

6th Steering Committee Meeting Minutes

Project: *Strengthening Capacity for Evidence-Based Policymaking and the Economic Resilience of CARICOM*

4 March 2026

Participants

- Dong Wu, Katalin Bokor, Nour Barnat, Benny Salo, Ekaterina Chernova, Marion Hermans (UNCTAD)
- Maria Alejandra Ovalle (ECLAC)
- Delores Francis (OECS)
- Reanata Ramsey, Kevin Sears (CARICOM)
- Representatives from National Statistical Offices and partner institutions from Grenada, Dominica, Saint Lucia, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and Barbados.

Agenda

- 1. Opening and adoption of the agenda**
- 2. Review of actions from the 5th Steering Committee Meeting**
- 3. Results of fact-finding missions: Grenada and Dominica**
- 4. Update on upcoming policy missions**
- 5. Creative services questionnaire**
- 6. Capacity building and e-learning updates**
- 7. Any other business**
- 8. Closing**

Discussion

Project progress

- Participants reviewed progress since the **5th Steering Committee Meeting (November 2025)**. The project has entered an advanced implementation phase, focusing on **TiSSTAT pilot activities, country missions and capacity building**.

Fact-finding missions: Grenada and Dominica

Updates were provided on the statistical missions supporting **TiSSTAT implementation**.

These two countries were prioritized because they were more advanced in their technical readiness and infrastructure.

The UNCTAD team provided "hand-to-hand" support on several fronts:

- A specialized IT expert joined the missions to work directly with national experts on system installation and troubleshooting.
- Teams collaborated on refining survey samples, including targeting enterprises that have historically not responded to data requests.

Based on direct feedback from enterprise visits during the missions, the team updated the questionnaire to increase the likelihood of receiving responses. Key points:

- **Dominica launched the TiSSTAT pilot survey on 20 February 2026.**
- UNCTAD supported national teams in **sampling preparation, survey implementation and questionnaire adjustments.**
- **Grenada's pilot launch is expected shortly** following minor technical adjustments.

A data cleaning and validation mission in Geneva is planned for April 2026.

A mission to other two pilot countries will be planned when countries will have reached needed infrastructure readiness. In the meantime, A significant challenge was reported regarding the lack of a server for Saint Lucia. UNCTAD is currently working to help secure a server so the pilot can proceed.

Upcoming policy missions

Policy missions are scheduled in:

- **Dominica:** 11–13 March 2026
- **Grenada:** 16–18 March 2026
- **Saint Lucia:** 22–24 April 2026
- **Saint Kitts and Nevis:** 27–29 April 2026

Each mission is structured as a three-day visit with specific goals:

- A day and a half is dedicated to structured interviews and consultations with stakeholders across multiple sectors to ensure the findings are solution-oriented and owned by the countries.
- Half a day is focused on training, specifically on how to collect, use, and interpret both quantitative and qualitative data. The missions aim to identify alternative data sources for policy-making when traditional relevant data is absent.

The final day is reserved for detailed interviews to refine and sharpen the mission's findings.

ECLAC (specifically through its Port of Spain office) has offered to assist with logistics, including potentially funding some travel or providing office space for the missions.

Strategic High-Level Engagement

The project team intends to showcase the findings and country experiences from these missions at the UNCTAD Multi-Year Expert Meeting on Trade in Services and Development in Geneva (15–16 April 2026). This meeting focuses on "servicification for economic diversification," which aligns closely with the project's objectives.

Creative services questionnaire

A **dedicated questionnaire on creative services** is being developed to improve measurement of the sector because the general TiSSTAT tool does not capture all the specific data points required by policy colleagues for creative economy analysis.

- The questionnaire will complement the **TiSSTAT survey framework**.
- **Dominica plans to pilot the questionnaire in July 2026**.
- UNCTAD has invited active participation from member countries to fine-tune the questions to ensure they are relevant to national contexts. Barbados has expressed strong interest in piloting the questionnaire through its national associations.

Considering the **informal nature of the creative sector** the project is moving beyond traditional surveys by identifying and engaging with associations and cultural institutions like ECHO.

Capacity building and e-learning

Participants were informed about upcoming training activities:

- The **UNCTAD/WTO/UNSD e-learning course on International Merchandise Trade Statistics (IMTS)** will run from **16 March to 3 May 2026**.
- There will be e-learning on Trade in services statistics in autumn. UNCTAD will inform about it start.
- UNCTAD is developing a **TiSSTAT e-learning course** to support the long-term sustainability of the system, which is expected to be available early next year. This course is tailored specifically to the project's goals of establishing a sustainable, long-term statistical framework. It is designed to support the system beyond the project's end date by providing a permanent training resource for future National Statistical Office staff. Project experience showed that training is most effective when participants have "hands-on" experience with the TiSSTAT tool while it is being actively implemented in their national institutions.

Closing

Participants thanked all partners for their continued collaboration and support in advancing the project.

Summary of action points

UNCTAD

- Continue supporting **TiSSTAT pilot implementation**.
- Organize the **April data validation mission in Geneva: a representative from Dominica and Grenada and ECCB**.
- Finalize and circulate the **Creative Services Questionnaire among member states**.

Member Countries

- Participate in **upcoming policy missions**.
- Provide feedback on the **Creative Services Questionnaire**.

Regional partners

- Continue supporting **coordination with member countries**.