

# NEWS BRIEF

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## **IMF Opens First Electronic Links (Hyperlinks) from Dissemination Standards Bulletin Board to National Data on the Internet**

It is now possible to move directly from the International Monetary Fund's (IMF's) Dissemination Standards Bulletin Board (DSBB) on the Internet to certain national Internet sites to access key economic and financial data. The first electronic links (hyperlinks) to such Internet sites will be opened early on Friday, April 25, 1997 (Washington time). For six subscribers, data users can now move quickly between the bulletin board, which describes the statistical practices of subscribers to the IMF's SDDS, and the actual data for these subscribers.

The subscribers for which hyperlinks to national data sites have been established are:

<i>Canada</i>	<i>Mexico</i>	<i>Singapore</i>
<i>South Africa</i>	<i>Switzerland</i>	<i>United Kingdom -- Hong Kong</i>

Hyperlinks to national data sites for Finland, Israel, Japan, and Turkey are expected shortly. Hyperlinks to more subscribers' data will follow.

### **How to Access Data**

These six subscribers have developed a summary page on the Internet that shows data (for example, GDP growth rates, prices, money and international reserves) that correspond with the descriptions of their data and data dissemination practices posted on the IMF's DSBB. Data

users can access the DSBB at the Internet address <http://dsbb@imf.org>. They can move from the DSBB to national summary data pages by clicking on "**New Access to [subscriber's] data**" wherever it appears. Furthermore, from many of these national summary data pages users can move to more detailed data using hyperlinks that the subscriber has provided. Users may also move in the other direction, from national pages to the DSBB.

## **Background**

The IMF's ministerial-level Interim Committee in April 1995 requested a set of standards to guide IMF members in providing to the public comprehensive, timely, accessible, and reliable economic and financial statistics. A similar request was made to the IMF in June 1995 by the G-7 Heads of State at their Summit in Halifax. The SDDS is targeted at countries having or seeking access to international capital markets. Countries that voluntarily sign up for the SDDS undertake to make the necessary changes to statistical practices to meet the data coverage, periodicity, and timeliness requirements of the SDDS during a transition period (that ends on December 31, 1998) and to follow good practices with respect to public access to the data covered by the standard and to the integrity of the data and its quality. They also undertake to provide information about their data dissemination practices for posting on the IMF's DSBB. Currently, there are 42 subscriptions to the SDDS.

The information posted on the DSBB is known as metadata. In addition to describing SDDS subscribers' data dissemination practices, the DSBB describes steps subscribers are undertaking to improve practices to move toward full observance of the SDDS by the end of the transition period. As of today, the metadata for 29 subscribers are available on the bulletin board.