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To: Members of the Executive Board
From: The Secretary
Subject: Statistical Policy of the Fund

Attached for consideration by the Executive Directors is a paper on the statistical policy of the Fund, which is tentatively scheduled for discussion on Wednesday, June 7, 1995. Issues for discussion appear on page 45.

Mr. K. O'Connor (ext. 37904) is available to answer technical or factual questions relating to this paper prior to the Board discussion.

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INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND

Statistical Policy of the Fund

Prepared by the Statistics Department

(In Consultation with Other Departments)

Approved by John B. McLenaghan

May 17, 1995

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Introduction and Summary

The recent Executive Board discussions on the biennial review of surveillance and the provision of data to the Fund have highlighted the importance to the Fund's surveillance function under Article IV of the timeliness of statistical reporting. These discussions also provide a bridge to a broader discussion of the statistical work of the Fund and the ways in which this work underpins the institution's surveillance activities.

Prior to its review on April 3, 1995 of the staff paper "Strengthening of Surveillance and Provision of Statistical Data by Members" (SM/95/59, 3/24/95), the Executive Board's most recent discussion of statistics took place in 1986, largely dealing with an examination of member countries' reporting of data to the Statistics Department and the timeliness of data published in the Fund's statistical publications ^{1/}. The Board has not previously had the occasion to address the full range of the Fund's statistical activities from the perspective of the institution as a whole. The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to bring together for the consideration of Executive Directors a review of all elements of statistical activities of the Fund, and the interrelationships among them, in the context of a more coordinated approach to statistical policy.

The present paper also draws attention to recent and planned initiatives in several areas of the Fund's statistical work. In support of surveillance, new staff guidelines are being developed to promote uniform treatment and coverage of data quality, coverage, and timeliness issues in Article IV consultation reports and, in light of the Interim Committee Communique, the staff is developing proposals for the Executive Board's consideration of standards to guide members' provision of data to the public. To improve the effectiveness and efficiency of internal data management activities, an interdepartmental committee has recommended improvements in work practices and the adoption of new technologies. In the key area of statistical methodologies, the staff is now working on a new *Manual on Monetary and Financial Statistics* and a revision of the *Manual on Government Finance Statistics*. More systematic procedures for follow-up on the recommendations of technical assistance missions and for enhanced supervision of advisors are being developed. Training programs for Fund economists in statistical methodologies and in database management are planned. Finally, regarding publications, consideration is being given to publishing a greater volume of the Fund's operational data in statistical publications.

Timely, accurate, and well-organized macroeconomic statistics are essential to the Fund to carry out its surveillance, analysis, and dissemination objectives. The data that are compiled are an important

^{1/} Review of Fund Statistics (SM/86/55, 3/11/86). A paper entitled Review of Fund Statistics (SM/88/131, 6/14/88) was issued for the information of the Executive Board.

strategic resource of the organization and the Fund devotes very substantial resources to a broad range of statistical activities that take place in a decentralized and flexible environment that has been tailored to the needs of the Fund and member countries. However, at a time when surveillance is being strengthened, a more coordinated approach to statistical activities may yield benefits in terms of more timely and higher quality data and a more efficient allocation of resources.

While precise figures are not available, ^{1/} the area and functional departments with statistical requirements devote substantial resources to data activities. Area departments allocate an appreciable portion of mission work to data collection and preparation, and data collection and database management require consistent work throughout the year for desk economists. The Statistics Department utilizes its complement of 150-160 staff-years to achieve its goals with regard to technical assistance, development of statistical standards, training, data collection and data management, and dissemination. Other functional departments devote considerable resources to statistical activities during missions and in the development of specialized databases. The specialized databases range from permanent Fund-wide databases such as the *World Economic Outlook (WEO)* database to databases compiled for specific technical assistance and research activities. ^{2/} Finally, a sizable share of the resources of the Bureau of Computing Services is directed to the support of data work. Overall, the statistical activities undertaken by departments, defined in broad terms, may account for as much as 15-20 percent of total budgeted staff resources.

This paper identifies a number of changes and initiatives, particularly in the areas of support for surveillance, data management, and training which, if introduced, would have resource implications for the administrative budget. However, no attempt has been made to quantify the potential resource cost, as decisions would need to be made on the extent and content of any changes and on the possible offsets. The views of Executive Directors on these issues and related resource implications are sought in the final section of the paper.

Statistical support for surveillance

The Executive Board discussion at EBM 95/32 on April 3, 1995 focused on data availability in the Fund to support surveillance. Directors noted that while the majority of Fund members provided data on a timely basis, there were significant deficiencies for a number of members that needed to be addressed. The Board concluded that closer scrutiny of data quality,

^{1/} The budget reporting system for staff activities that is now in use does not isolate statistical activities carried out by area and functional departments other than those of the Statistics Department.

^{2/} This paper does not deal with databases used by the Fund for administrative and financial controls such as the Treasurer's Accounting Database.

coverage, and timeliness was required and that a specific assessment of these three issues should be provided in each staff report on Article IV consultations. The Interim Committee in its Communique of April 26, 1995 emphasized the importance of timely publication by members of comprehensive data and requested the Executive Directors to work toward the establishment of standards to guide members in the provision of data to the public.

Data quality is critically important to surveillance and policy formulation. Qualitatively deficient data--even if reported on a timely basis--can lead to poor analysis and thus to ineffective policy decisions and surveillance. The principal aspects of data quality are coverage, methodological basis, and intersectoral consistency. The quality of data available to the staff depends to a great extent on the basic data compiled by the authorities; inadequacies in these data lead to the need for excessive estimation by staff. The staff addresses data quality issues in the short and medium term through country mission work, development of statistical methodologies, technical assistance, and training. The internal review process also plays an important role in supporting improvements in data quality, but this process can be strengthened. In the context of Fund programs, where there are serious data deficiencies that hinder analysis and the ability to monitor program performance, the inclusion of structural benchmarks and qualitative performance criteria may be appropriate.

Data collection and management

Data collection and management are the most resource intensive statistical activities in the Fund. Area and other functional departments devote substantial resources to managing country operational databases, permanent global databases such as the WEO database, and a wide range of specialized databases. The Statistics Department applies almost one third of its resources to management of its large mainframe-based database, the Economic Information System (EIS). Data management in the Fund is characterized by decentralization, which gives to those handling country data the flexibility to deal with country-specific issues quickly as circumstances require.

There are a number of long-standing issues and problems related to these aspects of the Fund's data work, including: (i) duplicate data collection activities and limited data sharing; (ii) the existence of multiple databases for individual countries that are not well harmonized; (iii) deficiencies in technology for processing and sharing data; and (iv) inadequate data management guidelines and standards, particularly with regard to documentation of databases, that lead to large transition costs when desk personnel change. Recent initiatives by the staff are expected to lead to improvements in a number of these areas. In particular: (i) more coordinated data collection methods are being developed that are designed to serve the needs of all departments; (ii) data management guidelines for desk economists have been developed by some area departments, and the staff is addressing the need for the broader application of such guidelines, while preserving the flexibility needed by individual departments; and (iii) a

study has been launched to identify improved data management technologies that will serve the needs of individual departments while promoting data sharing across departments.

International statistical standards

Internationally accepted statistical methodologies guide the Fund's operational work on statistics, underpin its technical assistance and training in statistics, are the basis of international data comparability, and provide the framework for the Fund's statistical publications. The Fund has primary responsibility for the development and maintenance of methodologies in the areas of balance of payments, monetary, and government finance statistics. The Fund also played a key role, together with other international organizations, in the development of the *System of National Accounts 1993*, the national accounting framework that will be adopted by almost all member countries. The Fund has recently published the fifth edition of the *Balance of Payments Manual*, is producing a new *Manual on Monetary and Financial Statistics*, and is revising the *Government Finance Statistics Manual*.

Maintenance of the methodologies is a continuous, ongoing task to ensure that they meet the changing needs of analysts and policymakers and reflect a changing economic environment. Comparatively few resources (between 6-7 staff years per year) are allocated to work on methodologies, but this work has a very important role in overall statistical activities.

Technical assistance

Technical assistance has been the fastest growing statistical activity in recent years, with the increase directed to meet the needs of new members while maintaining the level of assistance to other membership. ^{1/} The orientation of technical assistance in statistics has also been changed to support more directly Fund surveillance and adjustment programs. Providing a much higher level of technical assistance that is focused to a great extent on the needs of transition economies has placed great strains on technical assistance delivery. Meeting these needs has been facilitated by additional staff resources, the use for the first time in statistical technical assistance of consultant experts, and improved management of technical assistance through the Technical Assistance Committee and the development of the Regional Allocation Plan (RAP).

The quality of assistance has also been improved by the use of multisector missions composed of specialists in each of the main areas of macroeconomic statistics and often including area department staff; these missions are especially useful in assessing infrastructural problems and the

^{1/} Details of technical assistance activity are given in Section IV and in the background paper "The Evolution of the Statistical Activities of the Fund" (forthcoming).

consistency and links between the data sets. Demand for technical assistance is expected to stay at a high level.

Training in statistics

An extensive program of training in statistics is provided to members by the Statistics Department in coordination with the IMF Institute. Courses in balance of payments, money and banking, and government finance statistics are offered each year at the Institute and a new course in national accounts will be presented in FY 1996. The fastest growth in external training has been in regional courses, which can be oriented to the specific needs of countries in similar circumstances. New requests for regional training are expected to remain high.

In contrast with external training, little has been done over the years to train Fund staff in statistical methodologies and data compilation and management practices. Few staff join the Fund with training in these areas and the necessary skills must be acquired by on-the-job training. Consideration is now being given to organizing training courses on statistical methodologies and data compilation in a mission environment to address this problem.

Publications and data dissemination

The Fund's statistical publications--*International Financial Statistics*, *Balance of Payments Statistics Yearbook*, *Direction of Trade Statistics*, and *Government Finance Statistics Yearbook*--have been the principal means of dealing with the Fund's mandate under Article VIII to act as a center for the collection and exchange of information on monetary and financial problems. A substantial amount of statistical information is also regularly disseminated through publication of the *WEO*. A number of changes have been introduced in the statistical publications in recent years and high priority is being placed on increasing the coverage of member countries in these publications and on the timeliness of the published data. In the next two years, an additional 20 countries are expected to be added to the 150 for which country pages are currently published in *IFS*. Efforts are being made to increase the coverage of countries in the *Government Finance Statistics Yearbook*, which has declined in recent years. The 1995 *Balance of Payments Statistics Yearbook* will contain for the first time data that are based on the framework and classifications of the fifth edition of the *Balance of Payments Manual*.

The recently introduced procedure of publishing Recent Economic Developments (RED) reports provides an unprecedented amount of detailed operational country data to users outside the Fund. The publication of RED data may indicate to users of the Fund's statistical publications that the Fund maintains multiple databases. In cases where important differences between RED data and other Fund published data are identified, the staff will try to ensure greater data convergence. Efforts will be made to

publish a greater volume of operational data in the Fund's statistical publications.

I. Statistical Support for Surveillance

High-quality, timely, and comprehensive statistics are an essential ingredient of policy formulation in member countries and provide a critical underpinning to the work of the Fund in meeting its responsibilities for surveillance over the exchange rate policies of member countries. They are vital to the staff's capacity to monitor economic and financial developments and to provide policy advice within an analytically sound macroeconomic framework. There are a number of aspects to statistical support for surveillance. A timely and regular flow of data to the Fund is needed for ongoing surveillance; this issue was the principal focus of the Executive Board's consideration on April 3, 1995 of SM/95/59.

Members' ability to compile data needed for their own policy formulation and analysis and for the Fund's surveillance is often constrained by inadequate statistical infrastructure and a shortage of staff who are trained to produce data conforming to international standards. Moreover, statistical activities in many countries have been severely constrained by budgetary stringency in recent years.

The Fund's programs of technical assistance and training in statistics, as well as development and maintenance of international statistical methodologies, address these problems. Area departments, particularly during missions, provide support to members to enhance the quality of their economic statistics so as to make surveillance more effective. Finally, in the internal process for reviewing the statistical elements of country papers, the staff assesses in particular the quality and coverage of country data for surveillance and programs related to the use of Fund resources.

1. Statistical aspects of surveillance

The statistical requirements related to the Fund's activities in general and to surveillance are based on the Articles of Agreement of the Fund and Board decisions on surveillance. The Articles of Agreement require the provision of data by members. Under "General Obligations of Members", Article VIII, Section 5(a) specifies 12 categories of national data as "the

minimum necessary for the effective discharge of the Fund's duties" 1/ and also provides that the Fund "may require members to furnish it such information as it deems necessary for its activities." Section 5(b) provides that the Fund shall take account of members' varying ability to provide information and does not require members to provide information in such detail that affairs of individuals or corporations are disclosed. Article IV, under the heading "Obligations Regarding Exchange Rate Arrangements," provides specifically for the provision of information needed by the Fund in order to exercise surveillance over the exchange rate policies of members. Section 3(b) states that each member shall provide the Fund with the information necessary for surveillance and, when requested by the Fund, shall consult with it on exchange rate policies. It is clear from the Articles that it is the Fund, i.e., the Executive Board, that determines the information that is necessary for the discharge of its activities or for the conduct of meaningful surveillance.

The 1977 Executive Board decision on surveillance 2/ also refers to the data requirements for Fund surveillance. That decision calls for the Fund's appraisal to be based on an evaluation of developments in members' balance of payments, including the size and sustainability of capital flows, against the background of its reserve position and external indebtedness. This is to be done in the "framework of a comprehensive analysis of the general economic situation and economic policy strategy of the member, and shall recognize that domestic as well as external policies can contribute to timely adjustment of the balance of payments." It can be inferred from the decision that a full range of macroeconomic data, relating to both domestic

1/ These are (i) official holdings at home and abroad of (1) gold, (2) foreign exchange; (ii) holdings at home and abroad by banking and financial agencies, other than official agencies, of (1) gold, (2) foreign exchange; (iii) production of gold; (iv) gold exports and imports according to countries of destination and origin; (v) total exports and imports of merchandise, in terms of local currency values, according to countries of destination and origin; (vi) international balance of payments, including (1) trade in goods and services, (2) gold transactions, (3) known capital transactions, and (4) other items; (vii) international investment position, i.e., investments within the territories of the member owned abroad and investments abroad owned by persons in its territories so far as it is possible to furnish this information; (viii) national income; (ix) price indices, i.e., indices of commodity prices in wholesale and retail markets and of export and import prices; (x) buying and selling rates for foreign currencies; (xi) exchange controls, i.e., a comprehensive statement of exchange controls in effect at the time of assuming membership in the Fund and details of subsequent changes as they occur; and (xii) where official clearing arrangements exist, details of amounts awaiting clearance in respect of commercial and financial transactions, and of the length of time during which such arrears have been outstanding.

2/ Decision No. 5392 (77/63).

and external sectors, is necessary for the effective conduct of surveillance.

In requesting data, the Fund has always been mindful of the importance of the confidentiality concerns of members. As noted in SM/95/59, the Fund has always respected the wishes of its members and other institutions regarding confidential information, and provides appropriate safeguards to ensure that confidentiality is maintained.

2. Provision of data to the Fund

In reviewing the statistical information the Fund needs to carry out its surveillance mandate SM/95/59 focused on the data that are regularly available to the Fund and their timeliness. The Executive Board stressed the need for timely and regular data and noted that recent events had underscored the importance to surveillance of deficiencies in data reporting for the purposes of surveillance in certain cases. While a survey of data availability by the staff had indicated timely availability of basic indicators for the majority of the Fund's members, there were significant deficiencies for a number of members that needed to be addressed.

With regard to reporting standards, the Board, recognizing that data requirements for surveillance change over time and vary across countries, endorsed a selective approach to ensure evenhanded surveillance. A single standard of reporting by all Fund members would not be realistic as countries' ability to compile data varies and the Fund's needs for statistical information are not the same for all countries. There emerged agreement that members would provide on a regular and timely basis data on core indicators covering the main sectors of the economy ^{1/} and the balance sheet of the central bank. To the extent possible, these indicators should be reported on a monthly basis with minimal lags. Directors also suggested that a broader range of regularly reported data was required, at least for many countries; these would include monthly reporting of the accounts of the banking system and more timely information on capital flows and external debt. Executive Directors emphasized the importance for some countries of properly verifying data that are obtained from commercial sources as a supplement to data available to the Fund through official channels.

Directors agreed that the specific data to be provided by members could be identified as those that would be sought from the member in the context of a Fund arrangement, and they emphasized that there should not exist separate standards for program and nonprogram countries. In this regard,

^{1/} The ten basic indicators were exchange rates, international reserves, reserve money, broad money, interest rates, consumer prices, external trade, the external current account balance, the overall government balance, and GDP.

Directors expressed concern over the deterioration in data availability for some countries after they had completed a Fund arrangement.

Inadequate data availability could be due to two causes--deficiencies in the statistical systems of member countries or reluctance on the part of a member to provide available data. In the former case, technical assistance and training should, within available resources, be provided to the member. In the latter case, Directors endorsed a graduated approach that involved, successively: (i) direct staff and management contacts with the authorities; (ii) assistance from the Executive Director concerned; and (iii) consideration of the matter by the Executive Board either at the time of the Article IV consultation or in country matters sessions. The role that Executive Directors must play with respect to their constituencies was very critical for the success of this approach. There was support by some Directors for further action if these steps could not resolve the problem.

Many directors emphasized the advantages of timely publication of key data and encouraged member countries to disseminate statistical information to the public through their own publications and through other means such as the Fund's publications. The data dissemination practices of G-10 countries with regard to scope, timeliness, and frequency of data release were cited by some Directors as a desirable standard and great value was placed on members following a regular schedule of data release.

Substantial concern was expressed by Directors about existing deficiencies in data availability. They noted that recent events had emphasized that inadequate data provision by even a single member could impede the Fund's ability to detect emerging crises. This could have adverse consequences for the quality of advice provided in the surveillance process and potentially for the functioning of the international monetary system. In light of the seriousness of these problems, Executive Directors called for closer scrutiny by the Executive Board of *data quality, coverage, and timeliness* in staff reports on Article IV consultations. A specific assessment of these three aspects of the adequacy of data should be provided in each Article IV report to be submitted to the Board in the coming year. New guidelines for staff are being developed to promote uniform treatment and coverage of these aspects of data in consultation reports. In addition, Directors requested that a preliminary review of data availability be conducted within six months, with an overall review of data quality, coverage, and timeliness, taking stock of the situation for the membership as a whole and in specific cases, to be conducted within one year.

Endorsing the report by the Executive Board on strengthening Fund surveillance, the Interim Committee in its April 26, 1995 Communique stressed the importance of regular and timely provision by all members of economic data to the Fund, thereby enabling the identification of emerging tensions at an early stage. In that context, it also noted the Fund's intention to make greater use of financial market data. The Committee emphasized that timely publication by members of comprehensive data would give greater transparency to their economic policies. It requested the

Executive Directors to work toward the establishment of standards to guide members in the provision of data to the public, and to submit proposals for consideration by the Committee at its next meeting ^{1/}. The staff is preparing a paper for the Executive Board to respond to this request.

3. Measures to enhance data quality

While delays in the availability of important data for even a brief period can seriously impede country and multilateral surveillance, the quality of data provided by members is equally important. Even if reported on a timely basis, data that are deficient from the point of view of quality can lead to poor analysis and, thus, to inappropriate policy advice and prescription. For example, recent Board discussions on the stabilization experience of Russia and the other countries of the former Soviet Union have noted that the available data on aggregate output and industrial production have overstated the extent of the production decline in those countries because of the reliance of those statistics on outdated surveys that fail to capture new sources of economic activity. Similarly, studies have been carried out by Fund staff to show the extent of upward bias in measures of inflation for transition countries owing to defective methods of consumer or producer price index computation. A more typical problem may arise in other countries when data on the overall fiscal balance measured from "above the line" cannot be reconciled with a measure of the deficit from "below the line" because of inadequate sectorization of the banking system accounts, a lack of information on the domestic holders of government bonds, and weak data on external debt service. These deficiencies make it extremely difficult to quantify the links between fiscal imbalances, monetary conditions and the balance of payments. Problems in interpreting monetary developments may become acute when weaknesses in classification of the monetary accounts lead to erratic behavior of "other items net." Finally, weak import trade statistics may make it difficult to identify the causes of a deterioration in the net international reserve position in terms of excess demand pressures or capital flight.

It is clear that there are no uniform standards of data quality, and careful assessment and judgment are called for in each country situation. Nevertheless, there are a number of aspects of data quality that can be identified:

(1) Coverage of both institutions and transactions should be as comprehensive as possible, and gaps in coverage should be identified and their impact on the data assessed;

^{1/} As noted in Section IV, the Fund's program of technical assistance in statistics started in 1968 with the Central Bank Bulletin Project, a program to assist member countries to develop and publish statistics according to international standards. Improvement in statistical publications remains an element in technical assistance projects.

(ii) Data should be methodologically sound--they should conform to the extent possible to international and Fund standards with regard to analytical framework, identification of sectors, and classification of transactions and balances;

(iii) Data sources should be clearly identified. Where alternative sources are available, documentation should describe why particular sources have been chosen. Where staff estimates must be made, they should be made in collaboration with the authorities and the basis for the estimates should be documented;

(iv) Intersectoral consistency of data is critical to an understanding of relationships among policy variables and forecasting the impact of policy measures on target variables.

A substantial amount of mission time, particularly in developing countries, is devoted to ensuring that data of acceptable quality are produced. The staff frequently contribute to improved data quality through their work with authorities on missions, but the time that can be allocated to this work is limited in the context of the primary tasks of the mission. In many countries data quality problems result from inadequate training of officials in the relevant statistical methodologies and in data compilation practices. There are also many countries with significant deficiencies in the basic statistical infrastructure that include poor administrative records in the financial and government sectors, and a lack of basic data on production, incomes, external trade, prices, and labor markets. Data problems, particularly those related to data consistency, are also often exacerbated by poor coordination between agencies responsible for data compilation and between data compilers and users. Moreover, the collection, compilation, and dissemination of official statistics are accorded low priority in many countries and budgetary support for these activities is often lacking.

The Fund devotes substantial resources to the development and maintenance of statistical methodologies, technical assistance, and training to improve the quality of data for the use of the Fund and to support members' own information requirements for the formulation of economic policy and analysis of economic developments. Work in these three areas is closely integrated in order to have the greatest impact on improving the statistical base in member countries. Sections IV to VI of this paper discuss the role that work on methodologies, technical assistance, and training plays in the overall statistical policy of the Fund and provide information on current and future activities in these areas.

4. Identifying and resolving problems in data quality and provision

The responsibility within the Fund for ensuring the acquisition and use of timely, accurate, and high-quality data for surveillance and programming purposes is shared by a number of departments. In their operational work with member countries, area departments develop and maintain the principal

country surveillance databases. The Policy Development and Review Department is responsible for monitoring the effectiveness and evenhandedness of surveillance. The Statistics Department has methodological and technical expertise in statistical areas and major responsibility for dissemination. The Research Department reviews data consistency through its multilateral surveillance responsibilities in the *WEO* exercises and in the context of preparing notes for meetings of the G-7 deputies and G-7 finance ministers and central bankers. These departments have the broadest obligations for assessing data quality in the context of surveillance. Other functional departments contribute to the quality review in their areas of specialization. A collaborative approach among departments is required to identify data issues of importance and decide how they can be addressed.

Under current management guidelines for the review of country papers, the Statistics Department in cooperation with other reviewing departments has a specific responsibility related to criteria that are to be met in country work and the preparation of country documents. In this work the staff has the following objectives: (i) that the data used conform to the maximum extent possible to Fund and international standards for compilation and presentation; (ii) that attention is drawn in an appropriate manner to serious statistical deficiencies that might impede analysis; and (iii) that the measures required to correct these deficiencies, including technical assistance and training, be identified.

Statistical aspects of the review of country papers have received greater emphasis in recent years. The guidelines for staff in place before the Executive Board discussion at EBM/95/32 on April 3, 1995 called for a discussion of serious data deficiencies that impede analysis, policymaking, and Fund operational work in the main text of each Article IV consultation report and for a more detailed statistical annex in every second such report. They also called for appropriate comment to be made in staff reports relating to the use of Fund resources when data deficiencies would impede monitoring of a Fund program. There is also a well established precedent for including appropriate text in memoranda of economic policy and policy framework papers in such cases. In general, however, the treatment of statistical issues in consultation reports has been uneven, with few references in the main text to the ways in which statistical deficiencies have impacted adversely on the staff's ability to carry out surveillance. In this connection, it should be noted that over the 14 month period beginning in January 1994, statistical deficiencies were addressed in 24 (about 15 percent) of the Board summings up of Article IV consultations. As noted earlier, in the recently concluded biennial review of surveillance, Executive Directors stressed the need for staff reports to address the availability of timely and comprehensive data more directly, bringing issues

of coverage, quality, and timeliness of data to the attention of Directors in staff appraisals. ^{1/}

5. Statistical aspects of programs supporting the use of Fund resources

There are no Fund-wide standards to determine when data quality impedes analysis and policy formulation. The information provided to the Board on country data problems may therefore not be adequate to portray accurately the range and seriousness of these problems. There is also great variation in the manner in which data problems are addressed in Fund programs and in actions to be taken by the authorities to redress these problems. In a review of data issues in 55 program countries as of end-June 1994, the staff determined that statistical deficiencies had been: (1) addressed in terms of program benchmarks in ten cases; (2) addressed in the memorandum of economic and financial policies in 18 cases; (3) addressed in staff reports requesting programs in 30 cases; and (4) not addressed at all in 16 cases, of which more than half had severe data problems identified by the staff.

For the design of programs supporting members' use of Fund resources, the question arises as to the appropriate measures to be taken when statistical inadequacies impede analysis and the monitoring of the program. These measures may include establishment of structural benchmarks, qualitative performance criteria, or in the most serious cases prior actions to promote the speedy correction of serious statistical deficiencies. Such measures may, in particular, require the member country to implement recommendations of an institutional nature made by technical assistance missions or may directly require the development or refinement of a particular indicator of performance that is critical for program monitoring.

Some examples of the types of structural benchmarks and qualitative performance criteria, related to statistical developments, that have been included in Fund programs may be helpful. The second-year ESAF program with Mongolia that was agreed in November 1994 included as a structural benchmark a requirement to reach agreement, by a specific date, on a timetable for the implementation of certain technical assistance recommendations in statistics. The 1994 ESAF program with Equatorial Guinea included as a structural benchmark the requirement to report monthly data to the Fund on a timely basis. The 1992/93 ESAF program with Uganda included as structural benchmarks the requirements to produce central bank monthly balance sheets with a lag of less than four weeks and a monthly reconciliation of the accounts of the government and of the central bank. In the case of Cameroon, the stand-by arrangement over the period March 1994 to September 1995 included as a performance criterion the production of consolidated quarterly accounts for the 17 largest public enterprises and an inventory of domestic arrears; and structural benchmarks included the biannual production

^{1/} In the 11 reports on Article IV consultations discussed by the Board during the period December 1994 to February 1995, two raised statistical issues in the staff appraisal.

of balance of payments statistics. The update of statistics on the national accounts and their harmonization with balance of payments data form prior actions for completing the mid-term review under the second annual arrangement under the ESAF for Cote d'Ivoire. These examples indicate that, where statistical deficiencies are important, they can be usefully addressed in the formulation of programs.

II. Data Collection and Management

1. Current data management practices

Effective data management by all departments that maintain statistical databases is essential to meeting the Fund's surveillance and other objectives, and coordination among departments in data management is necessary if the Fund is to receive full benefits from the large amount of resources devoted to this task. Data management, broadly viewed, has three aspects: a statistical and analytical framework that provides guidance for data organization, compilation, and presentation; a system of data compilation and reporting; and data storage and documentation, including work practices within the organization and management of the Fund's databases with appropriate technology. This section examines data collection, data management technology, and several other issues related to data work practices, as well as the collaborative approach to data management among departments.

Member countries vary greatly in their ability to produce and report timely, accurate and analytically well-organized macroeconomic statistics. As a result, there can be no single approach to data management in the Fund. Moreover, on the basis of the continually evolving nature of the Fund's statistical requirements for surveillance, analysis, and dissemination, and the absence in many countries of a statistical system able to produce good quality current data on a continuing basis, the Fund has accepted that multiple country databases, serving different purposes, are required. Thus, area departments' country databases at times may reflect compromises with respect to statistical coverage and international data standards because of the need to have more current data than would otherwise be available on a timely basis, to use national definitions as the basis for the policy dialogue, and to establish the appropriate base for forecasts. Differences in data definitions between databases also arise, however, because information available to one department may not be communicated to all other departments. Thus, there is a recognition of the need for more systematic means and better tools for data sharing and comparison.

The flexibility given to desk economists to deal with country-specific data requirements and changing circumstances in order to analyze and respond quickly to issues as a basis for the policy dialogue with members is seen as a principal strength of data management activities of area departments. The area departments attach great importance to decentralized data management arrangements that give country economists substantial

responsibility for country databases, thereby promoting an intimate understanding of the relationship between the member's statistics and its economic and financial developments. Some area departments have developed data management guidelines to better ensure adequate documentation of country databases and data definitions. For the Statistics Department, data management is keyed to the maintenance of a very large and centrally organized database that contains internationally comparable long time series in the main areas of economic statistics of concern to the Fund at the country, regional, and global levels.

The existing technology and constantly changing nature of data requirements pose a number of challenges to efficient data management, particularly with regard to sharing of data and to adequate documentation of databases. Data sharing among departments has been limited to a certain extent by the way in which data are structured, documented, and stored. In the case of the Statistics Department's EIS, data sharing has been greatly inhibited by the inaccessibility of the database to most Fund staff, largely because of the complex conventions used to identify time series and data sets and a weak interface between the mainframe and desktop computers. With respect to data documentation, current data management practices across the departments provide inadequate safeguards against loss of institutional memory. This problem is exacerbated for area departments when desk economists change frequently and successors are unable to reproduce satisfactorily the data in some or all sectors.

Over the years, data management practices in the Fund have been the subject of periodic review by the staff ^{1/} with the objectives of strengthening institutional memory and improving coordination of data collection, enhancing data sharing across departments, minimizing the reporting burden on member countries, and generally increasing the efficiency of the substantial resources that are devoted to data management. These efforts have met with limited success. Most recently, in late 1994 an interdepartmental working group on data management was established to develop new proposals on data management that would address the need for changes in internal work practices and take advantage of the technological advances now available to the Fund. The group's proposals for improvements in data management are outlined below.

2. Improvements in data management

Current work practices impose unnecessary costs on the Fund and its members that are related to (1) a duplication of work, owing to loss of institutional memory, suboptimal data sharing within the Fund and duplicative reporting requirements on members, and (2) an inadequate understanding of differences in data coverage and definitions among the

^{1/} The background paper on the evolution of the statistical activities of the Fund (forthcoming) provides a review of past efforts to improve data management.

Fund's multiple databases. Based on the recommendations of the Interdepartmental Working Group on Data Management, the staff believes that significant improvements can be made in these areas of the Fund's data work:

(i) Data management guidelines. Data management guidelines are needed to ensure that databases are managed properly and that data management receives high priority in the assessment of staff members' performance. Consistent with the needs of decentralized, multiple databases, these guidelines should be established at the departmental level, with all departments having full access to the practices operating in other departments with a view to achieving consistency over time. Departmental management should provide appropriate incentives to encourage compliance with the guidelines.

All departmental guidelines will follow some general principles. Databases should be transparent in structure, with source data clearly distinguished from transformed or processed data. Databases should be clearly documented with regard to data sources, definitions, and dimensions, and links to source data. This documentation should be sufficient to give the user a clear understanding of the database, including any weaknesses in data coverage and quality, and to enable a new manager of the database to reproduce the data accurately and completely. Core databases should be stored in a network environment to increase discipline of database managers and to facilitate access by other users in and outside the department.

(ii) Data collection and compilation. Area departments and the Statistics Department rely on different, and only partly complementary, methods of data collection. Area departments use a variety of methods for data collection. In the case of a number of industrialized countries and some of the more statistically advanced developing countries, data are obtained electronically directly from national statistical sources and third party commercial data sources are also often used. For the majority of developing countries, area departments rely on missions as the primary source of data. These data are supplemented throughout the year by direct reports by national authorities and resident representatives, EIS, and publications. In the statistically least developed countries, direct contacts by staff with national authorities are usually required to obtain data. For the regular updating of the EIS, the Statistics Department relies primarily on direct, monthly data reporting by statistical correspondents in member countries.

To manage this system efficiently, the use of existing data collection channels should be improved, the duplication of data requests to member countries from the Fund should be reduced, and more use should be made of electronic data collection technology. When circumstances permit, the regular data reporting to area departments and the Statistics Department by national authorities should be consolidated into a single system. This would provide benefits to both the Fund and its members in terms of reduced costs through elimination of duplication, enhanced data quality and

timeliness, and more efficient data processing. The benefits would be greatest where direct computer to computer data transmission is possible. This method of data collection would be possible for countries where data definitions are stable and well understood, where the staff do not have to undertake extensive data transformation and estimation, and where the authorities can provide the data through telecommunications links. This common collection system would have to serve the differing needs of departments and would not eliminate the need for different definitions in the data series used by area departments and the Statistics Department. It would, however, facilitate the assessment of data collected by the different departments and over time should lead to greater convergence in the series collected by departments in many areas.

3. Technology

The benefits to be gained from enhanced data sharing are widely recognized, but can only be achieved by major improvements in access to the Fund's databases. Current technology used in the Fund does not facilitate access to the full range of databases as well as switching easily between them. The need for better technology to support data sharing is also closely related to other requirements for improved data management technology. The EIS, with more than 1.6 million time series on country, regional, and global statistics combines a sophisticated time series storage and management system with calculation and report generating capabilities. While it is a complex and powerful system, the technology associated with the EIS is more than 15 years old and does not allow efficient integration with the desktop PC environment. Thus, the EIS database is very difficult to access effectively by staff outside the Statistics Department and indeed, by present standards, the EIS is an inefficient tool even for the needs of the Statistics Department. Moreover, maintaining a large-scale mainframe application such as EIS when other Fund applications have moved or are moving to a PC environment is not cost effective. A replacement system for EIS will likely require four to five years to complete. For desk economists, the present software tools (particularly AREMOS) that are used to manage medium-sized databases, as well as the spreadsheet software used by most country desks, will have to change as the Fund introduces the Windows operating system.

The technology choices facing the Fund's statistical work, therefore, have two dimensions: the development of a system that will facilitate data sharing across the Fund, and identifying the appropriate new tools for data management. These two dimensions must be considered together in developing a comprehensive new system of data management technology. A two-track approach is being followed to deal with these issues. The first track will involve engaging a consultant to advise on the development of a Fund-wide data sharing system and also on the replacements for the large- and medium-sized database management systems (particularly those in the EIS and WEO). The requirements for data sharing will include: (i) a powerful and user-friendly means of accessing all databases and analyzing different databases at the same time; (ii) access to the documentation of each database; and

(iii) tools for facilitating electronic receipt and dissemination of data. The consultant will also identify and evaluate software options for managing the large- and medium-sized databases that will meet all requirements with regard to data input, processing, documentation, analysis, and publishing.

The second track will involve identification of the appropriate software tools to meet the requirements of time series management by desk economists arising from the imminent change to a Windows environment. This approach will take advantage of the considerable in-house expertise on users' requirements in the desktop environment, combined with the experience of other organizations, and should allow basic decisions to be reached before completion of the consultant's work.

Coordination between these two projects will be needed to ensure not only that the recommendations of the studies will be compatible but also that the scope for common solutions in both tracks will be explored, particularly the possibility of using common tools for managing desktop and medium- and large-sized databases. An advisory group will oversee this process.

4. Benefits from improved data management

The changes in work practices and technology discussed in the preceding two sections can be expected to lead to substantial improvements in data management. In a setting of multiple databases and decentralized data management area departments will retain the flexibility that has proven effective for their data work on individual countries, while functional departments will remain responsible for providing comparable cross-country databases within the Fund and outside the Fund. However, work practice and technology improvements, in combination, will provide the basis for a better utilization of resources devoted to statistical activities and a more efficient sharing of data among departments.

The large- and medium-sized databases can play a more important role than at present in providing statistical information to all Fund departments through greater ease of access and by orienting these databases more to the needs of Fund users generally, in terms of the currentness and coverage of data and the quality of documentation. This would result from enhancing existing collection and documentation practices. Data that encompass the needs of various departments will be collected increasingly from national authorities by electronic means, with primary storage in a central location. Centralized storage would not entail data standardization. While it may be desirable to allow for variations in data definitions that facilitate policy analysis and discussion, convergence of source and analytical data should emerge as member countries adopt international standards and methodologies.

In area departments, implementation of the changes in work practices and technology will have two important and beneficial effects on the utilization of resources. First, improved database management will, over time, reduce resource costs related to desk transition. Second, the greater

ability of area departments to rely on data obtained through central Fund databases, where this is appropriate, as well as improved institutional memory, will allow departments to focus their statistical resources on areas where decentralized data activities have the largest payoff. This will permit greater emphasis to be placed on problem countries and, within countries, on problem sectors.

Functional departments will also benefit from these changes. Electronic reporting for countries, where appropriate, will lead to improvements in the quality of the *WEO* database, especially for historical data, and foster greater correspondence between data in area department documents and those in Fund statistical publications. These changes will also support information requirements for ESAF and conditionality reviews and other operational and analytical work of functional departments. For countries with more problematic data, better documentation and structuring of databases should help the Fund's efforts to improve countries' statistical infrastructures. The country review process will also benefit through better access of reviewers to country databases.

III. International Statistical Standards

Methodologies on national accounts, balance of payments, monetary, and fiscal statistics guide the Fund's operational work, provide the foundation for technical assistance and training in statistics, and also provide the framework for the Fund's statistical publications. These standards, developed in an open international forum, are widely understood in the Fund and in member countries. They reflect a broadly accepted generalized economic framework for the compilation and analysis of economic data providing an essential basis for policy dialogue and policy formulation. They also provide a ready-made framework for international comparisons. The Fund staff have played a very active role in the development and maintenance of the standards for economic statistics.

1. Recent developments in statistical methodologies

The development and maintenance of statistical methodologies have always been major statistical activities of the Fund. ^{1/} This work has a number of aspects but is most evident in the development of statistical manuals. The work is carried out in close collaboration with the other major organizations in the statistical community, particularly the World Bank, OECD, the UN, the European Union, and the European Monetary Institute.

The Fund has assumed primary responsibility within the international statistical community for methodological development in balance of payments, monetary, and government finance statistics through the preparation of

^{1/} The background paper contains a detailed review of the evolution of the Fund's manuals and guides in statistical methodologies.

manuals, guides, and training courses to assist members in the implementation of these methodologies. The development of statistical methodologies dates back to the origins of the Fund. The first edition of the *Balance of Payments Manual (BPM)* was published in January 1948, with subsequent editions produced in 1950, 1961, 1977, and 1993. A *Manual on Government Finance Statistics (GFSM)* (produced in draft in 1974 and in final in 1986) was developed to provide a flexible framework for the classification and compilation of government finance data. Substantial work has been carried out over the years in developing a methodology for compiling monetary data. A draft *Guide to Money and Banking Statistics in IFS* ^{1/} was prepared in 1984 to present the analytical framework used for the publication of monetary data. Each of these manuals and guides was intended to provide a basis for reporting to the Fund and for the development of improved statistical systems in member countries.

The period since the mid-1980s has been very active in the development and revision of methodologies for macroeconomic statistics. By the early 1980s there was general agreement among analysts, policymakers, and statisticians that the existing framework for national accounts, the UN *A System of National Accounts* (1968), was in need of major overhaul. The revision process was a major international effort managed by the statistical agencies of the Fund, the European Union (Eurostat), the OECD, the UN, and the World Bank which joined forces to form the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts (ISWGNA). The two main objectives of Fund involvement were improvement of national accounting practices in member countries and harmonization of national accounts methodology with the statistical systems for which the Fund has major responsibility. The Fund's three specialized systems, which had evolved separately from national accounts methodology, were designed to meet particular needs in each area of analysis. Until the recent *SNA* revision, little recognition had been given to the interdependencies as well as overlaps of the Fund's systems and national accounts statistics, and whether the differences that existed among these systems were necessary. In this recent period of intensive review, while maintaining the integrity of each system, high priority has been placed on harmonizing concepts, definitions, analytical frameworks, and classifications among the four systems.

The preparation of the 1993 *SNA*, which took place over a period of ten years, drew upon the expertise of specialists from over 50 countries as well as the staff of the five international organizations that managed the

^{1/} The *Guide* was circulated to all member countries, and has been used as a training tool in the period since; however, it was not published.

revision process. 1/ Almost all member countries have announced their intention to adopt the 1993 SNA as the primary basis for compiling national accounts. Implementation will be a long and difficult process for many countries and will require long-term commitment and substantial resources.

The Fund will play an active role in the implementation of the 1993 SNA in member countries. Under the guidance of the UN Statistical Commission and through the ISWGNA, the staff will continue research on outstanding and new methodological issues, and will coordinate its technical assistance and training activities in national accounts. Technical assistance in national accounts will be provided to members on a selected basis. Beginning in late 1995, the Statistics Department will introduce, through collaboration with INS, a six-week course on national accounts methodology and compilation based on the 1993 SNA and its implementation. This will be the first regular course given by international organizations with this scope and duration. There will be a concerted effort by all other concerned international organizations to assist countries to implement the 1993 SNA and the UN Statistical Commission has encouraged organizations, particularly the UN Regional Commissions, to assist countries in devising a strategy for implementation.

The decision to revise the *Balance of Payments Manual* in close parallel with the revision of the SNA afforded an unprecedented opportunity to achieve greater harmonization of the two systems. The revision of the *BPM*, which took place between 1988 and 1993, was substantially influenced by the recommendations of the Working Parties on the Statistical Discrepancy in the World Current Account Balances and on the Measurement of International Capital Flows. 2/ The revision process led to a number of changes in the *BPM* including the separate identification of current and capital transfers, and alignment of the accounting structure to parallel that of the 1993 SNA. There were also many changes made in the standard components of the system to reflect recent developments, particularly the growth of trade in services and new types of financial instruments. The views of compilers as well as users of balance of payments data in the Fund and in member countries were essential to the revision. A committee of Fund staff representing various

1/ The Fund played an active role in this process. This role included the organization of three (of a total of 14) Expert Group Meetings that dealt with issues in the external, government, and financial sectors. These meetings were critical not only in establishing guidelines for treatment of these sectors in the SNA, but also in identifying issues that would form the basis for the revision and further development of the Fund's own methodologies. Fund staff drafted chapters of the 1993 SNA on the financial and external accounts of the system, and made major contributions to other chapters and, through participation in the ISWGNA, played an active role in managing the completion of the draft and its publication.

2/ See IMF, *Report on the World Current Account Discrepancy*, September 1987 and IMF, *Report on the Measurement of International Capital Flows*, September 1992.

Fund departments made a substantial contribution in the revision process which culminated in a meeting of experts, made up of representatives of each constituency of the Executive Board, who reviewed the entire draft and reached final decisions on methodological issues.

The *BPM*, like the 1993 *SNA*, is a conceptual manual that emphasizes definitions, analytical frameworks, and classifications, but does not provide instructions on data collection. To serve this second need, a *Balance of Payments Compilation Guide*, published in March 1995, establishes guidelines and provides instructions on collection and compilation. A *Balance of Payments Textbook* to support training by Fund staff and for direct use by member countries will also be published in 1995.

Implementation of the fifth edition of the *BPM* is now under way. The Statistics Department is also in the process of converting all member country data maintained in the balance of payments database of the EIS to conform with the fifth edition and, from late 1995, will collect and publish country data according to its definitions and classifications. All technical assistance to member countries and training courses in balance of payments statistics are now based on the fifth edition.

Preparation of the first edition of a new *Manual on Monetary and Financial Statistics (MMFS)* by the Fund commenced in 1993. The 1993 *SNA* and the fifth edition of the *BPM* attach great importance to the improved treatment of financial transactions and the financial sector. While each of these manuals contains a detailed treatment of financial operations relevant to its own purposes, a large number of member countries have identified the need for a manual that addresses the requirements of domestic monetary and financial analysis, and provides an in-depth coverage of the full range of new financial instruments and institutions.

The *MMFS* is intended to provide detailed guidance to countries on the organization of monetary and broader financial statistics, including flow of funds analysis. It will provide a detailed description of financial institutions and instruments, emphasizing important current issues such as the nature and classification of financial derivatives, and will illustrate a range of financial aggregates and frameworks for monetary and financial analysis. The *MMFS* will also provide guidance on the measurement of financial flows as well as stock positions. Harmonization with the 1993 *SNA* and the *BPM* is one of the prime objectives of the new manual.

A first complete draft of the manual is expected to be circulated to members at the end of 1995. Consistent with the procedure adopted for the *Balance of Payments Manual*, the revised version will be reviewed in early 1996 by a group of experts representing all Fund constituencies and finalized based on their recommendations. On present plans, publication is expected to take place around the end of 1996.

Work has recently begun on revising *A Manual on Government Finance Statistics (GFSM)*. In a number of important areas, this *Manual* does not

deal adequately with developments and issues that have become important for fiscal analysis in the 1980s and early 1990s. These include the growth of domestic and external payments arrears in some countries, the importance of transactions in kind rather than in cash, the development of quasi-fiscal operations in financial institutions and other parts of the public sector that affect the analysis and interpretation of traditional fiscal performance measures such as the overall deficit, and the treatment of privatization proceeds. The revision of the *GFSM* will follow the same procedures as the *BPM* and the *MMFS*. Publication of the revised *GFSM* is expected in 1998.

Work on statistical methodologies is a continuous activity. The publication of a statistical manual inevitably involves compromises over certain conceptual and practical issues. For example, the 1993 *SNA* made little progress in incorporating environmental accounting into national accounts and did not fully resolve some long-standing issues such as the measurement of banks' output and the treatment of research and development. To deal with this conceptual work, as well as to provide general guidance to countries on *SNA* implementation, the ISWGNA is continuing its operations and Fund staff will play an active role in this work. Similarly, the *BPM* did not resolve all conceptual issues related to balance of payments. To aid in continuing this work, as well as following up on the recommendations of the Current Account and Capital Flows working parties, the IMF Committee on Balance of Payments Statistics was established by the Board. The Committee, which meets twice yearly, is focusing its work in a number of areas including international portfolio investment (for which a benchmark survey is being coordinated) and private sector financial flows (through analysis of international banking statistics). While the methodologies must be continuously reviewed to ensure that they meet the requirements of analysis, it is very important that statistical reporting systems remain stable for reasonably long periods to promote their wide adoption and compilers' compliance in providing data.

The Fund staff plays a leading role in the international statistical community in methodological work, not only on the Fund's own systems but in the full range of economic statistics. These activities (which involve coordination in technical assistance and data collection and dissemination as well as methodologies) take place in an array of international statistical groups, particularly the UN Statistical Commission and its working group and task forces, the ACC Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities, the UN Regional Economic Commissions, and working groups organized by OECD, Eurostat, the Bank for International Settlements, and the European Monetary Institute.

2. Use of statistical methodologies within the Fund

International statistical standards have the advantage of providing a common basis for analysis, presenting a more comparable picture of countries' positions to the Executive Board and outside users of Fund data, and facilitating international comparisons. However, application of these

methodologies in member countries varies substantially. The *SNA* and the *BPM* are in widespread use as the basis for members' own organization of data in these areas. Most member countries have also expressed the goal of implementing the 1993 *SNA* and the fifth edition of the *BPM* as the basis of national accounts and balance of payments in their own statistical systems. It is clear, therefore, that in these two areas the use of standards should be the objective of the Fund and countries, and these standards should be the basis for discussions with member countries and within the Fund. International standards for prices and international trade data are also generally applied across the membership.

In the areas of monetary and government finance statistics, standards are less clearly defined both within the Fund and by member countries. In these two areas, countries often have their own definitions and organizing frameworks and these national standards are used for policy discussions. The use of these national standards, however, limits regional and global analysis. The manuals now being produced in these areas will identify and recommend broad areas of commonality for data organization that can both improve countries' own analytical systems and reduce variation of analysis across the Fund.

The greatest problems in compiling data that conform to analytical requirements and international standards relate to the poor quality of basic data in many member countries or at least in certain sectors. The lack of these basic data is attributed primarily to weak in-country data collection and management systems, and shortage of staff trained in data compilation and survey methods. In many countries, officials have insufficient familiarity with international standards to transform basic data into standard presentations. Area department staff devote substantial time to dealing with these shortcomings with national authorities, and in most cases technical assistance and training are viewed as the primary solutions to such problems.

IV. Technical Assistance

Technical assistance in statistics has been an important part of the Fund's overall program of technical assistance and has been viewed as a valuable service to member countries. It has grown rapidly in recent years and has increased in importance through efforts to link it more directly to support for Fund surveillance and structural adjustment by member countries. Through the application of international standards to the process of data compilation, the Fund's technical assistance is designed to improve the quality of data. Technical assistance is also directed at producing data on as timely a basis as possible.

A more comprehensive approach to the delivery of technical assistance in statistics has enhanced the effectiveness of the program in recent years. Additional features of the program have included: (1) the use of multisector statistics missions to address broad interrelated issues of data

compilation and development of statistical infrastructure; (2) the use of outside experts as consultants on short-term staff missions or on long-term assignments; (3) improved identification of technical assistance priorities through the Technical Assistance Committee and the RAP; and (4) greater coordination of technical assistance work with the efforts of other international organizations, as evidenced by the work of the Steering Committee on Coordination of Technical Assistance in Statistics to the Countries of the Former Soviet Union. These new initiatives have been facilitated by additional financing provided by the Japanese Government through the Japan Administered Account and the United Nations Development Programme.

Organized technical assistance in statistics began in 1968 when the Executive Board approved the Central Bank Bulletin project of the then Bureau of Statistics to assist member countries to compile data according to international standards and to promote the dissemination of these data within countries and internationally. In this phase, technical assistance focused on monetary and real sector statistics. Efforts to establish a standardized methodology in government finance statistics led to an organized program of technical assistance for the improvement of government finance data during the 1970s. The transfer of responsibility for balance of payments statistics from the Research Department to the Bureau of Statistics in 1978 permitted the full range of the Fund's technical assistance in statistics to be managed within a single program. In this period, technical assistance was almost exclusively in the form of single-topic missions undertaken by Fund staff in the Fund's three main areas of expertise--balance of payments, government finance, and monetary statistics.

The introduction of multisector missions at the end of the 1980s, with teams composed of staff and consultant experts, has enabled the Fund's assistance to be targeted to all major areas of concern. The multisector mission has been particularly useful in addressing the problems of transition countries, which were unfamiliar with the needs for statistics in a market economy and lacked basic data and accounting, and other administrative systems to support compilation of these data. Initial multisector missions to these countries were therefore diagnostic and used primarily to identify major weaknesses in statistical infrastructure, provide hands-on training in international statistical standards, and make an effective assessment of future technical assistance needs. These missions also examined the consistency of data across the major macroeconomic systems and placed improvements in consistency at the center of future work plans. Multisector missions have also become an important instrument in non-transition developing countries where there are substantial data weaknesses across a range of statistical areas. Over 60 multisector missions, to 51 countries, have been conducted since mid-1989.

A second major development has been the use of consultant experts to provide short- and long-term assistance. As recently as 1989, all technical assistance in statistics was provided by Fund staff, in contrast to the heavy use of long-term advisors in the Fund's program of technical

assistance in the central banking and fiscal areas. The use of outside experts and the ability to station long-term experts in countries have substantially increased the effectiveness of assistance in statistics, by permitting the Fund to expand its overall effort and, on occasion, to provide assistance in certain areas to supplement the staff's expertise. Extensive use has been made of short-term consultants in the areas of price statistics and national accounts, areas where the needs of transition countries have been acute. Consultant experts, in conjunction with staff or working under headquarters' supervision, have been instrumental in introducing substantial improvements in price statistics in many transition countries in the past four years. Consultant experts have also played a critical role in developing quarterly national accounts estimates in transition countries, an area of major importance in assessing current economic performance. They have also been used on balance of payments, government finance, monetary, and trade statistics missions to supplement available staff resources.

With the beginning of support for long-term assistance in statistics provided by the Fund's administrative budget in the early 1990s, supplemented by external funding by the UNDP and Japan Administered Account, it has been possible to respond to problems in a number of countries, particularly the transition economies, where weaknesses in macroeconomic statistics stem from structural problems that do not yield to short-term assistance. These weaknesses primarily relate to inadequate basic data (which affect primarily the quality of balance of payments and national accounts estimates) and to administrative systems, such as government and banking system accounts, that cannot be used to produce acceptable statistics. In such circumstances, there is a focus on institution building through statistical experts who are resident in countries for medium to long periods. These experts are able to have a major impact on the development of the required underlying improvements by conducting in-depth analysis of basic data sources and helping to implement improvements through the design of surveys and the development of estimating techniques. In the areas of government and monetary statistics, improvements in data are achieved by cooperation with other technical assistance experts working on government budgets and accounts, and on central and commercial banks' accounts.

A major new initiative in long-term assistance to transition countries was the assignment of four multisector statistical advisors to work closely with statistical authorities and Fund staff in all the major areas of macroeconomic statistics. Advisors were appointed to Russia and the Baltic Republics in 1993, and to Ukraine and Kazakhstan in 1994.

Consultants provided 16 staff-years of technical assistance in statistics in FY 1995, compared with 11 in FY 1993 and none in FY 1989.

As shown in Table 1, after declining to a low point of 37 missions in FY 1989, technical assistance activities increased sharply in subsequent years, reaching unprecedented levels of 143 missions in FY 1993 and 150 missions in both FY 1994 and in FY 1995. This was largely a result of the

increased needs of the new members, particularly the Baltics, Russia, and the other countries of the former Soviet Union and the former Yugoslavia. At the same time, the Statistics Department continued to provide assistance at around previous levels to other members, focusing especially on those that are actual or prospective users of Fund resources, as well as those with statistical infrastructures at an early stage of development.

Table 1. IMF Technical Assistance in Statistics
(In number of missions)

Year	Total	Multi sector	Other <u>1/</u>
FY 1989	37	0	37
FY 1990	50	2	48
FY 1991	57	4	53
FY 1992	66	14	52
FY 1993	143	19	124
FY 1994	150	15	135
FY 1995	150	13	137

1/ Single sector, supervision, and other missions.

In order to address systematically the emergence of excess demand for technical assistance in the 1990s and the sharp growth in external financing as a major funding source, the Fund in 1992 adopted new procedures for the allocation of technical assistance resources. The interdepartmental Technical Assistance Committee (TAC), which includes senior representatives of all departments involved in technical assistance activities, was established in 1992 to coordinate technical assistance activities on a Fund-wide basis. The TAC oversees the development of the Regional Allocation Plan (RAP) 1/ which sets the target allocations of technical assistance resources to each region for each technical assistance department. The RAP has now developed into the major instrument for the allocation of technical

1/ The RAP was first developed for FY 1993, partly in response to concerns that the pressing needs for technical assistance from the Baltics, Russia, and the other countries of the former Soviet Union would have to be balanced against those of other regions.

assistance resources, and its preparation and revision have become the main vehicle for the identification and prioritization of technical assistance needs and for the planning and monitoring of technical assistance activities. 1/

In response to the rise in technical assistance requests, the increasing use of outside experts for technical assistance assignments, and the need to ensure coordination within the framework of the TAC, the Statistics Department established a Technical Assistance Unit (TAU) in early 1993 to manage its technical assistance activities.

Demand for technical assistance resources continues to exceed supply, and coordination with other providers of assistance is important in order to avoid duplication of effort and assure that priorities are established. The Fund therefore maintains close contact with the international organizations and agencies of member countries that provide technical assistance in statistics.

In recognition of the importance of developing a coordinated approach to the provision of technical assistance and training in statistics for the Baltic countries, Russia, and the other countries of the former Soviet Union, and to avoid duplication of effort, a high-level Steering Committee composed of representatives of the main international organizations was established in early 1992 under the chairmanship of Mr. Jean Ripert. The Fund (through the Statistics Department) provides administrative and technical support of the Committee. 2/ The Fund also developed the Steering Committee's database, which facilitates technical assistance planning and the avoidance of duplication of effort. The Fund has been assigned responsibility for the coordination of technical assistance in balance of payments, consumer price, government finance, and monetary statistics.

In a number of countries the staff has developed close working relations with central banks, statistical offices, and other official agencies that have been willing to provide experts for both short- and long-term assignments. This has enabled the Fund to expand considerably its program of technical assistance and to make full use of the resources provided under the Fund's expert budget, the Japan Administered Account, and the United Nations Development Programme.

Notwithstanding the progress that has been made in technical assistance in statistics, there remains room for improvement in the evaluation of its effectiveness. In particular, follow-up on countries' implementation of

1/ The management of technical assistance was reviewed in detail in *A Review of Fund Technical Assistance* (EBAP/93/78).

2/ Membership comprises the European Union, the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), the Fund, the ILO, the OECD, the World Bank, and the UN.

technical assistance recommendations and oversight of ongoing long-term assistance projects should be strengthened. Within the limits of available resources, a more systematic follow-up to track implementation of technical assistance recommendations, including more frequent correspondence with countries receiving assistance and more regular assessment visits to review the work of long-term experts, would clearly be beneficial. Area departments (and resident representatives), which already play a significant role in technical assistance follow-up, will be asked to discuss the status of technical assistance implementation to encourage the authorities to take action where necessary, and to provide feedback to the Statistics Department. In cases where countries are clearly not making adequate use of technical assistance, further Fund assistance should be predicated on a clear commitment by members to implementation, including the provision of adequate staffing for statistical work.

V. Training in Statistics

Training of officials of member countries in statistical methodologies and data compilation practices has always been a major component of Fund training activities. Statistical training also has close ties to activities in statistical methodologies and technical assistance. Courses at the IMF Institute, at the Joint Vienna Institute (JVI), and at various other regional sites are a major vehicle for providing structured presentations to compilers of statistics in member countries on the latest developments in statistical methodologies, thereby complementing the Fund's work in developing manuals and guides. The courses are also a complement to country-specific technical assistance, as time constraints on missions do not normally allow in-depth training in methodologies to be carried out.

While the statistical courses have been centered on presentations at the IMF Institute, in recent years there has been substantial growth in regional training activities. These regional courses are normally shorter than those at the Institute and are designed to meet the needs of regions or homogeneous country groupings, such as the countries in transition. Courses in statistics are oriented primarily to data compilers. However, beginning in 1994, a first course aimed at analysts and users of macroeconomic statistics in transition countries was presented at the JVI. Table 2 shows the number of courses that have been offered through the various arrangements in recent years.

Table 2. Training in Statistics
(In number of courses)

	Total	Institute	JVI	Other regional courses
FY 1991	7	3	...	4
FY 1992	6	4	...	2
FY 1993	6	3	1	2
FY 1994	12	1	3	8
FY 1995	17	5	2	10

The development of new courses in statistics has normally been tied to major developments in statistical methodologies, particularly the publication of new manuals and guides. Courses in balance of payments methodology have been offered each year since the IMF Institute was founded in 1964. The balance of payments courses have been continually revised to reflect new developments and advances in methodology and compilation practices. The preparation of the draft *GFSM* in 1974 was the impetus for the development of a new course on government finance statistics that was presented at the IMF Institute in 1977. The course in money and banking statistics was first presented in 1986 following the development of the draft *Guide to Money and Banking Statistics in IFS*, which was distributed to member countries in 1984. The content of the courses on government finance and money and banking statistics has been revised substantially since the first offerings.

As noted earlier, the Statistics Department is currently developing a new course on national accounting, based on the 1993 *SNA*, which will be offered at the IMF Institute for the first time in late 1995. The course will provide the most comprehensive international training forum available to member countries in this important field. It is expected that most participants in the national accounts course will come from national statistical offices. Because of the commitment of most member countries to implement the 1993 *SNA*, demand for this course from all regions is expected to be high.

The statistical courses presented at the IMF Institute remain the core of statistical training in the Fund. These six-week courses allow time for a full coverage of conceptual issues and extensive practical work through detailed case studies. There is also sufficient time for participants to share their own practical experiences with other participants and to work with the Statistics Department and area department staff. However, in

response to rapidly increasing demands for training in statistics, the Fund in recent years has presented a number of regional courses and courses oriented to particular country groupings in each of the statistical systems. These courses, of two or three weeks duration, permit the Fund to provide a sharper focus, in both lectures and case studies, on problems that are particular to a region. They are usually co-sponsored by a host government or organization which provides all or a portion of the course financing. Supplemental financing, when necessary, is provided by the Fund, including through the Japan Administered Account, or by other international organizations.

The most concentrated of the regional training activities in statistics is carried out through the JVI. Courses in statistics at the JVI are currently offered each year in all three statistical areas of concern to the Fund--balance of payments, government finance, and money and banking statistics. They draw upon materials of the courses at the Institute and other regional venues, as well as from experience gained through the extensive technical assistance carried out by the Statistics Department in transition economies. As is the case at the Institute, these three courses are oriented to data compilers. The JVI Course on Macroeconomic Statistics for Users, presented for the first time in 1994, is the first statistics course given by the Fund that is oriented primarily to analysts and other users of data. The course is designed to give officials from transition countries a greater understanding of the statistical systems that are used for macroeconomic analysis and policymaking and has as its foundation those statistical systems necessary for financial programming. Since the JVI's inauguration in 1993, more than 250 officials have received statistical training and it has become the leading center for training participants from transition countries in statistical systems for market economies. Many former participants play a key role in providing statistical information to the Fund.

In addition to courses at the JVI, a series of regional courses is currently carried out in coordination with: (1) the Arab Monetary Fund, for its member countries; (2) the Australian Bureau of Statistics, for the Pacific Island countries and selected countries in Asia; and (3) the Central Bank of Central African States and the Central Bank of West African States for francophone African countries. In these regional courses, Statistics Department staff assist the host agencies and countries in organizing the courses and perform a substantial portion of the lecturing and presentation of workshops and case studies. Officials from the host agencies also present lectures, particularly on special regional issues. There is no fixed schedule or sequence for these regional courses. Courses are presented about once each year or every other year and over a three- to five-year period courses are provided in each of the three principal statistical areas. The courses are generally of two to three weeks' duration.

The Statistics Department also organizes ad hoc courses from time to time at the request of member countries and other regional and international organizations. In recent years, courses have been organized in coordination with the Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) for its member countries and the Baltic countries. Courses have been presented on financial statistics and on the development of quarterly national accounts, the latter also in coordination with the OECD. Courses in each of the three main areas have also been conducted in recent years for Chinese officials. Statistics Department staff also lecture at courses organized by member countries, regional organizations, particularly the UN Regional Economic Commissions, and other international organizations.

Demand for training in statistics by member countries is expected to remain strong. Current plans are to present four six-week courses each year at the IMF Institute and four courses at the JVI. With a continuing commitment to other regional training activities as resources permit, there has been good success in recent years, particularly at the Arab Monetary Fund and francophone African central banks, in enlisting staff of the host organizations to conduct a growing proportion of lectures and case studies. New regional requests continue to be received, most recently related to the East African Training Center, and regional courses may need to be developed in national accounts.

While the Fund has devoted substantial resources over the years to training officials of member countries to compile better data, there has been no commensurate effort in training Fund staff in statistical methodologies and basic approaches to data compilation. At present, Fund economists receive little formal training in national accounts, balance of payments, monetary, and government finance statistics. Although Fund economist and research assistant staff have some background in statistical theory and methods, few, other than a limited number who have worked in national governments, join the Fund with competence in these areas. Knowledge is therefore acquired in the course of their work as on-the-job training, leading to uneven development of statistical skills.

The presentation of concentrated courses for staff in each of the principal methodologies would help to address this problem. These would be oriented to new staff but could also extend to other staff who would like to expand their knowledge of statistics to new areas. The courses would stress both conceptual and compilation issues with emphasis on statistics for users rather than for compilers, but would also feature major compilation issues that are likely to be encountered in mission work. Separately, staff training would be introduced in the area of data management techniques. These courses would complement the on-the-job training that would still play an important role in familiarizing staff with specific country issues.

VI. Publication and Dissemination

The Fund's statistical publications, together with the *WEO*, are the principal recurrent means by which the organization meets its obligations with regard to dissemination that are specified in Article VIII 5(c) "...to act as a center for the collection and exchange of information on monetary and financial problems." Statistical information on member countries is also provided through the Occasional Papers series and other publications.

The Fund's four main statistical publications are *International Financial Statistics (IFS)*, the *Balance of Payments Statistics Yearbook (BOPSY)*, *Direction of Trade Statistics (DOTS)*, and the *Government Finance Statistics Yearbook (GFSY)*. ^{1/} The publications are available in printed and electronic form. The statistical publications play a major role in the Fund's overall publications program and accounted for 53 percent of total publications revenue in FY 1994.

One of the highest priorities in the statistical publications program is to achieve the widest coverage possible of member countries. The Fund has placed great importance on the presentation of country data on an internationally comparable basis that demonstrates the quality, timeliness, and transparency of members' statistics and their willingness to make these data available to the international community. This, in turn, has required members to report statistics in a regular and timely manner (in the case of *IFS* on a monthly basis) through the network of official statistical correspondents. Countries that are not covered in the statistical publications are strongly encouraged to improve their data and underlying statistical systems; one of the aims of technical assistance in statistics is to develop a system of regular reporting and publishing of data.

IFS currently contains country presentations for 150 countries ^{2/}. Of the 31 member countries ^{3/} without a country presentation, 21 have become members within the past three years. It is expected that new country pages for about ten members, mostly transition economies, will be introduced

^{1/} The development of each of these publications is described in the background paper.

^{2/} *IFS* contains country presentations for nonmembers Aruba and Netherlands Antilles.

^{3/} As of the May 1995 issue, there are no *IFS* country pages for the following countries: Albania, Angola, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Croatia, Eritrea, Georgia, Guinea, Kazakhstan, Kiribati, Kyrgyz Republic, Lao P.D.R., Latvia, Lithuania, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Russian Federation, San Marino, Sao Tome & Principe, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Viet Nam, and Republic of Yemen.

in *IFS* in 1995 ^{1/} and new pages for another ten members are planned to be added in 1996.

Table 3 presents a country-by-country review of the coverage and timeliness of data in the May 1995 issue of *IFS*. The date of the latest published observation is indicated for ten series representing the ten core indicators that the Executive Board discussed at SM/95/59: (i) exchange rates; (ii) international reserves; (iii) reserve money; (iv) broad money; (v) interest rates; (vi) consumer prices; (vii) external trade; (viii) external current account balance; (ix) overall government balance; and (x) GDP. Where a month is recorded, this indicates that the data are reported at a monthly frequency and the month cited is the latest observation available. A "Q" indicates that data are at a quarterly frequency and a specific year indicates that only annual data are available. The notation (...) indicates that no data are provided for that particular series. Entries in Table 3 are circled where the lag in the published data is equal to or greater than the mean lag plus one standard deviation of the mean for that series.

Table 4 provides summary statistics on currentness in *IFS* for major country groupings and indicates, for each of the above series, the number of countries reporting and the lags in months compared with the latest period for which data could be available. For each series, statistics are presented on the median, mean, standard deviation, and the minimum and maximum lags, all in months.

Care is needed in interpreting single point-in-time observations as shown in Tables 3 and 4. Nonetheless, Table 4 shows differences in data reporting between country groups that are systematic across time series. All industrial countries except San Marino are represented in *IFS*, while the coverage of developing countries is 81 percent, reflecting the difficulty experienced by many new Fund members in the developing countries group in providing the range, quality, and regularity of data reporting needed to establish a country page in *IFS*. Excluding members that have joined the Fund in the past five years, mainly the transition countries, the coverage of developing countries is 95 percent. Reflecting weaknesses in the statistical infrastructure of many developing countries, there is also more variation among these countries than for industrial countries in the availability for publication of the full range of data, and in the currentness of reported data. The standard deviation and maximum lag for all series are significantly higher for developing countries than for industrial countries. Among the program countries, both the mean lag and standard deviation are less than for the developing countries for all series except GDP/GNP, suggesting that there may be beneficial effects on data availability from the close cooperation between the Fund and members in the context of Fund programs. This no doubt reflects the greater intensity of

^{1/} New pages are to be introduced for Guinea, the Slovak Republic, and Yemen in the June 1995 issue of *IFS*.

Table 3. Coverage and Currentness of Data in *International Financial Statistics*

(Published in the May 1995 issue of *IFS*)

Code	Country	Exchange Rates	International Reserves	Reserve Money	Broad Money	Interest Rates	Consumer Prices	External Trade	Current Account Balance	Overall Government Balance	GDP or GNP
512	Afghanistan, Islamic State of	Mar 95	Mar 92	Mar 92	Apr 91	...	May 92	Q4 91	1989	...	...
612	Algeria	Mar 95	Mar 95	Dec 94	Q4 94	...	Feb 95	Q4 92	1991	...	1993
311	Antigua and Barbuda	Mar 95	Oct 94	Oct 94	Oct 94	Dec 94	1985	1988	1992	...	1992
213	Argentina	Feb 95	Feb 95	Nov 94	Nov 94	Feb 95	Feb 95	Oct 94	Q2 94	Mar 94	1993
314	Aruba	Mar 95	Mar 95	Feb 95	Feb 95	Mar 95	Feb 95	1989	Q2 94	...	...
193	Australia	Mar 95	Mar 95	Jan 95	Jan 95	Feb 95	Q4 94	Feb 95	Q3 94	Jan 95	Q3 94
122	Austria	Mar 95	Mar 95	Feb 95	Feb 95	Nov 94	Dec 94	Dec 94	Q3 94	Q3 94	Q3 94
313	Bahamas, The	Mar 95	Mar 95	Feb 95	Feb 95	Mar 95	Jan 95	Q4 91	Q4 93	Jan 95	...
419	Bahrain	Mar 95	Mar 95	Dec 94	Nov 94	Feb 95	Dec 94	Sep 94	1992	1993	1990
513	Bangladesh	Mar 95	Mar 95	Jan 95	Jan 95	Jan 95	Jan 95	Oct 94	Q4 93	...	1994
316	Barbados	Mar 95	Mar 95	Jan 95	Jan 95	Jan 95	Dec 94	Dec 94	1993	Q4 94	1992
124	Belgium	Mar 95	Mar 95	Dec 92	Dec 90	Feb 95	Feb 95	Q2 93	Q4 93	1992	1993
339	Belize	Mar 95	Mar 95	Feb 95	Feb 95	Jan 95	Q3 94	Dec 94	1993	1994	1993
638	Benin	Mar 95	Jan 95	Jan 95	Jan 95	Feb 95	...	1989	1993	...	1991
514	Bhutan	Mar 95	Jan 95	Sep 94	Sep 94	Sep 94	1992	1991	1989	1991	1993
218	Bolivia	Dec 94	Feb 95	Feb 95	Jan 95	Oct 94	Jan 94	Jul 94	Q4 92	1993	1992
616	Botswana	Mar 95	Dec 94	Nov 94	Nov 94	Nov 94	Feb 95	Sep 94	1990	Nov 94	1992
223	Brazil	Mar 95	Jan 95	Jun 94	Jun 88	Jan 95	Feb 95	Feb 95	Q4 92	1992	1993
748	Burkina Faso	Mar 95	Jan 95	Jan 95	Jan 95	Feb 95	Sep 94	Q4 91	1993	...	...
618	Burundi	Dec 94	Feb 95	Nov 94	Dec 90	Q2 89	Dec 94	Dec 94	1993	Sep 94	1994
622	Cameroon	Mar 95	Dec 94	Dec 94	Dec 94	Nov 92	1992	1992	1993	1992	1992
156	Canada	Mar 95	Mar 95	Dec 94	Dec 94	Feb 95	Feb 95	Oct 94	Q4 94	Jan 95	Q4 94
624	Cape Verde	Jan 95	Oct 94	Aug 93	Aug 93	Jun 94	Aug 94	1992	1992	...	1988
626	Central African Republic	Mar 95	Dec 94	Dec 94	Dec 94	Nov 92	Mar 94	1992	1992	...	1992
628	Chad	Mar 95	Dec 94	Dec 94	Dec 94	Nov 92	Apr 93	1993	1993	1991	1993
228	Chile	Mar 95	Mar 95	Jun 94	Jun 94	Feb 95	Feb 95	Jan 95	Q2 94	1993	Q1 94
924	China, People's Republic of	Mar 95	Dec 94	Q1 94	Q1 94	Dec 89	Aug 94	Jan 95	1993	1993	1993
233	Colombia	Mar 95	Dec 94	Dec 94	Sep 94	Oct 94	Aug 94	Aug 94	1992	Q4 93	1993
632	Comoros	Mar 95	Jun 93	Jun 93	Jun 93	Nov 89	...	1992	1991
634	Congo	Mar 95	Dec 94	Dec 94	Dec 94	Nov 92	Dec 93	1993	1993	...	1993

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(Published in the May 1995 issue of *IFS*)

Code	Country	Exchange Rates	International Reserves	Reserve Money	Broad Money	Interest Rates	Consumer Prices	External Trade	Current Account Balance	Overall Government Balance	GDP or GNP
238	Costa Rica	Feb 95	Feb 95	Jul 94	Jul 94	Feb 95	Jan 95	Feb 95	1993	Nov 94	1994
662	Cote d'Ivoire	Mar 95	Jan 95	Jan 95	Jan 95	Feb 95	Dec 93	Q2 93	1993	...	1991
423	Cyprus	Feb 95	Nov 94	Nov 94	Nov 94	Nov 94	Feb 95	Dec 94	Q4 92	Jun 94	1992
935	Czech Republic	Mar 95	Feb 95	Feb 95	Dec 94	Mar 95	Feb 95	Jan 95	...	Feb 95	Q3 94
128	Denmark	Mar 95	Feb 95	Feb 95	Feb 95	Mar 95	Feb 95	Dec 94	Q3 94	1993	Q3 94
611	Djibouti	Mar 95	Mar 95	Jun 94	Jun 94	...	...	1992	1993	1988	1990
321	Dominica	Mar 95	Oct 94	Oct 94	Oct 94	Dec 94	Dec 94	Q4 92	1993	...	1992
243	Dominican Republic	Mar 95	Mar 95	Feb 95	Feb 95	...	Feb 95	Feb 95	1993	Feb 95	1994
248	Ecuador	Feb 95	Feb 95	Dec 94	Dec 92	Jan 95	Jan 95	Dec 94	1993	Nov 94	1994
469	Egypt	Mar 95	Jan 95	Dec 94	Dec 94	Dec 94	Feb 95	Sep 94	1993	1992	1992
253	El Salvador	Mar 95	Mar 95	Feb 95	Feb 95	Mar 95	Mar 95	Mar 95	1993	Nov 94	1993
642	Equatorial Guinea	Mar 95	Dec 94	Dec 94	Dec 94	Nov 92	Dec 93	1993	1991	...	1993
939	Estonia	Nov 94	Nov 94	Jan 95	Jan 95	Feb 95	Dec 94	Dec 94	Q4 93	1993	1993
644	Ethiopia	Mar 95	Mar 95	Dec 94	Dec 94	Dec 94	Oct 94	Feb 94	Q1 94	1994	1994
819	Fiji	Mar 95	Feb 95	Jan 95	Jan 95	Feb 95	Dec 94	Sep 94	Q4 93	1994	1993
172	Finland	Mar 95	Mar 95	Mar 95	Feb 95	Mar 95	Feb 95	Dec 94	Q4 94	1992	Q4 94
132	France	Mar 95	Feb 95	Jan 95	Jan 95	Mar 95	Mar 95	Dec 94	Q4 94	Nov 94	Q3 94
646	Gabon	Mar 95	Dec 94	Dec 94	Dec 94	Q2 93	Jan 93	1993	1993	1991	1992
648	Gambia, The	Feb 95	Feb 95	Feb 95	Feb 95	Mar 95	Jan 95	1994	1992	1990	1992
134	Germany	Mar 95	Mar 95	Mar 95	Feb 95	Mar 95	Mar 95	Jan 95	Q4 94	Jun 94	Q4 94
652	Ghana	Dec 94	Dec 94	Dec 94	Dec 94	Dec 94	Oct 94	Dec 89	1992	1993	1992
174	Greece	Mar 95	Jan 95	Dec 94	Jul 94	Mar 95	Mar 95	Oct 93	Q1 94	Oct 93	1993
328	Grenada	Mar 95	Oct 94	Oct 94	Oct 94	Dec 94	Sep 94	Q3 93	1992	...	1992
258	Guatemala	Mar 95	Mar 95	Dec 94	Dec 94	Dec 94	Oct 94	Oct 94	Q2 94	Oct 94	1993
654	Guinea-Bissau	Dec 94	Nov 94	Nov 94	Nov 94	Dec 94	Oct 94	Oct 94	1993	1992	1993
336	Guyana	Mar 95	Feb 95	Feb 95	Feb 95	Feb 95	Dec 92	Dec 94	...	Sep 93	1993
263	Haiti	Dec 94	Aug 92	1993	1993	...	Jan 95	Nov 92	1993	Dec 90	1991
268	Honduras	Feb 95	Feb 95	Jan 95	Jan 95	Oct 94	Jan 95	Q3 94	1993	Dec 94	1994
944	Hungary	Dec 94	Oct 94	Sep 92	Sep 92	Feb 95	Oct 94	Oct 94	Q2 94	1990	1993
176	Iceland	Mar 95	Mar 95	Feb 95	Dec 94	Mar 95	Mar 95	Jan 95	Q2 94	1992	1993

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Code	Country	Exchange Rates	International Reserves	Reserve Money	Broad Money	Interest Rates	Consumer Prices	External Trade	Current Account Balance	Overall Government Balance	GDP or GNP
534	India	Mar 95	Mar 95	Feb 95	Nov 94	Jan 95	Dec 94	Jan 95	Q1 91	1993	1993
536	Indonesia	Mar 95	Mar 95	Jun 93	Mar 93	Mar 94	Feb 95	Sep 94	Q4 93	1993	1993
429	Iran, Islamic Republic of	Mar 95	...	Aug 94	Aug 94	...	Feb 95	Feb 86	1992	1993	1993
433	Iraq	Mar 95	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
178	Ireland	Mar 95	Mar 95	Oct 94	Oct 94	Mar 95	Q4 94	Sep 94	Q2 94	Q4 94	1993
436	Israel	Mar 95	Mar 95	Feb 95	Dec 94	Dec 94	Jan 95	Jan 95	Q4 94	1993	Q2 94
136	Italy	Mar 95	Mar 95	Sep 94	Nov 94	Jan 95	Oct 94	Nov 94	Q3 94	Sep 91	Q3 94
343	Jamaica	Feb 95	Aug 93	Jan 95	Jan 95	Feb 95	Dec 94	Nov 94	1993	...	1993
158	Japan	Mar 95	Feb 95	Jan 95	Jan 95	Mar 95	Jan 95	Feb 95	Q2 94	1990	Q3 94
439	Jordan	Mar 95	Mar 95	Dec 94	Dec 94	Dec 94	Dec 94	Nov 94	Q4 93	Dec 94	1994
664	Kenya	Mar 95	Mar 95	Nov 94	Nov 94	Dec 94	Jan 95	Jun 94	1993	Jan 95	1993
542	Korea	Mar 95	Mar 95	Jan 95	Jan 95	Feb 95	Mar 95	Feb 95	Q2 94	Dec 94	Q4 94
443	Kuwait	Mar 95	Mar 95	Feb 95	Feb 95	Feb 95	Sep 92	Sep 94	1993	May 90	1993
446	Lebanon	Mar 95	Mar 95	Mar 95	Feb 95	Feb 95	...	...	...	...	...
666	Lesotho	Mar 95	Dec 94	Dec 94	Dec 94	Dec 94	Q4 94	Q2 94	Q4 93	1991	1993
668	Liberia	Mar 95	Sep 94	Sep 94	Sep 94	Sep 94	Jun 90	1989	1987	1988	1989
672	Libya	Mar 95	Jun 93	Feb 93	Jan 93	Nov 89	...	1991	1990	...	1986
137	Luxembourg	Mar 95	Jan 95	Jan 95	Q4 92	Jan 95	Feb 95	1992	...	1991	1992
674	Madagascar	Nov 94	Feb 95	Oct 94	Oct 94	Sep 89	Dec 94	Nov 92	1992	1991	1993
676	Malawi	Aug 94	Aug 94	Jul 94	Jul 94	Aug 94	Jul 94	Mar 94	1988	Oct 93	1993
548	Malaysia	Mar 95	Oct 94	Oct 94	Oct 94	Oct 94	Dec 94	Oct 94	1993	Q3 94	1993
556	Maldives	Mar 95	Mar 95	Nov 94	Nov 94	Nov 94	Sep 94	Sep 94	1993	1992	1993
678	Mali	Mar 95	Jan 95	Jan 95	Jan 95	Feb 95	Dec 93	1990	1993	1988	1991
181	Malta	Mar 95	Feb 95	Dec 94	Dec 94	Dec 94	Jan 95	Nov 94	1993	1992	1993
682	Mauritania	Mar 95	Mar 95	Jul 94	Jul 94	Jan 93	Jul 94	Mar 91	1992	...	1991
684	Mauritius	Mar 95	Mar 95	Feb 95	Feb 95	Feb 95	Feb 95	Q3 94	1993	1994	1993
273	Mexico	Mar 95	Mar 95	Jan 95	Jan 95	Mar 95	Feb 95	Dec 94	Q2 94	Dec 93	1993
921	Moldova	Mar 95	Mar 95	Dec 94	Dec 94	...	...	...	...	...	...
948	Mongolia	Mar 95	Feb 95	Feb 95	Feb 95	Feb 95	Dec 94	Dec 94	1990	Feb 95	1992
686	Morocco	Mar 95	Feb 95	Aug 94	Mar 92	Oct 94	Dec 94	Dec 94	1993	1990	1993

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688	Mozambique	Feb 95	Q4 91	Q4 91	Aug 94	Q2 94	1992	...	1993
518	Myanmar	Mar 95	Feb 95	Feb 91	Feb 93	Sep 93	Oct 94	Dec 94	1990	1992	1993
728	Namibia	Mar 95	Feb 95	Feb 95	Feb 95	Mar 95	Feb 95	1993	1992	1993	1993
558	Nepal	Mar 95	Mar 95	Apr 94	Apr 94	Sep 93	Jun 94	Jun 94	1993	1991	1994
138	Netherlands	Mar 95	Mar 95	Mar 95	Feb 95	Feb 95	Feb 95	Nov 94	Q3 94	Jan 95	Q3 94
353	Netherlands Antilles	Mar 95	Dec 94	Dec 94	Dec 94	Dec 94	Nov 94	Dec 92	1993	1992	...
196	New Zealand	Mar 95	Feb 95	Mar 95	Q4 94	Mar 95	Q4 94	Feb 95	Q3 94	1993	Q4 94
278	Nicaragua	Dec 94	Feb 95	Sep 94	Sep 94	Feb 95	Dec 92	Sep 94	Q2 94	1993	1993
692	Niger	Mar 95	Jan 95	Jan 95	Jan 95	Feb 95	Dec 94	1991	1993	...	1991
694	Nigeria	Mar 95	Dec 94	Aug 92	Aug 92	Nov 94	Sep 94	Dec 92	Q4 92	1993	1993
142	Norway	Mar 95	Mar 95	Feb 95	Nov 94	Feb 95	Jan 95	Jan 95	Q3 94	1990	Q4 94
449	Oman	Mar 95	Feb 95	Dec 94	Jan 95	Dec 94	...	Dec 94	1993	1993	1992
564	Pakistan	Mar 95	Mar 95	Jan 95	Dec 94	Jan 95	Jan 95	Q3 94	Q4 93	1994	1993
283	Panama	Mar 95	Feb 95	...	Q3 94	Q3 94	Jan 95	Oct 94	1993	Apr 94	1994
853	Papua New Guinea	Dec 94	Dec 94	Jun 94	Jun 94	Jun 94	Q3 94	Sep 94	1993	1993	1993
288	Paraguay	Mar 95	Dec 94	Nov 94	Nov 94	Dec 94	May 94	Mar 94	1993	1993	1993
293	Peru	Mar 95	Sep 94	Mar 93	Mar 93	Mar 95	Feb 95	Dec 94	Q4 93	Jan 95	Q4 93
566	Philippines	Feb 95	Jan 95	Nov 94	Nov 94	Feb 95	Jan 95	Nov 94	Q2 94	Dec 94	Q4 94
964	Poland	Mar 95	Mar 95	Feb 95	Feb 95	Mar 95	Feb 95	Dec 94	Q1 94	1988	1993
182	Portugal	Mar 95	Oct 94	Dec 94	Dec 94	Feb 95	Jan 95	Nov 94	Q4 93	1990	Q4 92
453	Qatar	Mar 95	Dec 94	Dec 94	Dec 94	Jun 94	1991	Q4 91	...	...	1992
968	Romania	Mar 95	Feb 95	Feb 95	Feb 95	...	Nov 94	Nov 94	Q4 93	Q2 94	1993
714	Rwanda	Feb 94	Feb 94	Dec 93	Dec 93	Dec 93	Dec 93	Nov 93	1992	...	1992
361	Saint Kitts and Nevis	Mar 95	Oct 94	Oct 94	Oct 94	Dec 94	Dec 94	...	1992	1993	1992
362	Saint Lucia	Mar 95	Oct 94	Oct 94	Oct 94	Dec 94	Sep 94	1992	1992	1990	1992
364	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Mar 95	Oct 94	Oct 94	Oct 94	Dec 94	Dec 94	Q4 92	1992	1988	1992
456	Saudi Arabia	Mar 95	Mar 95	May 92	Jan 95	...	Dec 94	Oct 94	1993	...	1992
722	Senegal	Mar 95	Jan 95	Jan 95	Jan 95	Feb 95	Dec 94	1990	1993	...	1991
718	Seychelles	Mar 95	Jul 94	Feb 95	Jan 95	Mar 95	Dec 94	Q2 94	Q4 92	1994	1992
724	Sierra Leone	Mar 95	Mar 95	Dec 94	Dec 94	Feb 95	Jan 95	Dec 94	1991	1993	1994

Table 3. Coverage and Currentness of Data in *International Financial Statistics*

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Code	Country	Exchange Rates	International Reserves	Reserve Money	Broad Money	Interest Rates	Consumer Prices	External Trade	Current Account Balance	Overall Government Balance	GDP or GNP
576	Singapore	Mar 95	Jan 95	Dec 94	Dec 94	Feb 95	Jan 95	Jan 95	1993	Jan 95	1993
813	Solomon Islands	Sep 94	Sep 94	Sep 94	Sep 94	Sep 94	Sep 94	1993	1992	1988	1989
726	Somalia	May 90	Mar 90	Mar 90	Mar 90	Mar 90	Nov 89	1990	1989	...	...
199	South Africa	Mar 95	Mar 95	Sep 94	Jun 91	Feb 95	Jan 95	Jan 95	Q3 94	Dec 94	Q4 94
184	Spain	Mar 95	Mar 95	Feb 95	Feb 95	Mar 95	Jan 95	Dec 94	Q4 94	Jan 95	Q4 94
524	Sri Lanka	Mar 95	Mar 95	Jan 95	Jan 95	Jan 95	Feb 95	Dec 94	Q4 93	Q4 91	1993
732	Sudan	Jan 95	Mar 94	Dec 94	Dec 94	...	Jun 94	1989	Q4 92	...	1991
366	Suriname	Mar 95	Feb 95	Jun 93	Jun 93	...	Apr 94	1990	Q4 92	...	1991
734	Swaziland	Mar 95	Mar 95	Feb 95	Jan 95	Feb 95	Mar 95	Q1 91	1993	1989	1991
144	Sweden	Mar 95	Jan 95	Feb 95	Jan 95	Feb 95	Feb 95	Dec 94	Q3 94	1993	Q4 94
146	Switzerland	Mar 95	Mar 95	Mar 95	Jan 95	Mar 95	Mar 95	Feb 95	1993	Q4 94	Q4 94
463	Syrian Arab Republic	Mar 95	Jun 89	Dec 92	Dec 92	Jun 89	Sep 94	Jun 94	1993	1992	1993
738	Tanzania	Jan 95	Jan 95	Oct 94	Jul 94	Mar 94	Dec 93	Q3 94	1993	1994	1993
578	Thailand	Mar 95	Mar 95	Dec 94	Dec 94	Dec 94	Dec 94	Apr 94	Q1 94	Oct 93	1992
742	Togo	Mar 95	Jan 95	Jan 95	Jan 95	Feb 95	Dec 93	1991	1993	...	1987
866	Tonga	Mar 95	Mar 95	Jan 95	Jan 95	Feb 95	Jan 95	Oct 94	Q2 93	1991	1994
369	Trinidad and Tobago	Mar 95	Dec 94	Dec 94	Dec 94	Dec 94	Oct 94	May 94	1993	1989	1993
744	Tunisia	Mar 95	Jan 95	Jan 95	Nov 94	Jan 95	Jan 95	Jan 95	1993	1992	1994
186	Turkey	Jan 95	Jan 95	Nov 94	Nov 94	Dec 94	Dec 94	Sep 94	Q3 94	1992	Q4 93
746	Uganda	Feb 95	Jan 95	Jul 94	Jul 94	Feb 95	Feb 95	Dec 94	1993	1993	1993
466	United Arab Emirates	Mar 95	Dec 94	Nov 94	Nov 94	...	...	May 94	...	1993	1992
112	United Kingdom	Mar 95	Dec 94	Apr 94	Jan 95	Feb 95	Jan 95	Nov 94	Q3 94	Q4 91	Q4 94
111	United States	Mar 95	Feb 95	Dec 94	Q4 94	Mar 95	Mar 95	Dec 94	Q4 94	Dec 94	Q4 94
298	Uruguay	Feb 95	Dec 94	Sep 94	Sep 94	Jan 95	Jan 95	Dec 94	1993	Dec 94	1993
846	Vanuatu	Feb 95	Feb 95	Jul 94	Jul 94	Dec 94	Q2 94	Jun 94	Q2 94	1989	1993
299	Venezuela	Mar 95	Feb 95	Dec 94	Dec 94	Feb 95	Feb 95	Nov 94	1993	Jan 95	1994
862	Western Samoa	Mar 95	Feb 95	Feb 95	Feb 95	Feb 95	Feb 95	Feb 95	1993	...	...
636	Zaire	Mar 95	Feb 95	Nov 94	Nov 94	Feb 95	Dec 94	Nov 94	1990	1993	1992
754	Zambia	Jul 94	May 94	Mar 92	Mar 92	Jul 94	Dec 93	May 93	1991	1989	1993
698	Zimbabwe	Feb 95	Feb 95	Jan 95	Jan 95	Dec 94	Jan 95	Q4 92	Q4 93	1991	1990

Table 4. Data Currentness in *International Financial Statistics*

Statistical Summary

(Published in the May 1995 issue of *IFS*)

Description	Exchange Rates	International Reserves	Reserve Money	Broad Money	Interest Rates	Consumer Prices	External Trade	Current Account Balance	Overall Government Balance	GDP or GNP
All Countries										
Countries reporting	150	148	148	148	136	141	146	142	118	139
Lags in months:										
Mean	1.0	3.8	6.5	7.9	7.1	7.0	14.9	19.5	22.4	19.2
Median	0	1	3	3	2	3	6	15	15	15
Standard deviation	5.0	9.2	9.7	12.6	14.9	13.2	18.5	14.4	20.9	16.2
Minimum	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	3	1	3
Maximum	58	69	60	81	69	111	109	87	75	99
Industrial Countries										
Countries reporting	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	22	23	23
Lags in months:										
Mean	0.0	0.8	3.3	5.7	0.7	1.5	5.3	7.1	19.7	8.1
Median	0	0	2	2	0	1	3	6	15	6
Standard deviation	0.0	1.3	5.7	11.2	1.0	1.3	6.8	4.0	17.9	7.4
Minimum	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	3	2	3
Maximum	0	5	27	51	4	5	27	15	51	27
Developing Countries										
Countries reporting	127	125	125	125	113	118	123	120	95	116
Lags in months:										
Mean	1.1	4.3	7.1	8.3	8.4	8.1	16.7	21.8	23.0	21.4
Median	0	2	3	3	3	3	6	15	15	15
Standard deviation	5.4	9.9	10.2	12.8	16.1	14.1	19.5	14.5	21.7	16.6
Minimum	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	3	1	3
Maximum	58	69	60	81	69	111	109	87	75	99

**Table 4. Data Currentness in *International Financial Statistics*
Statistical Summary**

(Published in the May 1995 issue of *IFS*)

Description	Exchange Rates	International Reserves	Reserve Money	Broad Money	Interest Rates	Consumer Prices	External Trade	Current Account Balance	Overall Government Balance	GDP or GNP
Program Countries										
Countries reporting	40	40	40	39	35	38	39	38	28	38
Lags in months:										
Mean	0.7	3.7	4.9	4.7	5.3	6.9	15.2	19.3	22.1	20.7
Median	0	2	3	3	2	3	6	15	15	15
Standard deviation	1.4	8.0	7.0	5.7	8.7	7.6	16.5	13.3	20.4	16.7
Minimum	0	0	1	1	0	1	3	6	1	3
Maximum	7	39	39	27	28	27	63	75	75	87
Market Borrowers										
Countries reporting	20	20	19	20	18	20	20	20	17	19
Lags in months:										
Mean	0.3	1.8	6.6	10.3	5.8	8.2	12.9	16.1	13.2	15.2
Median	0	1	4	5	2	2	5	15	12	15
Standard deviation	0.7	1.9	6.4	17.7	14.5	24.4	20.0	8.2	14.7	8.6
Minimum	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	3	2	3
Maximum	3	6	24	81	63	111	75	39	63	39

Note: All countries include 179 member countries plus nonmembers Aruba and Netherlands Antilles. Of these, 150 have country presentations in *IFS*.
Industrial countries total 24, of which all except San Marino have *IFS* pages.
Developing countries number 157, of which 127 have *IFS* pages.
There are 50 program countries that have arrangements under Stand-by, SAF, ESAF, and EFF, of which 40 have *IFS* pages.
Market borrowers include 22 countries, and all except Hong Kong and Kiribati have *IFS* pages.

mission activity of both area and technical assistance departments, including STA, and also the stationing of resident representatives in many program countries.

The Fund's statistical publications were last reviewed in detail in the late 1980s. The review covered user needs, publishing costs, computer costs, and marketing implications of proposed new initiatives for data dissemination. As a result of the review, a number of changes were made in the early 1990s including termination of the regular production of *IFS Supplements*, elimination of the monthly *Balance of Payments Statistics*, conversion of the *Direction of Trade Statistics* from a monthly to a quarterly publication, and a substantial reduction in size of the *Government Finance Statistics Yearbook*. These changes were effected at the time in order to allow the Statistics Department to shift resources to technical assistance and away from data management and publications. A number of other substantial changes proposed under this review were put on hold.

Some significant improvements in the publications have, nevertheless, been made in the past three years. Most of these changes are related to applications of new technologies. In June 1991, *IFS* was introduced on CD-ROM, a medium that allows PC users to access electronically a broad range of historical data not found in the printed publication. The CD-ROM software provides user-friendly access to the data. Desktop publishing methods have been used increasingly and this results in substantial cost savings and better control of published material. In addition, all publications were redesigned to enhance readability and marketability.

In the coming three years priority will be accorded to expanding country coverage in the publications, introducing quarterly CD-ROM publications on balance of payments and direction of trade statistics as well as enhancing the CD-ROM software for *IFS*, and undertaking a review of possible cost-saving measures including greater in-house composition of the publications. Consideration is being given to publishing a greater volume of the Fund's operational data in the statistical publications, principally *IFS*. Conversion of the balance of payments database to reflect the fifth edition of the *Balance of Payments Manual* has recently been completed and the 1995 *Balance of Payments Statistics Yearbook* will contain presentations based on the revised *Manual*. The 1996 *BOPSY* will contain presentations for the first time of International Investment Positions for countries. In recent years, there has been a deterioration in the country coverage of the *Government Finance Statistics Yearbook*. The 1994 *GFSY* contains data for 115 countries, but entries were not included for 30 countries that formerly reported data to the Fund because the statistics were now too outdated for publication. This deterioration has occurred notwithstanding the staff's efforts, through correspondence and other means, to encourage the authorities to compile and report GFS data. In the immediate future, technical assistance and training activities will be used to encourage reporting of fiscal data for publication and, in the longer term, consultations with member countries as part of the revision of the

Government Finance Statistics Manual will provide a structured basis for encouraging increased reporting for publication.

The recently instituted policy of publishing RED reports will provide the international community with an unprecedented volume of detailed economic data on individual countries. RED data and those appearing in the statistical publications may differ for several reasons, including differences in the underlying presentations as well as through revisions. Such differences may give rise to questions by users concerning the Fund's use of multiple databases. When they relate to important aggregates, the staff will need to determine whether differences in published series result from inherent inconsistencies and try to ensure greater convergence in the data. Thus far, the staff has not received enquiries from users on problems in this area.

The *WEO* presents in its statistical appendix a wide variety of historical data and projections. The data presented relate to output, inflation, monetary and fiscal indicators, external transactions, and external debt and debt service, and flow of funds. Data and projections are presented for individual countries for some topics and by regional and analytical groupings of countries for other series. The *WEO* format facilitates the presentation of different analytical groupings, while the Fund's statistical publications in general present only regional groupings. The data from which the *WEO* statistical appendix is drawn are primarily obtained from area departments, but these data are supplemented by EIS data and data from published sources, particularly in order to establish the long time series needed for *WEO* analysis.

VII. International Statistical Coordination

Issues of coordination in the statistical field have been accorded high priority by international organizations and, particularly over the last ten years, the Fund has played a very active part in international and interagency bodies that have directed efforts to coordinate activities in the development of statistical methodologies, statistical classifications, technical assistance, data collection from countries, dissemination and publication, and research. Because of the leading role the Fund has assumed in the development of methodologies in balance of payments statistics, monetary and financial statistics and government finance statistics, and in the 1993 *SNA*, and its almost unique position in the international statistical community as a producer and user of statistics, the Fund has been accorded a prominent position on issues relating to macroeconomic statistics.

Cooperation with the World Bank has been particularly close. Under reciprocal arrangements that have existed for many years, data sharing between the two organizations takes place at the institutional level as well as on an informal basis at the level of individual staff members. For example, the World Bank has electronic access to the *IFS* database maintained

in the Fund's EIS, while the Fund has electronic access to and makes considerable use of the detailed external debt statistics maintained in the Bank's Debtor Reporting System. Fund staff have access to the country data maintained in the Bank Economic and Social Database (BESD) while Bank staff make considerable use of data that appear in RED reports. These arrangements are important in limiting demands for data on member countries. The Bank, unlike the Fund, is not a primary collector of data (with the exception of external debt statistics) although its requirements for mission data extend beyond the areas required by the Fund for surveillance and related work.

Beyond data sharing, the Fund and Bank have collaborated in a number of statistical activities. For many years, the Bank provided financial support to the Fund for the development of statistics on local government finance and government capital expenditure by function. The Bank also supported the development work in the preparation of IFS on CD-ROM. More recently, the Fund has been providing financial support to the Bank's work in the International Price Comparison Program, the results of which are expected to be used in extending the Fund's use of statistics on Purchasing Power Parities.

Coordination with other international agencies has also been extensive. Fund staff participate actively in the biennial sessions of the United Nations Statistical Commission and its related bodies. The Commission serves as a central body for the discussion and coordination of international work in statistics. In recent years, these coordination activities have played a more prominent role as task forces have been established in each of the main areas of statistics to ensure a collaborative approach by international organizations on methodologies, technical assistance and data collection, and to reduce duplicative demands by international agencies on countries. The Fund has been the convener of the Task Force on Finance Statistics, and has participated actively in other task forces that relate to the Fund's interests in statistics. A major interagency collaborative effort is also carried out through the ACC Sub-Committee on Statistics which brings together, at its annual meetings, the heads of statistics of UN agencies and other international organizations.

Regular direct contacts are also maintained by the staff with the other international organizations that work in statistical areas of concern to the Fund. These include, in addition to the World Bank, the Bank for International Settlements, the European Monetary Institute, Eurostat, the OECD, the World Trade Organization, and the UN Statistical Division and the statistical offices of the UN Regional Commissions.

VIII. Issues for Discussion

1. On previous occasions, the Executive Board has considered the individual statistical activities of the Fund that underpin the core aspects of its responsibilities in the international financial system. In this paper the staff has attempted to integrate these activities in a unified framework that identifies the policy implications of the Fund's statistical work, with particular emphasis on its surveillance responsibilities. Executive Directors may wish to comment on this approach, and to indicate whether further reviews of statistical policy would be desirable.

2. In considering the statistical support for surveillance and country programs, Executive Directors may wish to comment on: (i) efforts to improve data quality; (ii) how statistical problems in countries should be brought to the attention of the Board; (iii) how the Interim Committee request for the establishment of standards for publication of data by countries can be realized; and (iv) the use of aspects of conditionality to address serious data problems in program countries.

3. Executive Directors may wish to consider the value of the Fund's work in developing and maintaining international statistical standards in improving member countries' own statistics and the importance of the application of these standards for country and multilateral surveillance.

4. Executive Directors may wish to address: (i) the role and importance of technical assistance in improving the quality, timeliness, and coverage of member countries' data to support Fund surveillance; (ii) improvements in the targeting and delivery of technical assistance in light of recent developments including multisector missions, and the use of outside consultant experts; and (iii) efforts to improve the effectiveness of technical assistance. Executive Directors may also wish to comment on training in statistics as part of the overall technical assistance effort, including the new directions that training has taken, particularly the trend to increased regional training.

5. Executive Directors may wish to comment on the experience with the Fund's program of statistical publications and the role that these publications can play in response to the call for greater openness.

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