

## Minutes of 2<sup>nd</sup>-kick off meeting (virtual)

### Project: Strengthening capacity for evidence-based policymaking and the economic resilience of CARICOM

21 June 2024

#### Attendees

-NSO and ministries representatives from countries: Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines; Caricom; ECCB; Division of Culture, Prime Minister's Office, Barbados: UNCTAD: Nour Barnat, Ekaterina Chernova, Benny Salo, David Cristallo, Petra Kynclova, Denis Gervalle, Dong Wu, Bruno Antunes; ECLAC: Maria Alejandra Ovalle.

#### Agenda

##### 1. 1. Opening Remarks

- **Welcome Address**
- **Objectives of the Meeting:** purpose and expected outcomes.

##### 2. Brief recap of the Kickoff Workshop

##### 3. Structured discussion sessions

- **Session 1: Discussion on Statistics**
  - TiSSTAT presentation refresh
  - Questions/discussions
- **Session 2: Discussion on Policy**
  - Inviting questions and comments about trade services Sectors
  - Focal points/contact points confirmation
- **Session 3: UNCTAD questions to Countries, OECS, CARICOM & ECCB**
  - Including any points that were not addressed during May 2024 workshop
- **General Q&A:** any further questions or comments

##### 4. Next Steps

- **Piloting**
- **Installation of Tisstat**
- **Next regional event - training (Stats)**

## 5. Closing Remarks

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### **Minutes:**

1. **UNCTAD opened the meeting** listing the objectives of the meeting, and
2. Made a **brief recap** of the 1st kick-off meeting on 21-22 May 2024.
3. **Structured discussion sessions**

- **Session 1: Discussion on Statistics**

UNCTAD Statistics team briefly presented the TiSSTAT platform to refresh information shared during the Barbados meeting.

### **It was followed by a Q&A session**

#### **1. Are historical adjustments possible in TiSSTAT?**

- UNCTAD (U): The utility of using historical data both on the unit level and the aggregated level has been considered. The functionality that would allow to do these adjustments automatically is not implemented in the current version of TiSSTAT. However, one of the current contributions of TiSSTAT is the standardized format of data files which makes it easy to combine data for several years. That helps to obtain comparable data on the country level. On the unit level, the user would need to be mindful of using enterprise IDs consistently.

#### **2. What are data requirements to install TiSSTAT?**

1. Good sampling is needed, along with good business register in place, a secure online link to answer the questionnaire by respondents.

Additional technical aspects:

2. availability of MS SQL Server 2017 or later.

3. A dedicated server (ideally running Windows Server 2019 or later) that could be access publicly through HTTPS (nginx or IIS)

4. If sending emails via TiSSTAT, access to a mail service is required.

5. And not least, technical knowledge on how to manipulate TiSSTAT that UNCTAD is ready to provide. **Countries need to communicate to UNCTAD a focal IT person.**

### 3. How are estimations done in TiSSTAT?

- U: TiSSTAT is built to apply simple statistical estimation methods. Exact methodology can be shared further if needed. We can also discuss additional methodology for possible further developments.

ECCB raised the point that considering the region specifics, from their experience, some methods need to be tailored to a company nature and sector. Manipulations with data are done in excel with macros, without automation.

TiSSTAT on the other hand, enables automated solution and an approach consistent across the sector.

### 4. Given UNCTAD TiSSTAT presentation, it is suggested to work outside of TiSSTAT. That sounds complicated. Countries prefer to work within the platform at all stages of the process.

U: The user may export the reports and finalize it in an external editing tool of their choice. This is done in order not to lock the user in TiSSTAT and block them from performing specific tasks outside TiSSTAT. While TiSSTAT is designed to work best when used from beginning to end, data files can be exported, adjusted and reimported into TiSSTAT.

### 5. Does TiSSTAT's introduction mean countries will need to adapt their present work methods?

U: Yes. To enable the system to function, the countries will need to use a questionnaire specifically developed for TiSSTAT to feed the database.

#### 5.1. If a country requires a modification to the questionnaire, can it be developed within the project?

U: the questionnaire is harmonised to be used by all members. However, during a pilot phase we do collect feedback based on which the questionnaire can be considered to be adjusted in discussion with the country in question.

#### 6. Is it possible to test with the database to decide about moving into a pilot phase?

U: Indeed, offering options for countries to explore and test the TiSSTAT system can help determine its suitability and efficiency for their needs. And yes, this can be organized. We can give access to a testing platform. UNCTAD can create for each country a separate page if needed or one demo version for all. That should be accompanied by the training to know how to manipulate the system.

UNCTAD presented several options that should be discussed again with the Steering committee, then presented to member States to adopt the most convenient one.

The different options for testing and implementing TiSSTAT are the following:

#### **1. Online training followed by testing on a UNCTAD Central testing Server:**

Description: Begin with comprehensive online training sessions for all participating countries. These sessions would provide an overview and detailed instruction on how to use TiSSTAT. Following training, provide access to a central testing server where countries can interact with the system using their own data which should be anonymized, in a controlled environment.

Timeline: TBC

#### **2. In-Person training and local installation:**

Description: After initial remote familiarity via online training, proceed with local installations of TiSSTAT in each member state. Follow up with in-person training sessions that are more detailed and tailored to each country's specific data and needs. This step ensures that each country can effectively use the system in their local context.

Training Units: The training could be divided into three key units:

Unit 1: online data collection by enterprises. Basic system operation and interface navigation. Best practices for data security and system maintenance.

Unit 2: Sampling and data collection

Unit 3: Data cleaning, reporting and dissemination

Timeline: Complete the installation (2 weeks), and in-person training (5 days minimum). Allow another month for review and adjustment based on feedback.

#### **3. Pilot Testing with selected enterprises:**

Description: After training and installations are completed, conduct a pilot phase with a selection of enterprises from each country. This real-world application allows countries to see how TiSSTAT handles actual trade data and insights can be gathered on its performance and utility.

Timeline: Run the pilot testing for 3-6 months, providing support and collecting feedback throughout.

Feedback and Final Adjustment Phase:

Description: After pilot testing, gather all feedback for a thorough review session. Make necessary adjustments to the system based on the feedback from the pilot phase. This final adjustment phase is crucial to resolve any issues and to ensure the system fully meets the needs of each member state.

**The exact option is to be chosen in consultation with all involved parties and based on discussion with countries.**

7. What will happen if countries decide not to move forward with the use of TiSSTAT for their trade in services data collection and treatment?

The project goal is to improve trade in services reporting making it more human resources and time efficient. The countries will be able to evaluate this during the TiSSTAT testing phase. If any further questions occur during this period, UNCTAD is ready to have tailored consultations to answer your queries and doubts. If after this, a country is not convinced on the TiSSTAT advantages, there are no engagements to install the system.

8. UNCTAD: how works the collaboration between ECCB and countries? ECCB:

ECCB: The data collection process begins in March/April each year. This timeline allows for the systematic gathering of data within a specific timeframe, ensuring all relevant data is collected for the annual review. To reduce the burden on companies, ECCB uses a single questionnaire for all member states. This standardization simplifies the process for companies and ensures uniformity in the data collected. The ECCB reviews the collected data and provides feedback to the CSOs. This step ensures that any discrepancies or issues in the data collection process are addressed promptly. The CSOs then carry out their data collection, using the feedback from ECCB to guide their processes. This ensures that the data collected is in line with the requirements and standards set by the ECCB. ECCB adjusts the collected data for non-response. This involves estimating data for companies that did not respond to the questionnaire, ensuring that the dataset is as complete as possible. ECCB makes mid estimates for each company, which helps filling in any data gaps and providing a more accurate overall picture. ECCB ensures the consistency of all external accounts. This involves a systematic approach to reconciling and validating the data collected by the CSOs and the ECCB. ECCB would like to consult Yago to share experience on coordination between UEMOA's NSOs and the central bank (BCEAO).

## **Session 2: Discussion on Policy**

- **Session 3: UNCTAD questions to Countries, OECS, CARICOM & ECCB**

### **4. Next Steps**

- **Piloting**
- **Installation of TiSSTAT**
- **Next regional event - training (Stats)**

These topics were not addressed as the meeting closed. Will continue the discussion at a later stage.

### **General considerations**

TiSSTAT aligns with international standards, ensuring global compatibility and facilitating data comparability across countries. By adopting TiSSTAT, countries avoid the significant costs of developing individual systems and benefit from shared updates and maintenance. The system offers a harmonized approach that enhances data accuracy for informed policymaking and reduces the need for extensive customizations. TiSSTAT not only fills critical gaps in trade services data but also supports continuous improvement and integration into a global network of trade data analytics. This collaboration fosters skill development and resource optimization among member states, ensuring they are well-equipped for economic transformation and future data challenges. The long-term benefits include sustained support, continuous system enhancement, and strategic importance for tapping into the service economy's growth potential. TiSSTAT could be also used as one tool to run enterprise surveys that serve also BoP, not only trade in services.