PROPOSAL TO IMPROVE THE EFFICIENCY OF TECHNICAL SUPPORT MISSIONS IN THE FIELD OF STATISTICS

Department of Statistics and Economic Measurement of Tourism

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Presentation

1. Since its creation, the World Tourism Organization (WTO) has had a small number of instruments at its disposal for helping and supporting countries in the development of internationally comparable tourism statistics. These instruments were extended in the wake of the Ottawa Conference of 1991. The Enzo Paci Nice Conference of 1999 called for these instruments to be renewed and updated and for impetus to be given to the creation of new instruments which, unlike those used in the past, now have a framework of coordination and integration. It is not for nothing that the methodological design of the Tourism Satellite Account (TSA) constitutes a conceptual framework in which the analysis of tourism is conducted on a global basis (i.e. with regard to expenditure, products consumed, the production value of the different tourism industries, the number of direct jobs associated with tourism, the investment made to meet demand for tourism, etc.).

2. At its sixty-third and sixty-fourth sessions held in Madrid in November 2000, WTO’s Executive Council approved the document «Tourism Satellite Account (TSA): a strategic project for the World Tourism Organization». Section IV of this document, entitled «Resources for developing the TSA project», identifies these instruments as follows:

- the Committee on Statistics and Macroeconomic Analysis of Tourism;
- the WTO-OECD-EUROSTAT Inter-Secretariat Working Group;
- tourism statistics and TSA seminars-training courses;
- preparation of various types of technical documents and educational material relative to the TSA;
- technical assistance to countries.

3. With respect to technical assistance, the aforementioned document highlights the following characteristics:

«Technical assistance to countries, hitherto geared to helping them develop their capacity to improve the production of tourism statistics in compliance with WTO guidelines, should be extended to provide them with consultancy and support with a view to enabling them to set up and develop their TSA in accordance with criteria of inter-institutional cooperation, flexibility and gradualism, mentioned in other parts of this document» (paragraph 4.9).
These types of missions can be designed to meet three principle aims:

- providing the experts of the various institutions involved with training in tourism statistics;
- dealing with specific aspects of the System of Tourism Statistics; and
- providing consultancy relative to the setting up and development of the country’s TSA (paragraph 4.11).

4. This new document argues in favour of making an in-depth analysis of these technical support missions, from the dual perspective of ensuring:

- that they encompass as many countries as possible, and
- that the efficiency of the resources earmarked for each mission is increased.

It therefore follows that specific requirements and procedures must be defined for the fielding and development of these missions.

5. From a financial perspective, the duration of these missions is obviously a relevant consideration. We believe that three working days (as opposed to five) should suffice to field these missions, in which case a new approach to their preparation is required.

More specifically, before commencing their missions, the consultants should have been provided by the corresponding National Tourism Administration with an entire set of technical information relative to available statistical sources and the level of development of the System of National Accounts in the country in question. This information should be supplied by the National Tourism Administration that has requested the mission and prepared by national experts in the country in question. This would enable our consultants to avoid having to devote part of their mission to the task of obtaining this information, which would be shouldered by the national experts insofar as they are clearly the individuals most qualified to do the job.

6. From an institutional perspective, there is no doubt that we must take measures to identify and strengthen links with the statistical operations conducted by other bodies, not least on account of the experience acquired to date in terms of developing the System of Tourism Statistics (STS) in the various countries. WTO has, moreover, acknowledged that the existence of an inter-institutional platform is indispensable in terms of developing the TSA project, whose main aim is precisely to strengthen the STS – at least from the dual perspective of improving existing physical indicators (particularly arrivals by non-resident visitors) and collecting data on the tourism expenditure of these non-residents.

The agendas of each of these technical support missions should therefore include a joint meeting with the representatives of the following institutions, at the very least: the National Tourism Administration (NTA), the Central Statistical Office (CSO), Central Bank (CB) and national associations of
tourism enterprises. Likewise, bilateral technical meetings should be held with each of these bodies.

7. Finally, attention should be drawn to the supporting measures presently available to our consultants. As explained in paragraph 1.3 below, the Department of Statistics is in the process of implementing four projects that are geared not only to increasing the efficiency of these missions, but also to providing the countries in question with ongoing technical support from WTO.

8. This document, which has been prepared by the Department of Statistics and Economic Measurement of Tourism in the context of the fourteenth General Assembly, outlines a set of proposals designed to streamline the present structure of WTO’s technical support missions in the field of statistics.

1.1. General considerations

9. The Executive Council of WTO has analysed a proposal presented by the Secretary-General in which he lists the components of the TSA project and specifically refers to the strategic nature of this project for the Organization. One of the principle elements taken into account on preparing the present document was therefore the approval by WTO’s Executive Council at its sixty-third and sixty-fourth sessions in November 2000 of a document entitled: «The Tourism Satellite Account (TSA) a strategic project for the World Tourism Organization».

Since this document was approved (almost a year ago), the Secretariat has acquired a wealth of experience both in terms of organizing regional training seminars on tourism statistics and the TSA, and fielding new technical missions.

10. It should be noted that in the last year, the number of regional training seminars has increased threefold with respect to the annual average of two seminars in previous years. In the last twelve months, six seminars have been held in Antigua (Guatemala), Trinidad and Tobago (Caribbean), Tangiers (Morocco), Bangkok (Thailand), Moscow (Russian Federation) and Amman (Jordan). The steps taken to increase the number of seminars were justified by the need to explain the underlying principles of the TSA as a new international standard, but also as means of acquiring experience—in record time— with the aim of defining the entire scope of the TSA project and thus strengthening the development of the System of Tourism Statistics (STS).

On the other hand, missions have been fielded in Ecuador, Argentina, Jordan and Panama; we are presently pending requests from Kenya, Guatemala, India and Honduras.
11. These seminars and missions (conducted and pending) are the elements that have forced the Department of Statistics to stop and think about suitable ways and means of providing ongoing technical assistance to WTO’s member States.

There is no doubt that in the last twelve months, we have learnt a great deal in terms of how to go about defining a project (the TSA) that is, by its very nature, extremely long and complex besides representing a major innovation:

- we are clearly dealing with a complex tool that requires stable cooperation between various institutions. However, the mere existence of a technical platform comprised of experts from the main institutions concerned by the TSA project does not guarantee that this body will be operational. Steps must therefore be taken to assign the aforementioned institutions with their respective functions and to appoint an expert to head the Project;

- being a complex tool by nature, the TSA must be tackled from a medium / long-term perspective (after all, the first national accounting system did not come into existence overnight). Consequently, the corresponding technical assistance missions cannot be designed as a permanent initiative but, quite the contrary, as one that will, for the most part, be limited to one or two specific occasions in the TSA development process;

- at the risk of being repetitive, it is important to highlight the innovative nature of this project, which is precisely why there are so few experts who are actually qualified to resolve each and every aspect of its development. Moreover, many of the questions that may be raised by the experts responsible for the TSA in a given country will only be able to be answered by a limited number of experts who have either resolved or had to come to grips with the same questions at an earlier stage. Consequently, the members of this select group of experts (most of whom are attached to the National Statistical Offices) are the only individuals who are qualified to provide responses to these questions.

1.2. Basic documentation for statistical support missions in the field of statistics


13. In terms of describing the STS, mention was made of the different dossier models WTO has designed for each of the six different types of statistical
operations possible (statistics derived from surveys, censuses/directories, statistics derived from administrative procedures, statistical publications, statistical syntheses and databases), which should be structured in three sections:

(a) Specific statistics and administrative sources for tourism demand;
(b) Statistics on the use and occupancy of tourism accommodation establishments;
(c) Specific statistics and administrative sources for tourism supply.

14. The aforementioned document subsequently specifies that «the STS diagnosis could be structured as follows:

A. General appraisal
B. Main indicators available
C. Identification of improvements in available operations
D. Identification of new tourism operations:
   D.1. Relative to statistical infrastructure (mainly definitions, classifications and directories)
   D.2. From the perspective of demand
   D.3. From the perspective of supply» (paragraph 5.6).

15. To facilitate the preparation of documentation on the various elements comprising the STS, the Secretariat has designed a set of standard forms that will be presented to the National Tourism Administration for completion by one of its experts and/or any other institutions that compile tourism statistics, or more general-type bodies whose inputs are indispensable for analysing the economic impacts of tourism.

1.3. The supporting measures required for fielding missions: the need for a new approach

16. Our experience in recent months has strengthened our conviction that the supporting measures presently available to consultants on technical support missions are inadequate in terms of strengthening the development of national Systems of Tourism Statistics from a TSA perspective. We therefore believe that the creation of new types of supporting measures is the sine qua non for streamlining these missions.

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1A substantial effort has been made to publish a set of documents that can be used as backup measures for missions and seminars. The list of documents published to date is as follows:
- Tourism Satellite Account (TSA): Recommended Methodological Framework
- General guidelines for developing the Tourism Satellite Account (TSA):
  - Volume 1: Measuring Total Tourism Demand
  - Volume 2: Measuring Tourism Supply
- Data collection and analysis for tourism management, marketing and planning (in English only)
- WTO proposal of a general questionnaire to estimate tourism expenditure associated to inbound tourism
- General guidelines for using data on international air-passenger traffic for tourism analysis (Joint WTO/IATA project)
This section refers to four projects that, in the opinion of the Department of Statistics, can bring about the required changes.

1.3.1. Development of a course on tourism statistics in CD-Rom format

17. WTO has developed a project entitled «Basic references on Tourism Statistics» in CD-Rom format, whose contents, with slight modifications, will be made available on WTO’s web site as of 1 October, free of charge.

18. Steps are presently being taken to create a course on tourism statistics, also in CD-Rom format, which draws on the work conducted and experience acquired during the course of the various regional seminars on tourism statistics and tourism satellite accounts. Needless to say, the most refined format corresponds to the seminar that was held in Amman, Jordan. The structuring and ordering of the themes dealt with in this seminar, along with their presentation in «power point», was substantially enhanced by the experience we acquired during the course of the five previous regional seminars.

19. This project has been devised along the lines of a «teach-yourself» course on tourism statistics and draws both on the material presented at the Amman seminar and on the aforementioned project, «Basic references on Tourism Statistics».

   Its aim is therefore to enable statistical experts to update their knowledge in the field of tourism statistics –via the Internet and free of charge– and to obtain answers to the most frequently asked questions relative to the concepts, definitions and classifications used in this sphere.

1.3.2. Design of an Internet-based statistical consultancy network

20. In a relatively short period of time, the doubts existing relative to TSA development per se will presumably spark a whole new string of demands for technical support missions. We therefore need to anticipate events by devising supporting measures that are geared to minimizing the length of these support missions, our aim being to try and extend this type of assistance to all the countries concerned since it will doubtless encompass a broad range of queries being raised by many experts in various countries.

21. In an initial phase (2002/2004), this service should be focused on a limited number of countries; the experience we acquire along the way will obviously be our best guide as to the steps we need to take to bring this communication tool into widespread use.
The countries that will initially be provided with this service (approximately 45) correspond to a group that tallies with each of the following categories:

- countries that dispose of a TSA,
- countries that expect to dispose of a broadly developed TSA in the period 2001/2003, and
- countries that have recently conducted studies on the economic importance of tourism.

WTO has already identified these countries on the basis of the replies received to two questionnaires sent out to all the Organization’s member States in the last twelve months.

22. The Department of Statistics has held talks with the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) with a view to weighing up the possibility of obtaining its technical support for this project, which also requires the backing of the UN Regional Agencies. With regard to the human resources required to implement this project, steps must be taken to strengthen WTO’s group of consultants with the addition of national experts with TSA experience.

23. From an operational perspective, it is proposed that WTO act as the body responsible for receiving all these questions and that the Statistics Department assume responsibility for taking one or several of the following initiatives: seeking additional specifications from the country that formulated the questions, directly responding to some of them, circulating the most technically complex questions to one consultant and seeking a second consultant’s opinion of the initial response, seeking general comments from the UN Regional Agency corresponding to the country that formulated the questions.

1.3.3. Design of the document «Collection of training materials for the preparation of a TSA»

24. As mentioned above, WTO has published various texts in relation to the development of the TSA project, although it obviously still lacks the experience required to produce manuals that will serve as widespread tools of reference.

This new project should be understood from a dual perspective:

- as a general backup tool for technical support missions; in other words, it should contain the required methodological references accompanied by a set of practical guidelines, and
- as a project that will draw on the experience acquired in the course of implementing other types of initiatives, more specifically the development of the new statistical consultancy service relative to the development of the TSA (see 1.3.2.), and the organization of the Regional Workshops mentioned in section 1.3.4. below.
25. In principle, this document will have to be updated on a regular basis with new materials and information drawn from experiences in the field. This document will not therefore be considered as a formal publication but as a supporting measure whose contents will be circulated by the various consultants during the course of their missions. These consultants will be responsible for selecting the materials they disseminate on the basis of the nature of their missions.

1.3.4. Creation of Regional Workshops in relation with the Tourism Satellite Account

26. There is growing consensus that the Regional Seminars hitherto organized relative to tourism statistics for the preparation of the Tourism Satellite Account should be followed by the organization of more practical encounters designed to enable the countries concerned to report on the progress they have made from the perspective of their respective national Systems of Tourism Statistics and, where appropriate, from a TSA perspective.

This requires a switch of focus both with regard to the organization of these workshops and the subject matter they deal with, insofar as it will fall to the participants (at least some of them) to present papers on their respective experiences in relation to a set of previously selected subjects.

27. WTO has established a cooperation agreement with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the Tourism Secretariat of the Kingdom of Spain with a view to organizing regional workshops in the period 2001/2002. The experience gained from the implementation of this initiative will provide a general basis for structuring future initiatives of this type.

28. This project should be envisaged:

- as a platform for meetings between experts from the various institutions concerned with the development of the TSA project (National Tourism Administrations, Central Banks and National Statistical Offices, plus other possible candidates), providing them with a vehicle for sharing their experiences and forging cooperation links at sub-regional level; and

- as an opportunity for educating the educators in the various regions in which these workshops take place. In other words, this project will also be designed in such a way as to consolidate a network of experts who are familiar with the TSA project in the various regions, with the aim of enabling WTO to call on them to conduct technical support missions in the countries of these regions.
1.4. The typology of technical support missions in the field of statistics

29. As explained in the previous point, the new backup measures that are being proposed should be understood from a twofold perspective:

- as new initiatives designed to streamline the development of the TSA project throughout the different phases of its implementation;
- as a complementary element of these missions, designed to provide the countries in question with ongoing technical assistance from WTO.

30. The aim of this type of mission is presently limited to promoting the development of the respective national Systems of Tourism Statistics from the perspective of embarking on the preparation of a TSA, in the case of the countries that wish to do so. As noted in section 1.3.2. above, the questions raised and decisions required with regard to the development of the TSA will presumably spark a new string of demands for technical support missions.

31. We would therefore classify these types of missions as:

- missions to improve the national System of Tourism Statistics and to provide backup for the preparation of the TSA project (type 1);
- missions to resolve technical aspects relative to the preparation of the TSA (type 2).

From this dual perspective and bearing in mind that the number of countries requesting type-1 missions will continue to increase, the Department of Statistics believes that it is indispensable to establish a specific set of rules for each type of mission.

32. Applying the same rationale that underpinned the organization of the Regional Seminars (in the sense that it would have been impossible to organize six seminars in twelve months without the establishment of a general structure right from the outset), we believe that it will be impossible to meet these demands unless advance steps are taken to systematize the requirements and procedures governing the organization, preparation and development of these missions, their content and the technical backup measures that will be available to the consultant.

But this approach to «standardizing» the organization of these missions has also been fuelled by our conviction that it is only by doing so that we will be able to guarantee that each mission is coherently focused and that common materials are provided, and, as a result, that we can progressively strengthen the mass of knowledge required to enable us to act as the natural spearhead of the TSA project at worldwide level.
1.4.1. Missions to improve the System of Tourism Statistics and to provide backup in terms of preparing the TSA project (type 1)

33. The document «TSA: a strategic project for the World Tourism Organization», approved by the Executive Council in November 2000, clearly establishes a general framework for conducting these types of missions (see Section V). This framework encompasses the logical sequence of measures that must be developed –identifying available information sources and making the corresponding diagnosis are the basic tasks that must be undertaken prior to tackling a feasibility study of the TSA in a given country– and certain basic requirements (such as the existence of an inter-institutional platform).

34. This document, however, makes no mention of the project leader, although it stands to reason that someone ought to act in this capacity in a project requiring an inter-institutional platform. And in this particular case, there is no doubt that an expert capable of leading the process will be required, even if only in its initial phase.

35. It is precisely on the basis of the experience acquired in recent months that the Department of Statistics has submitted the following proposal: once a provisional version of the feasibility study (prepared under the guidance of the project chief) is made available, it will fall to the WTO consultant to evaluate this study and provide the national authorities with his suggestions regarding the TSA project that needs to be developed in the country in question. In other words, the mission should only take place once the experts from the country in question have submitted the required set of information.

The document approved by the Executive Council specifies what this feasibility study should consist of. Broadly speaking, it should include a description of available statistics and the corresponding diagnosis (referred to in section 1.2), and certain additional considerations relative to the TSA project per se.

36. There is a very simple explanation for proposing this course of action: it would not make sense for the consultant to spend part of his mission compiling this type of data when the persons best qualified to undertake this task are the national experts. But this proposal also responds to the firm conviction that the best way of guaranteeing that the process of strengthening tourism statistics and preparing the TSA continues to gain momentum is for these same national experts (from the institutions comprising the inter-institutional platform set up for the development of the TSA project) to bend over backwards to contribute their experience and shoulder a leading role in this project right from the outset.
1.4.2. Missions to resolve technical aspects relative to the preparation of the TSA (type 2)

37. Although the Internet-based statistical consultancy service mentioned in section 1.3.2. of this document has been designed to complement these types of missions, it is quite likely that it will constitute an alternative, at least in the early stages.

38. In the medium term, these missions would be limited to a small number of countries, which means that their implementation should be based on highly selective criteria. In all events, the proposed statistical consultancy network should be operative before these missions are actually launched.