allocation of financial intermediation service charges indirectly measured to specific users. The Commission addressed the related issues in detail and accepted a proposal by the Inter-Secretariat Working Group on National Accounts to provide a flexible treatment in the SNA. This treatment would recognize the desirability of allocating such charges fully while allowing flexible implementation in particular countries or groups of countries.

The Inter-Secretariat Working Group had also recommended that certain other topics be placed on the research agenda.²⁵ The topics listed below were among those mentioned most often in the 1993 Statistical Commission:

(a) Cost of capital

The draft of the SNA completed in 1992 included imputations for rent on buildings owned and occupied by government and non-profit institutions serving households. However, this treatment presents certain conceptual and practical difficulties. For example, some have argued that the coverage of assets should be more extensive than the coverage of buildings if the concept of the cost of capital is to be used. These imputations were therefore deleted, and the topic was placed on the research agenda.

(b) Consumer subsidies

The 1992 draft maintained the treatment of subsidies found in the 1968 SNA. It has not been possible, despite considerable discussion, to agree on how to distinguish between payments to be treated as mainly benefiting consumers and those to be treated as mainly benefiting producers. Further research is needed, especially given

the importance of the subsidies in some countries.

(c) Informal-formal distinction

The 1992 draft noted the difficulty in developing appropriate criteria to distinguish between informal and formal economic activities, a distinction that has been widely recognized as useful. The International Labour Organization is the lead agency for this work, and the topic is on the national accounting research agenda to support continued collaboration with ILO in this field.

Three additional topics included in the 1993 SNA will require further research:

(a) Environmental accounting

The Section of chapter XXI on environmental satellite accounts notes that it is presenting the state of the art, as of 1993, on the integration of economic and environmental accounting. However, the state of the art does not permit the introduction of environmentally adjusted aggregates in the central framework. The section is intended as a guide to countries wishing to design satellite accounts responsive to policy and analysis focused on environmentally sound and sustainable growth and development. It urges that cooperative research and methodological work by national accountants and environmentalists continue, a sentiment widely expressed in the reviews conducted in various forums.

(b) Classifications

Chapter XVIII (Functional classifications) notes that two of the classifications describes—Classification of Individual Consumption by Purpose (COICOP) and Classification of Producers by Purpose (COPP)—are provisional. COPP, in particular, may need substantial revision. The Classification of the Functions of Government (COFOG) should be modified both to identify more precisely social transfers in kind and to identify more fully functions that are of increasing policy concern, such as repair and prevention of environmental damage.

(c) Matrix presentation

The annex to chapter II notes that the matrix presented there is provisional. Further work is needed to improve the matrix treatment of the accumulation accounts and balance sheets.

The interregional seminar, held jointly with the final expert group meeting in October 1992, devoted a session to updating and refining the SNA in the future. Many of the topics listed above were mentioned. Also cited were: scope of capital formation and stocks; output of services, including services produced within households; financial activities, including those associated with instruments such as derivatives; labour accounts; and regional accounts. The first topic includes two subtopics mentioned on the research agenda that emerged from the 1968 SNA. On one, research and development, substantial work was done during the review and revision toward treating relevant expenditures as capital formation. On the other, education and other aspects of human capital, not now treated as capital in the SNA, little progress has been made.

Finally, there is an interest in reviewing the purposes of the SNA. Two views have emerged on this question. One is that the national accounts are primarily an organizational scheme for economic statistics. The main value of the SNA, then, is in its consistent classifications and definitions and in its display of the interrelationships among the various parts of the economy. This view leads to an emphasis on the improvement of basic statistics for the accounts will improve only as the basic statistics allow. A contrasting view is that the national accounts serve primarily to facilitate analysis of the economy and decision-making. The SNA, through its structure and definitions, not only determines the kind of analysis that can be carried out but also influences the way economic and social issues are considered. This view would lead to a review of the uses of national accounting, and research on this topic has also been suggested. The upcoming fiftieth anniversary of international guidelines and standards for national accounts might provide the occasion for a review of the purposes and uses of the SNA along these lines.

Notes

²⁵ Report of the Inter-Secretariat Working Group on National Accounts on the revision of the SNA (E/CN.3/1993/4), 30 December 1992, and its recommendations on specific issues concerning the revised SNA (E/CN.3/1993/4/Add.1 and 2).

¹Source: *System of National Accounts 1993* prepared under the auspices of the Inter-Secretariat Working Group of National Accounts, the Commission of the European Communities—Eurostat, the International Monetary Fund, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the United Nations, and the World Bank, pages xliii-xliv.