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IMF's General Data Dissemination System Enters Operational Phase

The International Monetary Fund's (IMF) General Data Dissemination System (GDDS), which was launched in December 1997, has entered its operational phase. The pilot phase, which covered the past two years, was targeted at providing country authorities with information on the System, and with assistance in preparing for participation in the GDDS.

The entry into the operational phase was signaled by posting on the IMF's Dissemination Standards Bulletin Board (DSBB)¹ information on the statistical systems (or metadata), including plans for improvements, of nine participating countries, spanning all the major geographical areas. To date, about 40 countries have expressed a strong interest in participating in the GDDS at an early stage, and the IMF has established a program to assist new participants. The GDDS site will be maintained by the IMF as a service to the membership, and metadata for participants will be added and updated periodically.

The primary focus of the GDDS is to foster improvements in data quality, but it also serves as a guide on good practice in the dissemination and the production of comprehensive, timely, and reliable economic, financial and socio-demographic data. Thus it provides countries with a framework for evaluating current data collection and publication practices, and for setting priorities on improvements to data in accordance with each country's schedule.

¹ See <http://dsbb.imf.org/gddsindex.htm>.

The GDDS is an important strategic project for the IMF's Statistics Department, which is responsible for work on improving data and statistical practices among IMF member countries. The GDDS metadata are also expected to become a valuable source of information for bilateral and multilateral agencies that provide technical assistance to countries seeking to improve and deepen the quality of their data. The GDDS is distinct from another, more demanding, data dissemination initiative of the IMF, namely, the Special Data Dissemination Standard, which is intended for countries that generally already meet high data quality standards.

The GDDS was developed in close collaboration with regional and international organizations, including the World Bank, whose staff conducted the socio-demographic segments in the pilot phase seminars and assisted countries to prepare metadata for this sector.