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SECRETARIAT

**THIRTY FIRST MEETING
OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE
OF CARIBBEAN STATISTICIANS**

RESTRICTED

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6-8 November 2006

6 November 2006

THE BAHAMAS COUNTRY REPORT

Please see attached Paper entitled "**The Bahamas Country Report**".

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CENSUS

The population projections for All Bahamas have been completed. The projections for New Providence are in its final stages of completion and should be available at the end of the year.

The 2000 Country Report is in its final stages of completion with three chapters outstanding.

SOCIAL STATISTICS

The Environment, Social and Gender Statistics and the MDG'S have been up-dated to the year 2005, where data were available.

The Bahamas In Figures Report 2004 and 2005 have been published. The 2007 Calender have been completed and is available for distribution. There has been no further progress on the Statistical Abstract. Hopefully, by June of next year we should have a first draft.

VITAL STATISTICS

In July, the Vital Statistics Section produced and published a provisional summarized Vital Statistics Report. This report seeks to provide current data on a semi-annual basis. With the exception of 2004, the report covers provisional registered vital events for 2005 and the first six months in 2006, from the Date Range records of the Registrar General's Department.

The 2004 annual Vital Statistics Report is presently being printed in-house. Some highlights of the 2004 report are the reduction of AIDS deaths for the second consecutive year. The estimated occurrences of live-births showed little change over the figures (5054) for the previous year.

A position was taken to set a deadline for coding 2005 vital events by the end of October, 2006. All events coded by this cut-off date will be used to produce the annual vital statistics report before year's end.

An Historical Load Tool (HLT) was installed and training was provided by the Canadian consultants SIMMS consulting. The HLT is a data base application for loading historical data. In addition, the Registrar General's IT Consultant has installed software that will allow coding of the vital events electronically. Training in this software will be provided to the staff of our Vital Statistics section before the end of the year.

LABOUR MARKET INFORMATION UNIT

LABOUR FORCE

The 2005 Labour Force and Household Income Report is completed and published. This report revealed that the Bahamian labour Force grew by 1.3% to 178,705 persons. While this is an increase of 2,375 persons over the 2004 figure, it represented a continuing slowdown in the growth rate experienced by the labour Force in the last two years.

The total number of unemployed persons in the labour force increased slightly from 17,990 in 2004 to 18,175 in 2005. This minimal increase had no impact on the unemployment rate, which remained at 10.2%.

A revised questionnaire has been utilized this year. The main additions were:

1. new entrants in the labour force
2. employees in labour disputes/layoff
3. under employed
4. specialized training

5. union status
6. measure of informal economy

Teleform, an information capture system was purchased as a means of eliminating most of the manual procedures involved in preparing the data for analysis. This new system would enable the Department to produce more timely statistical data. In view of this, the questionnaires and all other relevant documents were structured using this new system. However, there were some problems encountered with the system, which among other things prohibit the completion of training in its usage. After a reasonable wait for its adjustments and/or replacement of parts, it was decided to revert to the old system, i.e. manual data entry.

This delay was the main cause for the late release of the preliminary results in October rather than the earlier expected date.

The survey was conducted during the month of May and covered 3,500 households on New Providence, Grand Bahama, Abaco and Andros.

A final report should be available by the end of the year.

LABOUR MARKET

The latest Labour Market Information Newsletter, a bi-annual publication, was disseminated in June 2006. The Newsletter contains data on The National Insurance Board Short Term Benefits, results of National Standard Examinations together with other data pertaining to the labour market.

The 2004 report on the 'Occupations and Wages in the Hotel Industry' was released early in 2005. The report indicates that the average wage in Hotel Industry in 2004 was \$335 per week; males \$362 and females \$310.

The report for 2005 is completed and being edited.

FOREIGN TRADE SECTION

It is a pleasure to report that Foreign Trade Statistics is current. Data for the year 2005 are now available and have been released to both local and international users. Data up to July 2006 have been entered and up to June edited and ready for 1st and 2nd quarter release.

Preliminary estimates on external or foreign trade show that during the year 2005 the total value of commodities imported into The Bahamas totalled some \$2.5 billion dollars resulting in a 30% increase over 2004's total of \$1.9 billion. The category of Machinery and Transport Equipment continued to be the largest contributor to imports, totaling some \$567 million (or 22% of all imports). The category of Mineral Fuels followed closely with a total of \$508 million or 20% of total imports.

Domestic exports during 2005 totalled some \$271 million. The major categories of domestic exports consisted mainly of Chemicals (polystyrene & other plastic materials) which accounted for 59% of total exports and Food and Live Animals (representing 29% of total domestic export).

Development Plans:

Plans are still afoot to begin the process of producing trade data by Broad Economic Category (BEC) as this will better assist the National Accounts Section in the production of GDP figures. Data have been produced quarterly and made available in both Standard International Trade Classification (SITC) and the Harmonized System (HS).

The section still plans to produce import/export price indices. Production of these indices will depend in part on technical assistance from CARTAC (methodology) and the cooperation of The Bahamas Customs Department (data details).

BUSINESS ESTABLISHMENT STATISTICS

2005 Survey

New Providence

The Business Establishment 2005 Survey round commenced the second week in March 2006 and fieldwork officially closed September 29, 2006. The 2005 Survey round was challenging for all economic sectors in New Providence. All of the surveys experienced decreases in response rates over the 2004 survey round by about 10 to 20%. The Survey of Health experienced the highest response rate of about 31 percent and Recreational Tours and Cruises obtained the lowest response rate of 1.3 percent. The surveys of Other Community and Industry usually achieve a fifty percent response rate or higher but this survey round Other Community only obtained a 28 percent response rate and Industry 21 percent response rates. The low response rate for the 2005 surveys can be attributed to the extra work load of the Section and respondent fatigue. Officers will use the first two weeks in October to clean up the New Providence 2005

registers, complete data entry and resolve all queries before the preparation of estimates begins. The section foresees some draw backs in meeting National Accounts deadline at the end of November because of the many challenges facing the section.

Grand Bahama

The 2005 survey round fieldwork will close the first week in October. To date, a number of questionnaires from Grand Bahama have been received and data entered.

The response rate for the Grand Bahama 2005 survey round was also considerably lower than 2004.

Economic Census

An Economic Census will be conducted in 2007. Some 22,000 businesses in the Bahamas, including those in the finance, insurance, non profit, agriculture, fishing, other community, construction, business services, health activities, wholesale trade, retail trade, private education, real estate, manufacturing, electricity, water production, transportation, storage, communication, hotels motels and guesthouses sectors will be targeted.

The proposed date for the census is April 2007 and the survey will run until September 2007. The questionnaires will be designed in teleform and the forms will be scanned when they are received into the office.

NATIONAL ACCOUNTS

Current Projects:

1. Gross Domestic Projects Estimates:

The National Accounts section is currently working on the current and constant price figures for Revised 2003 and 2004, Provisional 2005 and Preliminary 2006. These

estimates should be completed for in-house use by March 31st, 2007 and for general circulation by June 1st, 2007.

2. Tourism Satellite Accounts:

The Department of Statistics continues its joint project with the Ministry of Tourism and the Central Bank of Bahamas in an effort to refine the TSA methodology and to produce Provisional 2003 and Preliminary 2004 figures. These results are expected to be completed by January 15th, 2007 and published at the end of January 2007.

3. Supply and Use Tables:

According to the System of National Accounts 1993, Supply and Uses tables are matrices that record how supplies of different kinds of goods and services which originate from domestic industries and imports allocated between various intermediate and final uses, including exports. These tables involve the compilation of a set of integrated production and generation of income accounts for industries that are able to draw upon detailed data from industrial censuses or surveys. The supply and use tables provide an accounting framework within which the commodity flow method of compiling national accounts – in which the total supplies and uses of individual types of goods and services have to be balanced with each other – can be systematically exploited.

The National Accounts section is currently working with the Consultant Mr. Farihah Siddiqi (CARTAC) in an effort to develop the first SUT for the Bahamas. The process involves one to two week missions to the Bahamas during which Mr. Siddiqi reviews the completed work and makes recommendations for future developments. The last mission was held December 11th to 15th, 2005 and the next is scheduled for

November 20th to December 1st, 2006. Unfortunately, this approach to development is a very slow one as the National Accounts staff have no prior experience in developing a SUT and are also actively engaged in the other projects listed here that most times take priority to this SUT project.

Assuming all things remain equal, the intention is to provide SUT 2002 for publication by June 30th, 2007.

4. Environmental Statistics:

The National Accounts section is responsible for the collection and compilation of environmental statistics from various government and private sources for the second communication for the National Climate Change Committee and the Persistent Organic Committee. This also involves attending various environmental meetings, conferences and workshops over the course of the year.

The Environmental Statistics gathered are in compliance with the guidelines outlined in the CARICOM Environmental Project as well as The Millennium Development Goals. At present, the Bahamas is able to provide statistics for most areas and is actively working to fill gaps which may exist in some of these areas.

5. Building Construction Statistics:

The National Accounts section is responsible for the compilation of the Building Construction Statistics by type and value. The data come primarily from the Ministry of Works, Local Government and the Grand Bahama Port Authority.

Information to the end of 2004 is available. Preliminary 2005 data is scheduled for publication in December 2006.

Future Projects:

1. Plans to implement a methodology for defining and measuring the Informal Economy of the Bahamas are being formulated. In preparation for this an Informal Economy Module was added to the 2006 Labour Force Survey which was conducted in May 2006, the results should be available in the not too distant future.
2. Expanded coverage in implementing SNA 1993: provide coverage of the institutional Sectors with special emphasis on the Balance Sheet items and the inclusion of the Non-Profit institutions Serving Households.
3. Base Year Revision: This involves changing the year currently being used to estimate the Constant Price series and is expected to be conducted once the results from the 2006 Household Expenditure Survey and the 2006 Economic Census become available.

CONSUMER PRICE INDEX (CPI)

Consumer Price Statistics are available up to September 2006 for New Providence, Grand Bahama and All Bahamas.

During the period under review the CPI Section completed the 2005 Annual Review of Prices. This report is very detailed and provides substantial price data for New Providence, Grand Bahama and All Bahamas.

The Section continues to prepare and advertise its quarterly one-page report which showcases outstanding fluctuation in the average prices of selected items. To date, the report for the third quarter has been advertised in the local media. By the end of the

year, the Section intends to do the same thing for the Construction Building Materials Index.

The Quarterly Building Construction Materials Price Index for New Providence, Grand Bahama and All Bahamas is available up to June 2006. September's quarterly index is currently being processed. The Section has recently finalized, printed and distributed ***The Construction Building Materials Price Index report (4th QTR 2005 – 1st QTR 2006)***. This is a very detailed report analyzing price changes of building materials used to construct a "model house" in New Providence and Grand Bahama.

At present, the Department is finalizing preparations for a Household Expenditure/Poverty Survey which will be conducted in November. The results of this survey will be used to construct a new 'basket' and revised weights for the CPI.

DATA PROCESSING SECTION

Hardware/Software

The following items were purchased:

1. Verity TeleForm Application V 9.X
(Additional modules: one Designer, four Verifiers,
and one-year Maintenance Subscription)
2. Fujitsu Fi-4990C Duplex Scanner
3. InFocus IN24 DLP Projector

System Development

Customized Application Systems designed using VB .Net technology, and developed by SIMM Solution Inc. were as follows:

1. Frame Management Tool (A database application system that matches for-profit business entities using input data from different sources to produce a register.)
2. Historical Load Tool (A database application system that loads historical data for Establishment, External Trade, Retail Prices, Construction, National Accounts, and Vital Statistics.)
3. Establishment Survey System (A system application that captures, performs sampling, aggregation, editing, summary tabulation, and processing of Establishment survey data.)

Training by SIMM Solution Inc.

1. Technical training for all IT persons in system maintenance of the Frame Management Tool, Historical Load Tool, Establishment Survey System, and all related databases.
2. Hands-on training for all Application Users

ADMINISTRATION

The Department of Statistics has a staff complement of eighty-eight (88) permanent members. Five (5) officers from this number are on loan. Seventy-four (74) permanent staff members and the five (5) officers on loan are stationed in the New Providence' Office. Twelve (12) permanent staff members and one (1) part-time office complete the office complement in the Grand Bahama Office.

Temporary Field

The Department of Statistics because of its structure and work programme, has over the years been allowed to employ individuals on a temporary basis. At present, we

have a staff complement of thirty-nine (39) Temporary Field Workers. As the name suggests, these individuals are offered employment on a temporary period of six (6) months intervals and trained to go into the community to collect data.

Retirement/Transfers

The Department recently suffered the loss of two (2) officers to retirement and three (3) officers to transfer.

Recruitment of Professional Staff

At present, the Department is in the process of recruiting ten (10) professional officers. These individuals are required to have a Bachelor's Degree or an Associate's Degree (preferably relevant) and be prepared to be trained in and/or contribute to the technical areas of Social and/or Economic Statistics.

Training

Two very much needed workshops were organized and mounted by the Department. The first, "Making Data Meaningful, A Guide to Writing Stories About Numbers", was facilitated by a senior Media Advisor out of Statistics Canada. This two day workshop was attended by all subject matter supervisors.

The second, 'Project Management', was conducted by a consulting firm, Cohen and Klein, located in Ft. Lauderdale and affiliated with Florida International University. Most of the senior officers from this Department as well as three officers from the Ministry of Finance reaped the benefits of this four day session.

