The IMF Data Mapper – New Features and Potential to Share with Other Statistical Agencies

The IMF launched the first version of the IMF Data Mapper on its external website in mid-October 2007 to coincide with the release of its World Economic Outlook (WEO) data (see http://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/index.php). The IMF Data Mapper is an interactive data visualization tool that provides an intuitive way to access the IMF’s key data. You can select data from individual countries or for regional and other groups, using the world map or a pull down menu. The tool immediately displays the selected data in chart form. The map and charts are always fully interactive. For example, sliding the time axis on a line chart changes the shadings on the map to reflect the underlying data at a different time. The data available through the tool dates from 1980 to the present date and users have the option to change the parameters of the line chart to focus on a specific data range. The selected information can be printed or exported to other applications in the form of chart or map images.

The data available through the tool is gradually expanding to include additional variables as well as other Fund databases, including the Balance of Payments (BOP) data, Government Finance Statistics (GFS) data, Regional Economic Outlook (REO) data and Global Financial Stability Report data. In addition, the IMF is working with the OECD on a joint product including the OECD’s Main Economic Indicators. The IMF Data Mapper will also be made available from the Economic Data Warehouse (IMF.Stat).

The presentation will provide an overview of the features of the tool. It will also describe how this tool was developed, as the effort to develop this tool occurred in close collaboration between the software vendor (Mapping Worlds, a Dutch company) and the IMF’s Data Visualization Working Group comprising of representatives from various departments (External Relations, Research, Statistics, Research and Technology Services). We will also explain how this is the first step in the context of a larger data dissemination capital project for improving the way the Fund disseminates its important data. In this context, the IMF Data Mapper will also be made available from the Economic Data Warehouse (IMF.Stat), which is based on the OECD.Stat data warehouse system - in fact, future developments are now done in close cooperation between the two organizations.-

The next release of the application in the spring of 2008 will contain enhanced chart capabilities as well as enhanced presentation features – allowing to link key messages to specific map/chart combinations – and basic analytical features – allowing the user to compare variables over time in a playback mode -. We will be able to demonstrate these features at the time of the Seminar in Stockholm.

Finally, we are currently evaluating several alternatives to share the Data Mapper with other statistical agencies including by developing a web service that could fetch data from other agencies/organizations, and the presentation will include a proposal on how to move forward.