

**Oman: Report on the Observance of Standards and Codes—Data Module,
Response by the Authorities, and Detailed Assessments Using
the Data Quality Assessment Framework**

This Report on the Observance of Standards and Codes on Data Module for Oman was prepared by a staff team of the International Monetary Fund as background documentation for the periodic consultation with the member country. It is based on the information available at the time it was completed on December 1, 2005. The views expressed in this document are those of the staff team and do not necessarily reflect the views of the government of Oman or the Executive Board of the IMF.

The Response by the Authorities on this report and the Detailed Assessments Using the Data Quality Assessment Framework (DQAF) are also included.

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**International Monetary Fund
Washington, D.C.**

INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND

OMAN

Report on the Observance of Standards and Codes (ROSC)—Data Module

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December 1, 2005

The Report on the Observance of Standards and Codes (ROSC) data module provides an assessment of Oman's macroeconomic statistics against the recommendations of the General Data Dissemination System (GDDS) complemented by an assessment of data quality based on the IMF's Data Quality Assessment Framework (DQAF July 2003). The DQAF lays out internationally accepted practices in statistics, ranging from good governance in data producing agencies to practices specific to datasets.

The datasets covered in this report are national accounts, consumer price index, government finance, monetary, and balance of payments statistics. The agencies that compile the datasets assessed in this report are the Ministry of National Economy, the Ministry of Finance, and the Central Bank of Oman.

The datasets to which this report pertains can be accessed in print and on the Internet:

Ministry of National Economy: <http://www.moneoman.gov.om>
Ministry of Finance: <http://www.mof.gov.om>
Central Bank of Oman: <http://www.cbo-oman.org>

This report is based on information provided prior to and during a staff mission from February 8–23, 2004 and publicly available information. The mission team was headed by Mr. Eduardo Valdivia-Velarde, and included Mr. Thomas Alexander, Ms. Colleen Cardillo, Mr. Subramanian Sriram (all STA), Mr. David Hughes and Mrs. Sagé de Clerck (experts), and Ms. Christian Dimaandal (STA-Administrative Assistant).

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ACRONYMS

<i>1993 SNA</i>	<i>System of National Accounts 1993</i>
<i>BPM5</i>	<i>Balance of Payments Manual, fifth edition</i>
CBO	Central Bank of Oman
COICOP	Classification of Individual Consumption by Purpose
CPI	Consumer Price Index
DGES	Directorate General of Economic Statistics
DQAF	Data Quality Assessment Framework
DSBB	Dissemination Standards Bulletin Board
GDDS	General Data Dissemination System
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GFS	Government Finance Statistics
<i>GFSM 1986</i>	<i>A Manual on Government Finance Statistics, 1986</i>
<i>GFSM 2001</i>	<i>Government Finance Statistics Manual 2001</i>
HIES	Household Income and Expenditure Survey
IIP	International Investment Position
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ITRS	International Transactions Reporting System
<i>MFSM</i>	<i>Monetary and Financial Statistics Manual</i>
MOF	Ministry of Finance
MONE	Ministry of National Economy
<i>NAB</i>	<i>National Accounts Bulletin</i>
<i>Reserve Template</i>	<i>International Reserves and Foreign Currency Liquidity: Guidelines for a Data Template</i>
ROSC	Report on the Observance of Standards and Codes
STA	Statistics Department, IMF

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Report on the Observance of Standards and Codes (ROSC) data module provides a review of Oman's data dissemination practices against the IMF's General Data Dissemination System (GDDS), complemented by the in-depth assessment of the quality of the national accounts, consumer price index, government finance, monetary, and balance of payments statistics. The agencies that compile the statistics assessed in this report are the Ministry of National Economy (MONE), the Ministry of Finance (MOF), and the Central Bank of Oman (CBO). A mission from the Statistics Department carried out the assessment during a visit to Muscat, Oman, during February 8–23, 2004.

Omani authorities have strongly committed to adhering to internationally accepted standards and good practices in statistics. The authorities have taken several important measures in recent years, such as (1) implementing the latest international statistical standards (national accounts, prices, and balance of payments) and/or moving in that direction (government finance and monetary statistics), (2) participating in the GDDS and regularly updating the GDDS metadata, (3) creating a strong legal framework and institutional environment for compiling statistics, and (4) identifying plans for improvement and working toward their implementation.

Omani macroeconomic statistics are broadly adequate to conduct effective surveillance. Nevertheless, the mission identified shortcomings in some statistical practices that may detract from the accurate and timely analysis of economic and financial policies. The mission made recommendations to further enhance Oman's adherence to international statistical standards. Some of these recommendations could be addressed with the current resources. However, more substantive improvements in the quality of statistics would require a commitment for additional resources. The mission reached the following main conclusions:

- **GDDS:** Oman adheres to the recommendations for coverage, periodicity, and timeliness of most GDDS data categories. However, full adherence to the GDDS recommendations will also require (1) compiling production indices and data on unemployment, (2) improving data coverage on employment and wages/earnings of the private sector, (3) disseminating central government debt, as well as public and publicly guaranteed external debt/debt service schedule, (4) improving periodicity of the consumer price index (CPI), and (5) improving the timeliness of balance of payments core indicators—although comprehensive balance of payments data meet the timeliness recommended in the GDDS. Oman also disseminates some of the GDDS encouraged data indicators.
- **Prerequisites of quality:** Several laws such as the *Banking Law*, the *Financial Law*, and the *Statistical Law* provide a good overall legal and institutional environment for the statistical activity in Oman. The legal framework and institutional arrangements are broadly adequate for the collection and dissemination of statistics by the agencies in their areas of responsibilities. The laws establish mandatory response, procedures for protecting confidentiality, and penalties for nonresponse/misreporting and for

breach of confidentiality. Effective data sharing arrangements are in place. Consultations with users, in particular, from the nongovernmental sector, should be undertaken more regularly for all datasets.

- **Assurances of integrity:** In general, agencies demonstrate professionalism, pursue transparency in their statistical policies and practices, and provide ethical guidelines to their staff. The public trusts that macroeconomic statistics produced in Oman are objective. Selection of data sources and methods is governed solely by statistical considerations. Government statistics only cover budgetary accounts. The extent of the government's internal access to statistics prior to their release for certain datasets is not disseminated.
- **Methodological soundness:** The methodologies for macroeconomic statistics broadly follow internationally accepted guidelines. Government accounts should exclude the gross transactions of market producers but include the net results of their operations. Improvements are also needed in the coverage of national accounts and balance of payments statistics. Some classification issues for GFS, monetary, and balance of payments statistics need to be addressed.
- **Accuracy and reliability:** In general, source data are comprehensive, timely, and adequately detailed to compile statistics. Nonetheless, data sources for balance of payments statistics need to be expanded. Statistical techniques are broadly consistent with international standards, but some statistical techniques for national accounts, CPI, and balance of payments statistics should be improved. Revision studies to inform statistical processes are not prepared regularly.
- **Serviceability:** The disseminated data appear to broadly meet users' needs, as indicated by the results of a recent user survey.¹ There is room for improving the consistency between monetary statistics and GFS. In general, the periodicity and timeliness of Omani statistics are satisfactory although the timeliness of central government debt should be improved.
- **Accessibility:** Opportunities exist for expanding the accessibility of macroeconomic data and metadata for most datasets. In particular, statistics should be made available to all users simultaneously, and advance release calendars with precise dates for release are needed. Assistance to users needs to be improved in all statistical agencies, in particular by providing sector-specific contact information.

¹ With assistance of the authorities, an informal survey was conducted among government agencies, banks, nonbank enterprises, training institutes, embassies, and regional international institutions. The results of the survey are presented in Appendix III of the accompanying document presenting the detailed assessments.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The data dissemination module of this Report on the Observance of Standards and Codes (ROSC) summarizes Oman's practices on the coverage, periodicity, and timeliness of several data categories against the IMF's General Data Dissemination System (GDDS).² It is complemented by an assessment of the quality of national accounts, consumer price index (CPI), government finance, monetary, and balance of payments statistics using the July 2003 vintage of the Data Quality Assessment Framework (DQAF) developed by the IMF's Statistics Department (STA). The quality of the producer price index is not assessed because the index is not disseminated, although it is at an advanced stage of development. This report is based on information provided prior to and during a staff mission from February 8–23, 2004,³ publicly available information, feedback from data users through a users' survey conducted prior to the mission, and meetings held by the mission with key respondents.

2. Section II provides an assessment of Oman's data dissemination practices against the GDDS. Section III presents a summary assessment of the quality of the principal macroeconomic datasets, following the dataset-specific assessment frameworks (included in the accompanying detailed assessments volume). Finally, Section IV sets out recommendations for further improvements in Oman's statistics.

II. DATA DISSEMINATION PRACTICES AND THE GENERAL DATA DISSEMINATION SYSTEM

3. Oman's data dissemination practices are assessed against four GDDS dimensions—(1) data, (2) quality, (3) integrity, and (4) access. Where shortcomings are found, the focus is on the plans for improvements posted on the IMF's Dissemination Standards Bulletin Board (DSBB). Metadata were first posted on the DSBB in June 2002 and updated as of July 2003 (and September 2003 for national accounts statistics).

4. Macroeconomic statistics in Oman are mainly produced by the following three institutions: (1) the Ministry of National Economy (MONE) is responsible for the national accounts, prices, and other statistics; (2) the Ministry of Finance (MOF) is responsible for statistics on the central government operations and central government debt; and (3) the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) is responsible for monetary and balance of payments statistics.

5. Access to macroeconomic data and socio-demographic indicators is provided through several publications and the following websites:

- Ministry of National Economy: <http://www.moneoman.gov.om>
- Ministry of Finance: <http://www.mof.gov.om>
- Central Bank of Oman: <http://www.cbo-oman.org>

² A detailed description of the GDDS can be found at <http://www.dsbb.imf.org>.

³ The mission team was headed by Mr. Eduardo Valdivia-Velarde and included Mr. Thomas Alexander, Ms. Colleen Cardillo, Mr. Subramanian Sriram (all STA), Mr. David Hughes and Mrs. Sagé de Clerck (experts), and Ms. Christian Dimaandal (STA—Assistant).

Data dimension: coverage, periodicity, and timeliness

6. Oman's core statistical frameworks adhere to the GDDS recommendations—except for the fiscal sector, regarding the timeliness of central government debt data, and for several core indicators (see Table 1). However, full adherence to the GDDS recommendations will also require (1) compiling production indices and data on unemployment; (2) improving data coverage on employment and wages/earnings of the private sector; (3) disseminating central government debt, as well as public and publicly guaranteed external debt/debt service schedule; (4) improving the periodicity of the national CPI; and (5) improving the timeliness of balance of payments core indicators—although comprehensive balance of payments data meet the timeliness recommended in the GDDS. Oman also disseminates some of the GDDS-encouraged data indicators (see Table 1).

Table 1. Oman: Overview of Current Practices Regarding Coverage, Periodicity, and Timeliness of Data Compared to the General Data Dissemination System

GDDS Data Category	Coverage (meets GDDS)	Periodicity		Timeliness		Comments
		GDDS	Oman	GDDS	Oman	
COMPREHENSIVE FRAMEWORK						
Real sector: National accounts	Yes	A	A	10–14 mths	8–9 mths	
Fiscal sector: Central government operations ¹	Yes	A	M	6–9 mths	45 days	See footnote ²
General government operations	Yes	A	M	6–9 mths	45 days	
Central government debt	Yes	A	M	6–9 mths	n.a.	
Financial sector: Broad money survey	Yes	M	M	2–3 mths	45 days	
External sector: Balance of payments	Yes	A	A	6–9 mths	7–8 mths	Data not compiled
International investment position	n.a.	A	n.a.	6–9 mths	n.a.	
DATA CATEGORIES AND INDICATORS						
Real Sector						
GDP (nominal and real)	Yes	A, Q	A, Q	6–9 mths	A: 8–9 mths Q: 2–3 mths	
Gross national income, capital formation, saving	Yes	A, Q	A, Q	6–9 mths	A: 8–9 mths Q: 2–3 mths	
Manufacturing or industrial production index/indices	n.a.	M	n.a.	6 wks	n.a.	Data not compiled ³
Primary commodity, agricultural, or other indices, as relevant	n.a.	M	n.a.	12 wks	n.a.	Data not compiled
Consumer price index	Yes	M	M	1–2 mths	M: 1 mth Q: 2 mths	Monthly (Muscat); Quarterly (national)
Producer price index	n.a.	M	n.a.	M	n.a.	Data not compiled ³
Employment	No ⁴	A	A, M	6–9 mths	A: 8–9 mths M: 1 mth	Data not compiled
Unemployment	n.a.	A	n.a.	6–9 mths	n.a.	
Wages/earnings (all sectors)	No ⁴	A	A	6–9 mths	8–9 mths	
Fiscal Sector						
Central government budgetary aggregates: revenue, expenditure, balance, and financing with breakdowns (debt holder, instrument, currency)	Yes	Q	A, Q, M	1 qtr	A: 11 mths Q: 8–10mths M: 45 days	
Interest payments	Yes	Q	A, Q, M	1 qtr	As above	

Table 1. Oman: Overview of Current Practices Regarding Coverage, Periodicity, and Timeliness of Data Compared to the General Data Dissemination System (concluded)

GDDS Data Category	Coverage (meets GDDS)	Periodicity		Timeliness		Comments
		GDDS	Oman	GDDS	Oman	
Central government debt: domestic and foreign debt, as relevant, with appropriate breakdowns (debt holder, instrument, currency)	Yes	A, Q	A, M	1–2 qtrs	n.a.	See footnote ²
<i>Government guaranteed debt</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>A, M</i>	<i>1–2 qtrs</i>	<i>n.a.</i>	<i>Data not disseminated</i>
Financial Sector						
Broad money and credit aggregates	Yes	M	M	1–3 mths	45 days	
Central bank aggregates	Yes	M	M	1–2 mths	45 days	
Short- and long-term government security rates, policy variable rate	Yes	M	M	... ⁵	45 days	
<i>Money or interbank market rates and a range of deposit and lending rates</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>...⁵</i>	<i>45 days</i>	
<i>Share price index, as relevant</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>...⁵</i>	<i>Same day</i>	Disseminated by Muscat Securities Market
External Sector						
Balance of payments aggregates	Yes	A, Q	A, Q	6 mths	A: 7–8 mths Q: n.a.	Q: <i>Data not disseminated</i>
Public and publicly guaranteed external debt outstanding, with maturity breakdown	No ⁶	Q	M	1–2 qtrs	n.a.	Data not disseminated
Public and publicly guaranteed debt service schedule	No ⁶	Twice yearly	M	3–6 mths	n.a.	Data not disseminated
<i>Private external debt not publicly guaranteed and debt service schedule</i>	<i>n.a.</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>n.a.</i>	<i>6–9 mths</i>	<i>n.a.</i>	<i>Data not compiled</i>
Gross official reserves denominated in U.S. dollars	Yes ⁷	M	M	1–4 wks	45 days	
<i>Reserve-related liabilities</i>	<i>n.a.</i>	<i>n.a.</i>	<i>n.a.</i>	<i>1–4 wks</i>	<i>n.a.</i>	<i>Data not compiled</i>
Total exports and total imports	Yes	M	M	8–12 wks	8–10 wks	
<i>Major commodity breakdowns with longer time lapse</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>8–12 wks</i>	<i>8–10 wks</i>	
Exchange rates: spot rates	Yes	D	D	High frequency publication	Same or next day	

Note: Italics indicate encouraged categories; “n.a.” means not applicable.

¹ In Oman, central government is equivalent to general government, owing to the absence of state governments and the inclusion of local governments (not regarded as separate levels of government) in central government accounts.

² Included only in IMF’s *Government Finance Statistics (GFS) Yearbook*. Monthly data are available upon request.

³ The MONE is at an advanced stage of compiling the index, and plans to disseminate it quarterly with a quarter lag.

⁴ Partial coverage of the private sector.

⁵ Dissemination as part of a high-frequency (e.g., monthly) publication.

⁶ Only central government and central government guaranteed external debt are included.

⁷ Foreign assets of the CBO.

Quality dimension

7. The assessment of the quality dimension of the GDDS is based on the dissemination of (1) documentation on methodology and data sources and (2) component detail and reconciliation with related data. Documentation on the methodology for macroeconomic statistics in Oman is available on the IMF’s DSBB website and periodically updated. However, only limited detailed documentation on concepts and methods is published by the data-producing institutions, and the DSBB is not publicized on their websites.

Integrity dimension

8. The GDDS recommends disclosure of the legal framework for the compilation and dissemination of data, including the confidentiality of the collected data. The legal framework and institutional arrangements under which most official statistics in Oman are compiled and disseminated support, to a large extent, the integrity of the statistical system, but this information is not sufficiently publicized. Information on the extent of the government's internal access to the data prior to their release to the public is not disseminated.

Access dimension

9. Ready and equal access to official statistics by all market participants is a fundamental requirement for the statistics to be regarded as a public good. This would be facilitated by (1) simultaneous release to all users and (2) dissemination of advance release calendars. In Oman, advance release calendars with specific dates for data release are not provided to users, although all institutions follow internal release schedules that are largely known by the public.

Plans for improvement

10. Plans for improving data quality are integral to the GDDS. The following comments are based on the information available on the IMF's DSBB website and comments provided by the authorities during the mission.

- In terms of the **national accounts** statistics, the MONE plans to disseminate a revised set of GDP estimates with a new base year of 2000, including independently calculated estimates of private final consumption expenditure. In addition, the scope of the accounts will be broadened to include capital accounts as well as supply and use tables for 2000–01.
- Regarding the **CPI**, the MONE plans to incorporate new weights, extend the coverage to be more representative of the whole country, publish a detailed methodological guide for the new CPI, and describe the impact of the new weights.
- In the area of **GFS**, the MOF plans to improve the recently established MOF website with the view to disseminating fiscal data (including annual central government debt data) and metadata. The MOF will continue to investigate the Integrated Financial System with the aim of improving the accounting system of government and of bringing accounting practices in line with current international standards and the *Government Finance Statistics Manual 2001 (GFSM 2001)*.
- Regarding **monetary statistics**, the CBO plans to present monetary survey data according to the classification recommended by the *Monetary and Financial Statistics Manual (MFSM)*, make advance release calendars available to the public, and give advance notice to the public of major changes in methodology.

- For the **external sector**, the CBO plans to improve the balance of payments coverage, mainly of the nonfinancial private sector, by introducing surveys; compile data on goods in line with the *Balance of Payments Manual*, fifth edition (*BPM5*); compile the international investment position (IIP) data; and give advance notice when major methodological changes occur.

III. SUMMARY ASSESSMENT OF DATA QUALITY

11. Interest in assessing the quality of data derives from the objectives of complementing the GDDS with a consideration of the quality of the data being disseminated and of focusing more closely on the quality of the data that underpins the surveillance of countries' economic policies. Against this background, STA has developed a tool to provide a structure and a common language to assess data quality. The DQAF comprises a generic framework⁴ and a set of dataset-specific frameworks. These frameworks cover five dimensions of data quality—assurances of integrity, methodological soundness, accuracy and reliability, serviceability, and accessibility—and a set of prerequisites.⁵

12. An assessment of five macroeconomic datasets (national accounts, CPI, government finance, monetary, and the balance of payments statistics)⁶ was conducted using the frame of reference provided by the dataset-specific DQAFs. The information resulting from the application of this framework to the Omani statistical system is presented below, following the structure of the July 2003 vintage of the DQAF. Conclusions are also presented in the form of standardized summary tables in which the assessment of data practices is made on a qualitative basis, using a four-part scale (Table 2 in this report and Tables 1–5 in the accompanying detailed assessments volume).

13. **In summary, Oman's macroeconomic statistics are broadly adequate for effective surveillance. Nevertheless, the mission identified shortcomings in some statistical practices that may detract from the accurate and timely analysis of economic and financial policies.**

Prerequisites of quality

This category in the DQAF identifies conditions within the agency in charge of producing statistics that have an impact on data quality. The elements within the category refer to the legal and institutional environment, resources, relevance, and other quality management.

⁴ Information on the DQAF can be found at the IMF's website on the "Data Quality Reference Site" (<http://dsbb.imf.org/Applications/web/dqrs/dqrshome/>).

⁵ The Generic Framework is shown in Appendix II of the accompanying detailed assessments volume to this report.

⁶ The producer price index is not part of the mission's assessment because the index is not currently disseminated, although it is at an advanced stage of development.

14. The *Statistical Law* (Royal Decree No. 29/2001, April 2001) provides a strong legal and institutional environment for the statistical activity in Oman. The law confers on the Directorate General of Economic Statistics (DGES) and Directorate General of Social Statistics of the **MONE** the responsibility of publishing statistics of national interest and authorizing statistical surveys. In addition, Article 4 of the law establishes that government units may collect and publish the statistical data in their areas of responsibility as approved in the annual statistical plan.

15. The *Statistical Law* creates the Statistical Advisory Committee,⁷ which is responsible for reviewing regulations under the law before MONE's approval, and coordinating statistical activities in Oman. This includes (1) approval of annual plans prepared by the MONE and other agencies and (2) determining priorities for studies, surveys, and census according to the various government units' needs, among others. The law also establishes that government units, private entities, and individuals are obligated to provide information on request to the DGES and/or other government agencies concerning issues under their respective jurisdictions. Penalties for noncompliance have been established; however, in practice, moral persuasion and a rigorous follow-up process are followed. The law establishes strong procedures for protecting confidentiality, including severe penalties for breach of confidentiality (see accompanying detailed assessments volume for details).

16. Resources available at the **MONE** for compiling national accounts and CPI statistics are adequate. Staff are well trained and motivated, and the number is sufficient for the program. Computing systems are modern and efficient, and the availability of a computer network allows for the seamless transfer of tasks among individuals. CPI compilation is fully automated from its initial capture on hand-held computers. Improvements and efficiency are constantly sought, using outside experts whenever necessary. The relevance of the national accounts and price statistics is assessed through regular meetings with major public sector users; however, there is no systemic process to solicit feedback from the private sector. The DGES has instituted procedures to focus on quality management. Staff are aware of the need to uphold quality. The DGES has recruited external experts to review organizational practices as part of an ongoing process to streamline procedures and improve efficiency.

17. The legal and institutional framework supports the compilation of fiscal data of government by the **MOF** through the *Financial Law* (Royal Decree 47/98, 1998). The law clearly sets out the responsibilities of the MOF and other ministries to record all transactions of government in the accounting system of government and to publish such results within a specified timeframe. Well-established institutional arrangements ensure that data sharing and coordination are adequate and prevent disclosure of confidential data.

⁷ The committee is headed by the Secretary General of the MONE and includes the CBO's Executive President, eight Under-Secretaries of relevant ministries, and representatives from the Omani Royal Police and the Sultan Qaboos University.

18. Resources at the MOF are adequate to perform the ongoing tasks, although additional resources could facilitate additional development work. The staff are well trained for current needs with a high priority placed on continued in-house and external training. A computer network provides for all the hardware and software needs to facilitate an integrated financial management system. Financial needs are provided for within a five-year development plan. Strict legal requirements ensure the efficient use of resources. The relevance of fiscal data is illustrated by the MOF, line ministries, and other policymakers (including the CBO) who use these data while determining, monitoring, and evaluating fiscal policy. However, data needs of nongovernmental users are not determined. Quality management is well exercised by the MOF, including measures to control and audit all relevant processes.

19. The **CBO** engages in statistical work on monetary and balance of payments statistics under its legislative authority to gather data from financial institutions. The legal and institutional environment is largely set out in the *Banking Law* (Royal Decree No. 114/2000, December 2000), which provides the CBO with the authority to collect data from banks but does not explicitly mandate the compilation and publication of statistics. The *Statistical Law* additionally supports the CBO data collection process from the nonfinancial sector. The CBO has a tradition of compiling and disseminating monetary and balance of payments statistics as a public service. Reporting by banks is mandatory, and confidentiality is strongly protected under the *Banking Law*. Existing data-sharing arrangements with other government institutions are well-coordinated.

20. Resources at the CBO are adequate to compile monetary and balance of payments statistics. Staff are well trained and motivated, and computer resources are suitable for statistical needs. However, with the recent introduction of surveys for balance of payments and IIP data collection, and with more surveys planned for the coming years, the number of staff working in balance of payments statistics needs to be augmented. The CBO monitors the relevance of monetary statistics through meetings with bankers and media requests, although no regular feedback from nongovernmental users is obtained. In 2002, a Balance of Payments Committee (comprising government officials and one representative from the Chamber of Commerce and Industry) was established to review developments relevant for statistical and economic analysis. There are no regularly-scheduled consultations seeking the balance of payments data needs of other users. The CBO has well-established processes to focus on quality management, such as measures to monitor and review the quality of ongoing activities, and to seek outside expertise to guide the quality of its statistics.

Assurances of integrity

This dimension identifies features that support firm adherence to objectivity in the collection, compilation, and dissemination of statistics so as to maintain users' confidence. Elements refer to the professionalism and ethical standards that should guide policies and practices, which should be reinforced by their transparency.

21. Professionalism is highly valued within the **MONE**. The DGES is responsible for producing the national accounts and the CPI and it is reportedly able to carry out these statistical functions without any interferences from any other government units. Staff are

recruited and promoted purely on ability. A formal and continuous training program exists for the staff. Staff take appropriate corrective action in all cases of misinterpretation of the statistics. Transparency of the statistical system is promoted through the wide dissemination of information on the terms and conditions for compiling the statistics. Copies of the *Statistical Law* are provided to respondents (both in Arabic and English), and the relevant articles on the confidentiality of the statistics are cited in the correspondence. However, the extent of internal government access to statistics prior to their release to the public is not publicly identified (although prior access is acknowledged in the GDDS metadata). The DGES provides users with advance notice of impending changes to the methodology and source data before the revised estimates are published. Rules on staff behavior are in place and staff are fully aware of the need to uphold ethical standards. New staff are required to sign a statement to the effect that they will comply with the rules of the Statistical Law and of the civil service.

22. A high degree of professionalism is maintained within the **MOF**. Professionalism is actively promoted and supported through formal and on-the-job training of staff and continued participation in seminars, courses, and workshops arranged by regional and international organizations. Processes and activities in the work place also promote a culture of professionalism through peer review and mentoring. Government statistics only cover government budgetary accounts. Transparency in the compilation of fiscal statistics is promoted by wide availability of the *Financial Law* and regulations related to the budgeting and planning process. The MOF issues financial circulars every year to spell out budgeting processes and the terms and conditions for compiling government accounts. These circulars are published in the government gazette. However, the extent of internal government access to statistics prior to their release to the public is not publicly identified (although prior access is acknowledged in the GDDS metadata). The maintenance of ethical standards is supported through the legal framework applicable to all government employees. Government employees are subject to a code of conduct. Sound management and cultural practices, as well as mentoring, ensure that staff are regularly reminded of the behavior expected of them.

23. Staff at the **CBO** maintain a high degree of professionalism. Statutory provisions in the *Banking Law* provide the legal basis for institutional independence in compiling statistics. Professionalism is actively promoted and supported within the organization. The recruitment and training process furthers professionalism. The CBO monitors media reports and responds to erroneous interpretations of statistics as needed. Transparency is fostered by wide availability of the *Banking Law* and the *Statistical Law*, but the extent of internal government access to statistics prior to their release to the public is not publicly identified (although prior access is acknowledged in the GDDS metadata). Data on monetary and credit aggregates are provided to the MONE for publication and for data production within the MONE. Apart from the detailed information available through the DSBB website, there is limited written information available to the public about the terms and conditions under which the statistical series are compiled and disseminated. Advance notice of major changes in methodology is not usually given. Clear and comprehensive ethical standards are set out in *Staff Regulations* (1995). The staff are also required to sign a “Declaration of Secrecy” when they join the CBO.

Methodological soundness

Methodological soundness refers to the application of international standards, guidelines, and agreed practices. Application of such standards, which are specific to the dataset, is indicative of the soundness of the data and fosters international comparability. Elements refer to the basic building blocks of concepts and definitions, scope, classification and sectorization, and basis for recording.

24. The **national accounts** generally follow the concepts and definitions of the *System of National Accounts 1993 (1993 SNA)* introduced in Oman in 1997. The scope of the statistics does not include all the accounts and tables considered by the International Secretariat Working Group on National Accounts as required for implementing the *1993 SNA*. Accounts beyond the generation of income accounts and regular supply and use tables are compiled but not published. The production and assets boundaries are in accordance with the *1993 SNA* where feasible. These boundaries exclude items with no major impact on the overall accounts or which measurement may be considered impractical. Internationally recommended classification systems are widely used, except for the Classification of Individual Consumption by Purpose (COICOP). However, the national classification is fully compatible with the United Nations classification. The basis for recording accords with the recommendations of the *1993 SNA*, with the exception of government transactions, recorded on a cash basis rather than on an accrual basis.

25. The **CPI** follows the concepts and definitions of international good practice. The scope of the CPI covers the consumption expenditures of all noninstitutional resident households, including the imputed expenditure on housing services of owner-occupied dwellings. The index for the whole country is only produced quarterly. Transactions use a national classification that maps to COICOP. The basis of recording fully conforms to international standards.

26. For the **GFS**, the concepts and definitions used for the compilation of the fiscal accounts of Oman's civil ministries, embedded in the charts of accounts of these ministries, are broadly consistent with the guidelines of *A Manual on Government Finance Statistics, 1986 (GFSM 1986)*. The scope of GFS only covers central government budgetary accounts and central government debt. This is a significant departure from international standards. The Omani pension funds are virtually excluded from the coverage of the GFS. Only government contributions to these pension funds are recorded in the GFS. The summary table of major GFS components is disseminated on a monthly and quarterly basis, but the full scope of detailed tables is presented at the time of the annual release of GFS data. The classification of transactions of the civil ministries broadly follows the international standard; however, the total expenditure of non-civil units is recorded as current expenditure without details. The fiscal accounts record grants as financing, lending as expenditure, and repayment as revenues. Nevertheless, when data are reported to the IMF, the transactions are reclassified according to *GFSM 1986* guidelines. The sectorization of government units broadly follows international guidelines; however, there are major departures such as the inclusion in the central government budgetary accounts of municipalities and of gross transactions of several agencies that market goods and services on a large scale. As indicated by *GFSM 1986*,

transactions are presented on a cash basis of recording and government debt data at face value. Although fiscal data are not presented in accordance with the gross/netting procedures indicated by the *GFSM 1986*, adjustments are made before the final release of GFS data in the *GFS Yearbook*.

27. The concepts and definitions of **monetary statistics** broadly conform to the guidelines of the *MFSM*. The scope is broadly in line with the *MFSM*, except that a small private specialized bank currently monitored by the authorities is not included in the monetary accounts. Classification and sectorization are mostly in line with *MFSM* guidelines. Nevertheless, the various pension fund deposits with the commercial banks are indistinguishably included within the private sector deposits; accrued interest on certain financial instruments is not included with the underlying instruments (i.e., certificates of deposits on the CBO's and commercial banks' balance sheets, deposits on the CBO balance sheet, and treasury bills held by the commercial banks on their balance sheets); and a sectoral breakdown of private sector deposits with commercial banks is not available. The basis for recording follows the *MFSM*, except that treasury bills are recorded at face value.

28. Concepts and definitions of the **balance of payments** statistics broadly conform to *BPM5* (in 2000, data were revised back to 1996). The scope is generally consistent with international standards. However, gaps in coverage remain—the main gap involves financial transactions of the nonfinancial private sector. Classification and sectorization are generally consistent with internationally accepted standards, although some banking transactions are misclassified among the direct, portfolio, and other investment categories, and some balance of payments items need to be in line with *BPM5* and the *International Reserves and Foreign Currency Liquidity: Guidelines for a Data Template (Reserve Template)*. In most cases, the basis of recording for balance of payments transactions is at market prices. In general, transactions are recorded on an accrual basis; however, interest on public sector external debt is not recorded on an accrual basis.

Accuracy and reliability

Accuracy and reliability identifies features that contribute to the goal that data portray reality. Elements refer to identified features of the source data, statistical techniques, and supporting assessments and validation.

29. The DGES derives the source data for **national accounts** estimates from a comprehensive data collection program comprising annual establishment surveys, administrative data, financial records of public corporations, and a recent household budget survey. The data cover most of the country's economic activity, which is based principally on petroleum- and natural gas-related industries. Staff continuously update the business register using mainly information from administrative records. The data collection program covers all establishments engaged in petroleum activities and financial intermediation, as well as other large establishments as determined by industry-specific criteria. In addition, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry annually conducts a survey covering about 900 manufacturing establishments. The source data are timely, as the DGES has instituted a rigorous follow-up program. The assessment of the source data reflects international good practices. Staff

rigorously identify and track errors in the field as well as during the processing of the data. They cross-check the data from surveys against data from administrative sources for consistency. The statistical techniques are generally satisfactory. The estimates are derived at a sufficient level of detail, and the double-deflation method is widely used to derive the constant price estimates. However, the base year (1988) is outdated. Further, final consumption expenditure is derived as a residual. Estimates are not adjusted for holding gains or losses accruing on inventories. The assessment and validation of statistical outputs are not conducted routinely and systematically. A supply and use framework is not used to investigate discrepancies; and the existence or extent of possible bias in the estimates is not known. The DGES does not conduct formal revision studies but assesses the differences between the initial estimates and the final estimates on an ad hoc basis.

30. DGES staff collect the weights and price source data for the **CPI** from comprehensive surveys. However, the weights obtained from the 1990/91 Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) are considered to be out of date. A comprehensive update of the items for which prices are collected was undertaken in 1995, but the weights were not changed. Assessment of source data is impressive with comprehensive computerized and manual checks of all source data. The results are incorporated into the manual for price collectors. In general, statistical techniques are sound, but improvements could be made in some specific areas related to index construction. The assessment and validation of the outlet and price samples are of a high quality. Revision studies are undertaken if new weights are introduced. The prices in the CPI are not normally revised.

31. The MOF obtains source data for the **GFS** on Ministries and units from comprehensive and fully electronic and hard copy administrative records. All source data are received timely. The regular and continuous assessment of source data was automated in the accounting system of government with additional controls mandated by the audit laws and regular reconciliation practices. Statistical techniques employed in the compilation of fiscal data are, to a large extent, automated and dependent solely on actual records. Strict legal requirements and well-established management practices have led to continued assessment and validation of intermediate data and statistical outputs. Staff investigate any statistical discrepancies in the output and introduce corrective measures to eliminate recurrence of the discrepancy. The well-documented audit trail serves as revision studies. Audit reports document the nature of any discrepancies discovered. All government entities are required to document the result of their internal investigation, remedial steps, and measures taken to avoid a reoccurrence of the contravention.

32. The source data for **monetary statistics** are the monthly balance sheet of the CBO and the individual monthly returns of the commercial banks. In general, the source data provide sufficient detail to classify sectors and instruments in line with the *MFSM*, but a detailed sectoral breakdown of private sector deposits with the commercial banks is not available. The source data are timely. Assessment of source data is generally sound. CBO staff cross-check data submitted by the commercial banks across different returns and changes over time. For any errors and out-of-trend changes, staff immediately contact the commercial banks for explanation and/or for revised data. Statistical techniques are sound, and electronic compilation procedures minimize compilation errors. The intermediate data

are assessed and validated against data from other returns obtained for other departments. There are no formal revision studies; however, sources of errors are investigated on an ad hoc basis. Data are considered final when first released.

33. Source data for balance of payments statistics are largely based on administrative data sources, although surveys were introduced recently. Existing sources provide reasonable, though not sufficient, coverage to compile comprehensive balance of payments statistics; the main gap involves financial transactions of the nonfinancial private sector. A need exists to expand the data sources, and efforts are underway to accomplish this. The data collection programs provide for the timely receipt of data. Assessment of source data is routinely conducted. Generally, data compilation employs sound statistical techniques; however, some of the benchmarks and measures taken to adjust the source data are outdated. Assessment and validation of intermediate data and statistical outputs against other independent data sources are carried out where applicable. The behavior of series is cross-checked with related series/indicators for statistical discrepancies when possible. Revision studies are generally not conducted because data come mostly from administrative sources that rarely get revised.

Serviceability

Serviceability focuses on practical aspects of how well a dataset meets users' needs. Elements refer to the extent to which data are produced and disseminated in a timely fashion, with appropriate periodicity, are consistent internally and with other datasets, and follow a predictable revisions policy.

34. The periodicity and timeliness of the **national accounts** statistics are in line with the recommendations of the GDDS. Consistent time series are available from 1980 onward. The series were revised with the introduction of the *1993 SNA* in 1997. The national accounts statistics are reconcilable with other major datasets. The revisions policy is based on a predetermined, but not publicized, cycle. When necessary, users are informed of the nature of major revisions and their impact on the estimates. The publications do not identify the data as being preliminary or revised; only data first released are identified.

35. The periodicity of the **CPI** is not fully in line with the recommendations of the GDDS. The index for Muscat is produced monthly using weights for Muscat. However, the index that also covers other cities, using weights for the whole country, is only produced quarterly, although it is published within two months, in conformity with the GDDS recommendations. The CPI is consistent within the dataset, over time, and reconcilable with other statistical frameworks. A consistent time series is available from 1987 onward. The revision policy implies that revisions are made when new weights based on the HIES results become available. Revisions to the previous month can occasionally occur when an administrative source reports a back-dated price changes. Whenever this happens, the revision is clearly identified in the publication.

36. Regarding the **GFS**, the periodicity and timeliness of data on central government budgetary operations follow the GDDS recommendations. Central government debt data are

compiled monthly, exceeding the periodicity recommended by the GDDS, but data are not disseminated to the public. The authorities rely on the release of the *GFS Yearbook* for the dissemination of central government debt data. The consistency of the GFS is good both internally as well as over time. A consistent time series is available from 1988 onward. Although the GFS is consistent with most other datasets, discrepancies in the financing between GFS and monetary statistics are kept under review. The revision policy and practice are primarily determined by the internal and external controls mandated by the legal framework. Revisions are affected after audits have been performed. All annual data clearly identify preliminary and final data. However, CBO publications that reproduce some fiscal statistics do not clearly identify revised data. Audit reports are not made public.

37. The periodicity and timeliness of **monetary statistics** are in line with the GDDS recommendations. Monetary statistics are consistent within the dataset. The CBO's and commercial banks' records on liabilities to, and claims on, each other, respectively, are consistent. The monetary statistics are consistent over time, with some aggregate series available from 1976. Although monetary statistics are consistent with balance of payments statistics, there are some differences between changes in the banking system's net claims on the central government (as in monetary statistics) and bank financing of central government (as in the GFS). The CBO and MOF are working toward reducing these differences. Revisions to monetary statistics are rare and generally small. These revisions are indicated by footnotes when the data are published.

38. Periodicity and timeliness of comprehensive **balance of payments** data are in line with the GDDS recommendations. Quarterly balance of payments statistics, an encouraged item under the GDDS, are produced for internal purposes as input into GDP, but are not disseminated. The balance of payments statistics are largely consistent within the dataset, with other datasets, and over time. Consistent time series are available on the *BPM5* basis since 1996. The revision policy and practice have not been made public because primary administrative sources are rarely revised. Currently, revised data are not clearly identified.

Accessibility

Accessibility deals with the availability of information to users. This element refers to the extent to which data and metadata are clear and easily available and to which assistance to the users is adequate to help them find and use the data.

39. The **national accounts** data are readily accessible in various publications and on the MONE website in both Arabic and English. The MONE disseminates estimates at various levels of detail depending on the publication format. Longer time series are available on request. The MONE's annual *National Accounts Bulletin (NAB)* includes a brief analysis of recent economic developments. The statistics are not released according to a preannounced schedule, but regular users are aware of the general timing of release because this has remained stable from one period to the other. Metadata are available at the IMF's DSBB website, although not linked to national websites. The *NAB* includes notes on the main concepts and data sources. Assistance to users may be hampered by the lack of contact information because the publications do not identify specific contact points.

40. The **CPI** data are readily accessible. Data are not published on a preannounced schedule, but the MONE's *Monthly Statistical Bulletin* is always released at the same time each month. The MONE can provide additional breakdowns on request. Currently, metadata are only available on the DSBB website. Assistance to users is provided through a general contact point for statistics.

41. Although the MOF presents data on the fiscal accounts of government clearly, data accessibility to the **GFS** could be improved in a number of aspects. Government debt data are only disseminated in the *GFS Yearbook*. The MOF currently disseminates only the audited annual accounts of government, while the CBO and the MONE disseminate monthly and quarterly data in their publications. The MOF does not provide advance notice of release of data. Although metadata accessibility is facilitated by the summary methodologies available on the IMF's DSBB website, no cross-reference to this website or a hyperlink is provided in national websites. Assistance to users, such as contact points for queries on data or information on the availability of MOF publications, is not publicized.

42. In **monetary statistics**, overall data accessibility is reduced by the absence of detailed data and the difficulty to access longer time series. However, the CBO releases data simultaneously to all users on a preannounced schedule, with the exception of data on combined balance sheet positions of commercial banks for major aggregates provided to commercial banks before the data are disseminated to the public. According to the authorities, the existing practice helps each commercial bank assess its relative position within the banking system in a timely manner. Nonpublished nonconfidential data are available to users, but this is not publicized. Brief metadata are available on the website. The GDDS metadata are posted on the IMF's DSBB website, but are not hyperlinked from the CBO website. Assistance to users is available on request. Specific contact information for monetary statistics is provided on the CBO website, but not in the CBO's hard copy publication.

43. Accessibility of **balance of payments** statistics is largely adequate. The CBO disseminates data clearly in its *Annual Report*, along with charts, tables, and analysis on current-period developments. More comprehensive historical time series back to 1980 are available on request. Currently, no electronic database is maintained for users. A preannounced schedule for release is posted on the CBO website, although no precise release dates are identified. The actual release may not be according to the schedule. The CBO makes annual balance of payments statistics available to all users at the same time, although government external debt stock data are only available through IMF publications. To the extent possible, staff make the statistics, not routinely disseminated, available to users upon request. Metadata accessibility is provided through the IMF's DSBB website; however, no hyperlink from the CBO website is provided. Personal contact is the preferred way to provide assistance to users of statistics, although specific contact point information for balance of payments is not available. Publications of the CBO are available on the CBO website.

IV. STAFF'S RECOMMENDATIONS

44. Based on the data quality assessment, discussions with the authorities, and user feedback,⁸ the following actions are proposed to further increase Oman's adherence to international statistical standards and to enhance the analytical usefulness of macroeconomic data. These recommendations build upon the authorities' ongoing plans for improvement.⁹

Cross-cutting Recommendations

High priority

- Undertake a review of statistical dissemination policies and practices addressing the following issues: (1) establish and disseminate advance release calendars with precise release dates for all statistics; (2) release data simultaneously to all users; (3) publicize the extent of internal government access to the data prior to their release; (4) publicize the availability of unpublished data and metadata; (5) provide users of official statistics more detailed contact information for each dataset; (6) disseminate longer time series when available; and (7) include a brief data analysis in statistical releases.
- Extend the dissemination of documentation on concepts and methodology by (1) preparing methodological publications for major datasets, (2) continuing updating and enhancing GDDS metadata on the DSBB website, and (3) linking the GDDS metadata to national websites and/or provide other means for easy access to domestic users of data.
- Implement measures to improve the usefulness of statistics, including (1) extending regular consultations on user needs to nongovernmental data users (through advisory committees, formal meetings, and/or users' surveys), and (2) giving advance notice of planned major methodological changes.

Other key recommendations

- Make the revision policy of all institutions known to the public, identify revised data as such in publications, and conduct revision studies more regularly and make them available to the public.
- Make available—both in hardcopy and national websites—the *Banking Law*, the *Financial Law*, the *Statistical Law*, and any other legal documents related to the institutional responsibility and the terms and conditions under which statistics are compiled and disseminated.

⁸ See Appendix III of the accompanying detailed assessments volume for summary of results of the data users' survey.

⁹ Some of the recommendations are to "pursue" or "continue"; the intent is to note—in line with taking a snapshot of the data disseminated at the time of the mission—that an area would be the subject of recommendation, but the work is already underway in the data-producing agency.

National Accounts

High priority

- Pursue efforts to prepare and disseminate revised national accounts estimates on a new base year (2000) promptly, and develop concrete plans for the next rebasing exercise (minimum frequency of five years).
- Continue the process of developing independent estimates of private final consumption expenditure.
- Conduct valuation adjustments to the estimates of inventories, particularly inventories of petroleum products.
- Pursue efforts to compile regular (annual or five yearly) supply and use tables.
- Develop income accounts and the capital account for the total economy.

Consumer Price Index

High priority

- Undertake a full HIES on a regular basis and at least every five years.
- Use a group index to impute a price change in all cases when a replacement item has to be introduced without an overlap price.
- Adjust each set of weights to reflect price movements between them and the reference year.
- Calculate elementary level indices as the ratio of average prices; and apply this to all past periods.
- Pursue work toward completion of the producer price index, and, once produced, start wide dissemination according to the GDDS recommendations.

Government Finance Statistics

High priority

- Disseminate annual (quarterly encouraged) data on the outstanding debt and debt guarantees of government within the timeliness recommended by the GDDS and with sufficient details as proposed by the *GFSM 1986*.
- Extend the scope of government accounts in accordance with the appropriate *GFS* guidelines.

Other key recommendations

- Review whether the exclusion of pension funds from the GFS is in accordance with the *GFS* guidelines.
- Continue to reconcile the differences between the GFS and monetary statistics.
- Continue with the investigation into modernizing government accounting systems.
- Develop a concrete migration plan for implementation of the *GFSM 2001*.
- Improve the classification and sectorization of the government account with the view to (1) classifying lending and repayments as financing, rather than as income/expenditures, (2) presenting data on municipalities separately, and (3) presenting data on market producers separately.
- Compile a separate set of accounts for the public nonfinancial and financial entities with a view to having consolidated public sector accounts available.

Monetary Statistics

High priority

- Adopt the full scheme of sectorization of institutional units and classification of financial instruments as recommended in the *MFSM*.
- Improve the presentation of the sectoral balance sheets of the CBO and commercial banks to facilitate easy derivation of their analytical presentations and monetary survey.
- Reclassify the deposits of pension funds from the category of private sector deposits to the deposits of other financial corporations (financial institutions other than banks). Based on the review of the treatment of pension funds in the GFS, reassess their classification in monetary statistics.
- Value treasury bills at market prices or fair values.
- Include accrued interest with underlying instruments for certificates of deposits in the balance sheets of the CBO and commercial banks, deposits on the CBO balance sheet, and treasury bills held by the commercial banks on their balance sheets.

Other key recommendations

- Continue to reconcile the differences between monetary statistics and the GFS.
- Continue to monitor one private specialized bank with a view to including the bank in the coverage of monetary statistics.
- Collect and disseminate the sectoral breakdown of resident private sector deposits in the commercial bank balance sheets.

Balance of Payments

High priority

- Provide additional staff resources to undertake tasks associated with the recent introduction of surveys to improve balance of payments coverage and collect stock data.
- Update several indicators and benchmarks used in estimating components of the balance of payments and revise some methodologies for deriving estimates.
- Continue with the recent initiative to collect data on transactions of the nonfinancial private sector and other financial data.
- Continue developing surveys as a data source.
- Expand accrual accounting to the recording of interest on public sector external debt.

Other key recommendations

- Continue with initiative underway to compile IIP and external debt statistics.
- Keep in mind that the classification of stocks in the forthcoming IIP will need to be consistent with flows in the balance of payments statistics and in accordance with *BPM5* and the *Reserve Template*.
- Move toward disseminating quarterly balance of payments data as soon as practicable.

Table 2. Oman: Data Quality Assessment Framework (July 2003)—Summary Presentation of Results

Key to symbols: NA = Not Applicable; O = Practice Observed; LO = Practice Largely Observed; LNO = Practice Largely Not Observed; NO = Practice Not Observed							
Element	National Accounts (NA)	Consumer Price Index (CPI)	Government Finance Statistics (GFS)	Monetary & Financial Statistics (MFS)	Balance of Payments (BOP)	Comments on Assessment (see paragraph(s))*	Plans for Improvement **
0. Prerequisites of quality							
0.1 Legal and institutional environment	O	O	O	O	O	14, 15, 17, 19	
0.2 Resources	O	O	O	O	LO	16, 18, 20	
0.3 Relevance	LO	LO	LO	LO	LO	16, 18, 20	
0.4 Other quality management	O	O	O	O	O	16, 18, 20	
1. Assurances of integrity							
1.1 Professionalism	O	O	LO	O	O	21–23	MFS (1.2) & BOP (1.2): Give advance notice to the public when major changes are planned to take place in methodology.
1.2 Transparency	LO	LO	LO	LO	LO	21–23	
1.3 Ethical standards	O	O	O	O	O	21–23	
2. Methodological soundness							
2.1 Concepts and definitions	O	O	LO	O	O	24–28	GFS (2.1, 2.2, 2.3, and 2.4): Improve government accounting system with the aim to improve methodology.
2.2 Scope	LO	O	LNO	O	LO	24–28	NA (2.2): Prepare supply and use tables and estimates of capital account by institutional sectors for 2000–01. Publish data by institutional sectors.
2.3 Classification/sectorization	O	O	LO	LO	LO	24–28	MFS (2.3): Present monetary survey data consistent with <i>MFSM</i> classification.
2.4 Basis for recording	LO	O	O	LO	LO	24–28	BOP (2.2): Improve coverage of BOP transactions. BOP (2.3): Breakdown of export/imports of goods.
3. Accuracy and reliability							
3.1 Source data	O	LO	LO	LO	LO	29–33	CPI (3.1): Update the weights for 1999/2000 and extend the geographical coverage.
3.2 Assessment of source data	O	O	O	O	O	29–33	GFS (3.1): Investigate government accounting system with the aim to improve source data.
3.3 Statistical techniques	LO	LO	O	O	LO	29–33	BOP (3.1): Introduce a partial ITRS and compile IIP.
3.4 Assessment/validation of intermediate data and statistical outputs	LO	O	O	O	O	29–33	NA (3.3): Develop independent estimates of household final consumption expenditure. Change the base year to 2000.
3.5 Revision studies	LO	O	O	LO	LO	29–33	BOP (3.3): Improve estimates of compensation of employees.
4. Serviceability							
4.1 Periodicity and timeliness	O	LO	LO	O	O	34–38	CPI (4.1): A monthly index for the whole country will be introduced in the near future.
4.2 Consistency	O	O	LO	LO	O	34–38	GFS (4.1): Disseminate annual government debt data.
4.3 Revision policy and practice	LO	O	LO	LO	LO	34–38	
5. Accessibility							
5.1 Data accessibility	LO	LO	LO	LO	LO	39–43	GFS (5.1, 5.2, and 5.3): Improve the MOF website with the aim to disseminate data and metadata.
5.2 Metadata accessibility	LO	LNO	LNO	LO	LNO	39–43	MFS (5.1): Make the advance release calendars public.
5.3 Assistance to users	LO	LO	LNO	LO	LO	39–43	CPI (5.2): A detailed methodological guide will be published in the near future.

* Paragraph numbers refer to Section III, Summary Assessment of Data Quality, in the present document.

** Authorities' plans as of February 23, 2004.

INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND

OMAN

Report on the Observance of Standards and Codes (ROSC)—Data Module

Response by the Authorities

December 1, 2005

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I. INTRODUCTION

The national authorities in Oman, in particular the Ministry of National Economy (MONE), the Ministry of Finance (MOF), and the Central Bank of Oman (CBO), appreciate the findings of the ROSC mission and view the whole process of ROSC as an extremely useful exercise to identify major data gaps, and to obtain the expert advice of the very experienced staff of the mission for introducing prioritized measures to strengthen the database of Oman and thereby move even closer to the international norms on various aspects of statistics. The data quality assessment conducted by the IMF mission under the ROSC provided a unique opportunity to the staff of the MONE, MOF, and CBO to better appreciate and understand the various dimensions of macroeconomic statistics. During the one-on-one discussion sessions, most of the relevant statistical issues were discussed candidly, and the ROSC report essentially presents the salient points that emerged during the consultation process, with a notable tilt, however, reflecting more the position of the mission staff. While broadly concurring with the major findings and recommendations of the ROSC report, the authorities would like to place on record here a few general and specific responses.

II. GENERAL RESPONSE

An assessment of the macroeconomic database of a country needs to be conducted in the context of the requirements of both policymaking and market analysis, which need not be the same across all countries. The ROSC process has been designed keeping in view the high standards of matured market economies of the developed countries where the economies are driven by the market and the market relies heavily on quality information for smooth functioning, and hence, the authorities devote significant quality resources to the generation of information. In emerging market economies like Oman, the resources that can be diverted to statistics could be limited, necessitating the need for prioritization on the one hand, and investing heavily in training and education of the staff on the other so that they can ensure generation of statistics consistent with the international norms and standards that are evolving from matured financial markets. Moreover, the understanding of the market agent may not be as good as in matured market economies, which itself can operate as a strong constraint to collecting information through surveys for generation of statistics. Our recent experience with the survey on International Investment Position (IIP) suggests that the response rate could be extremely poor (both in terms of ratio of number of responses to total questionnaires sent, and ratio of information provided to information sought), and even when the questionnaires are made quite simple, some of the concepts could still be misinterpreted by the respondents. The compiler of statistics, therefore, encounters a Herculean task in such countries. Moreover, one needs to differentiate between broad consistency with the requirements of different statistical manuals and complete compliance with each and every requirement of these manuals, which give too much emphasis to minor concepts and classifications, all of which may not be relevant for policymaking or market analysis. For example, the ROSC report recommends that deposits of pension funds may be reclassified on a priority basis from the category of private sector deposits to deposits of other financial corporations. We are not sure how such reclassification can be of any great help for policymaking or market analysis. There is a strong case, therefore, to prioritize the areas and

allocate the resources accordingly so that the requirements of policymaking are met effectively (both at the macro level by the authorities and at the micro level by the market agents who use macroeconomic statistics for designing their own strategies/policies), and to aim at other peripheral requirements of various statistical manuals only over time.

There are several issues on which the assessments presented in the ROSC report do not make much sense, particularly in terms of the message it may be trying to convey. For example, in several places it is noted that “the extent of internal government access to statistics prior to their release to the public is not publicly identified.” This line implies that there is scope for questioning the integrity of data just because the data generated, say, by the CBO could be shared with the government before public release. It was adequately emphasized during the discussions with the mission staff that pre-public release sharing of data is purely for simultaneous and timely publication of reports (or production of data) by different agencies, and there is absolutely no scope for manipulation of data by the government. Similarly, the ROSC report observes that “advance notice of major changes in methodology is not usually given.” We feel that our system is more used to receiving information on changes in methodology/revisions simultaneously with the data, and advance information may only add more confusion rather than help in improving understanding of statistics by the users. Moreover, the GDDS requirements on periodicity and timeliness are arbitrarily fixed, and in particular cases such arbitrary limits do not explain the rationale. For example, in case of comprehensive balance of payments data, the timeliness requirement is six to nine months, whereas in the case of balance of payments core indicators, the timeliness requirement is six months. If a country (like Oman) meets the comprehensive requirement of six to nine months but does not meet the core indicator requirement of six months, how could that make any difference to one’s assessment about balance of payments statistics?

III. SPECIFIC COMMENTS

A. National Accounts

The Directorate General of Economic Statistics (DGES) of the MONE is in the process of revising the base year (1988) for the national accounts estimates.

B. Consumer Price Index

The weights obtained from the 1990/91 Household Income and Expenditure Survey have been updated by the DGES but have not yet been published.

C. Monetary Statistics

Of the high priority recommendations for monetary statistics of Oman, the emphasis on adopting a full scheme of sectorization of institutional units and classification of financial instruments in accordance with *MFSM* is well recognized by the authorities, but their relevance for policy making/market analysis, as already mentioned under our general response is not clearly felt as yet. Any alteration in classification/sectorization would require revising the regular returns prescribed by the CBO to commercial banks, and our policy has

all along been to avoid the burden of returns on commercial banks with revisions that we feel may not help much in enhancing the usefulness of statistics, other than just meeting the requirement of *MFSM*. When the importance of meeting the requirements of policy warrants any revision in returns, we introduce such revisions promptly (recently, for example, a return, which all along has been part of the set of returns prescribed to banks for monetary statistics was revised to get information on inter-bank transactions with volumes and rates of different tenures ranging from one day to one year). Moreover, in view of the proposed single GCC currency, there may be a need for harmonizing returns across all six GCC countries for compilation of monetary statistics for the GCC region. Most of the recommendations for reclassification/sectorization could be kept in view while introducing new harmonized returns across all GCC countries. The recommendation for valuation of treasury bills (TBs) and certificates of deposit (CDs) at market price as opposed to face value has also to be seen in the above context, since the present returns and banking circulars require commercial banks to report the face value of such instruments to the CBO.

It may be noted that it has already been decided to post on CBO's website all the statistical returns for compiling monetary statistics accompanied by detailed explanatory notes and definitions of monetary aggregates. Moreover, advance release calendar of various publications have also been posted on the CBO website. In the meantime, we are exploring the options to compile information on accrued interest and market valuation of TBs and CDs, and also examining important changes in classification/sectorization as per *MFSM* that can be of relevance to policy. The suggestion for including one private specialized bank (that accepts deposits) as part of monetary statistics will also be examined with appropriate action over time.

D. Balance of Payments Statistics

Gaps in balance of payments statistics have already been identified through our internal as well as other external assessments, and the ROSC mission rightly emphasizes some of those in the report. We have recognized those gaps while revising our GDDS metadata in August 2004, and mentioned the following as part of our medium-term plans.

- It is being examined whether an International Transactions Reporting System (ITRS) can be put in place, which can be used initially as a cross-check for the existing compilation sources, and subsequently replace some of the existing sources, if found appropriate.
- Services data could be strengthened by collecting information on activities of foreign embassies in Oman.
- A new survey could be launched to collect information on earnings of Omani residents working abroad (i.e., labour income).
- A new survey could be appropriate to demarcate insurance and freight components in imports that are presently being reported on a c.i.f. basis.

- Partner country data could be used for collecting information on Oman's portfolio investment abroad.
- A new survey has been launched in 2003 (as part of the IIP survey) to collect information on FDI and debt flows of private nonfinancial corporate entities. Another FDI survey has also been launched in 2004. Depending on the response, financial account transactions relating to the private corporate sector could be improved.
- In consultation with the customs department, data collection systems could be revamped so that better information can be obtained on: (i) freight and insurance, and (ii) the five-fold classification of goods (i.e., general merchandise, goods for processing, goods for repair, goods procured in ports, and non-monetary gold).
- Information could be collected on operational and financial leasing (particularly from Oman Air) and related transactions, if any be presented in the balance of payments.

In the context of the fact that there are number of areas where improvement in statistics needs to be introduced, we have also specified clearly the following technical assistance requirement of different minimum duration from the IMF.

Less than three months—methodology and process for conducting a survey to improve the statistics on “compensations of employees/labour income” (presently information used in the balance of payments is outdated and must be updated based on an appropriate survey).

Less than six months—to put in place the framework for collecting data on Oman's foreign direct and portfolio investment abroad (at present, no information is available to the compilers of balance of payments).

About one year or even more—to establish a fully operational system to compile the IIP statistics meeting the international statistical standards/requirements.

Some technical assistance for the launch and full operation (if found appropriate) of the ITRS in Oman could also be useful. Some technical assistance was provided by the Statistics Department of the IMF during July 18–August 25, 2004, which only helped in identifying the challenges to compilation of IIP in Oman, and over time it is intended that by dealing with the challenges as indicated by the recommendations of the report of the technical assistance mission, we could graduate towards having a system for compiling IIP.

Of the five high priority recommendations made in the ROSC report for balance of payments statistics, the initiative already launched for collecting data on transactions of non-financial private sector will be sustained, and given its importance for both balance of payments and IIP, we ourselves treat this very much as a priority area. As regards the recommendation for graduating more towards surveys than using administrative data, we have already initiated the work by launching a few surveys in recent years particularly in respect of services. The need for updating some of the methodologies and benchmarks is also well recognized, and we have to prioritize our resources accordingly. On the other recommendation, we could

submit that since data on external public debt are not published as yet, using accrued interest on such debt may fall more in the domain of policy-decision rather than being at the discretion of the compiler. The recommendation for additional staff for undertaking more surveys and to improve the coverage of balance of payments statistics will certainly be given a careful review at the CBO. As regards other recommendations, we would also like to note that quarterly publication of balance of payments statistics and annual publication of IIP and external debt statistics are our medium-term goals and we will work towards attaining the goal over time. The issue of consistency in the classification of flows in the balance of payments and stocks in the forthcoming IIP, in accordance with *BPM5*, will be sorted out through discussions among concerned authorities in Oman.

INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND

OMAN

**Detailed Assessments Using the Data Quality Assessment Framework
(DQAF July 2003)**

Prepared by the Statistics Department

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December 1, 2005

This document contains a detailed assessment by dataset of the elements and indicators that underlie the data quality dimensions discussed in Oman's Report on the Observance of Standards and Codes (ROSC)—Data Module. It also includes as appendices (i) a summary of the main features of the General Data Dissemination System, (ii) a generic Data Quality Assessment Framework, and (iii) the results of the users' survey.

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ACRONYMS

<i>1993 SNA</i>	<i>System of National Accounts 1993</i>
BDD	Banking Development Department (of the CBO)
BED	Banking Examination Department (of the CBO)
BIS	Bank for International Settlements
<i>BPM5</i>	<i>Balance of Payments Manual</i> , fifth edition
BSD	Banking Surveillance Department (of the CBO)
CBO	Central Bank of Oman
CDs	Certificates of deposits
COFOG	Classification of Functions of Government
COICOP	Classification of Individual Consumption by Purpose
CPC	Central Product Classification
CPI	Consumer Price Index
DGES	Directorate General of Economic Statistics (of the MONE)
DGOC	Directorate General of Customs
DQAF	Data Quality Assessment Framework
DSBB	Dissemination Standards Bulletin Board (of the IMF)
ERSD	Economic Research and Statistics Department (of the CBO)
FMD	Financial Management Department (of the CBO)
GAD	General Accounts Department (of the MOF)
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GDDS	General Data Dissemination System
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GFS	Government Finance Statistics
<i>GFSM 1986</i>	<i>A Manual on Government Finance Statistics</i> , 1986
<i>GFSM 2001</i>	<i>Government Finance Statistics Manual 2001</i>
<i>GFSY</i>	<i>Government Finance Statistics Yearbook</i>
HBS	Household Budget Survey
IAS	International Accounting Standards
IFS	Integrated Financial System
IIP	International Investment Position
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ISIC	International Standard Industrial Classification of all Economic Activities
ISWGNA	Inter Secretariat Working Group on National Accounts
ITD	Information Technology Department (of the CBO)
ITRS	International Transactions Reporting System
<i>MFSM</i>	<i>Monetary and Financial Statistics Manual</i>
MOF	Ministry of Finance
MONE	Ministry of National Economy
MSM	Muscat Securities Market
<i>NAB</i>	<i>National Accounts Bulletin</i> (of the MONE)
ODC	Other depository corporation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OFC	Other financial corporation

PASI	Public Authority of Social Insurance
<i>Reserve Template</i>	<i>International Reserves and Foreign Currency Liquidity: Guidelines for a Data Template</i>
ROSC	Report on the Observance of Standards and Codes
SAC	Statistics Advisory Committee (of the MONE)
STA	Statistics Department (of the IMF)
TMOD	Treasury and Monetary Operations Department (of the CBO)

DETAILED ASSESSMENT USING THE DATA QUALITY ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK (DQAF)

The following detailed information on indicators of statistical practices in the areas of the national accounts, consumer price index (CPI), government finance, monetary, and balance of payments statistics was gathered from publicly available documents and information provided by the officials. This information, which is organized along the lines of the generic Data Quality Assessment Framework (DQAF) (see Appendix II), was used to prepare the summary assessment of data quality elements, based on a four-part scale of observance, shown in Oman's Report on the Observance of Standards and Codes (ROSC)—Data Module.

I. NATIONAL ACCOUNTS

0. Prerequisites of quality

0.1 *Legal and institutional environment*

0.1.1 *The responsibility for collecting, processing, and disseminating the statistics is clearly specified*

The *Statistical Law*, promulgated through Royal Decree No. 29/2001 on April 7, 2001, establishes the authority for collecting, processing, and disseminating the national statistics in the Sultanate of Oman. Article 3 of the decree stipulates that the Directorate General of Economic Statistics (DGES)¹ of the Ministry of National Economy (MONE) is responsible for disseminating data and results of surveys according to an annual work plan.

Article 4 exempts other government units from this stipulation and allows these units to compile and disseminate data that fall within their jurisdiction. However, these units can only proceed according to the work plan approved by the Statistical Advisory Committee (SAC), which is chaired by the Secretary General of the MONE (see also 0.1.2). Article 5 of the *Statistical Law* outlines the main publications that the DGES is expected to produce regularly. This includes the *Statistical Yearbook* that comprises important data available for economic and social development, a quarterly bulletin² of main indicators, and a monthly bulletin reflecting the main social and economic indicators. Thus, whereas the *Statistical Law* does not state explicitly that the DGES is responsible for the national accounts statistics, this is implied by the following: (1) the broad authority of the institution to compile and

¹ The *Statistical Law* covers both the Directorate General of Economic Statistics and the Directorate General of Social Statistics. No distinction is made between the two in the law; however, the law becomes relevant to the institution based on the specific circumstances and the type of statistics being compiled.

² The quarterly bulletin is not currently compiled.

disseminate national statistics; and (2) the restrictions placed on other units that they might only conduct activities under their jurisdiction. Further, the functions of government units are reviewed and established through the SAC.

0.1.2 Data sharing and coordination among data-producing agencies are adequate

Part of the mandate of the DGES under the *Statistical Law* is the coordination of statistical information in Oman. Article 9 of the *Statistical Law* creates the SAC chaired by the Secretary General of the MONE with broad representation from the other data producing bodies in the public service. Thus, the committee comprises eight ministerial undersecretaries who represent their respective ministries; the Executive President of the Central Bank of Oman (CBO); representatives of the Police and Sultan Qaboos University; and the Directors General of the MONE's Economic and Social Statistics. The regulations outlining the duties and functioning of the SAC was approved by Ministerial Decision No. 7/2004. The SAC meets twice annually, and its broad coordinating functions include, among others, the following:

- approve long-term economic and social statistical plans;
- coordinate statistical activities;
- determine the broad priorities for statistical studies based on the needs of government units; and
- standardize concepts and statistical terms and monitor the implementation of international recommendations.

The SAC develops a plan for conducting national surveys to avoid duplication and respondent's fatigue, recognizing that the goodwill of respondents has to be maintained. The law also stipulates that all data collected by government units must be shared with the DGES.

The national accounts staff have direct access to the government accounts and are able to utilize the data without making request for hardcopy transmissions or electronic transfers from the Ministry of Finance (MOF). This is an excellent example of interagency cooperation that promotes the timeliness of the source statistics and reduces the cost of processing the data.

The DGES cooperates with other ministries and departments in obtaining data through surveys related to its direct data responsibilities. For example, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry conducts an annual survey of manufacturing, and the results are used for the compilation of annual national accounts. The DGES therefore does not survey manufacturing establishments in the annual establishment survey.

0.1.3 Individual reporters' data are to be kept confidential and used for statistical purposes only

Article 8 of the *Statistical Law* guarantees that all individual data collected under the law will be kept confidential and will be used for statistical purposes only. The law prohibits the publication of data, except in aggregate form, and requires that the consent of the respondent be obtained if the data are to be disclosed to a third party.

The DGES has taken additional steps to prevent the misuse or inadvertent disclosure of individual records. All computer files are password protected, and access is limited to the level of detail required by the individual staff. Further, all records are given a unique code that does not identify the respondent, and the files matching the codes with the respondent are stored separately. Only persons who may need to conduct follow-up checks are provided access to the database identifying the respondents. Hardcopy files are kept in secure premises and can only be accessed by individuals who have special access privileges based on their need to access these files in the course of their normal duties. Records are destroyed in-house at a special facility designed for the same and confidential destruction of files. Article 7 of the *Statistical Law* states that the DGES could request assistance from the national security forces to provide security for field staff conducting national surveys or censuses. This facility was utilized for the recent population census.

Staff must sign an undertaking that they will keep the data confidential. Article 10 of the *Law* provides for a penalty of imprisonment for a maximum of six months or a fine not exceeding 500 rials Omani (US\$1,300) or both, for the breach of confidentiality regulations by staff. The penalty can also be applied to persons who obtain confidential data through cheating or threatening of staff.

0.1.4 Statistical reporting is ensured through legal mandate and/or measures to encourage response

Article 6 of the *Statistical Law* stipulates that all governments units, individuals, and private entities are obligated to provide all the data requested by the DGES or the government units that collect and publish the data on issues falling under their respective jurisdiction. Units refusing to provide data to the DGES or other government units operating under the law are liable to be fined an amount not exceeding 300 rials Omani (US\$780).

However, though the law prescribes penalties for noncompliance, the DGES has chosen not to prosecute for nonresponse. Instead, the DGES has instituted a broad program of survey follow-up and regular public relations exercises to promote compliance. Each questionnaire is accompanied by a cover letter outlining the nature of the survey and the possible uses of the data. In addition, the major publications are provided to respondents free of charge to highlight the use of the statistics.

Questionnaires are hand-delivered by field staff that make regular follow-up visits to answer queries and assist the respondent in completing the questionnaire. The DGES notes that,

though more costly, this method is preferable to a mailing system, since experience has shown that it ensures a higher level of response. Follow-up procedures are intensive. Reminder letters are sent to respondents when the data are not received by the given deadlines. The letters highlight the need for respondents to provide the necessary data and the use of the data in developing statistics. They also seek to reassure respondents that the data would be used for statistical purposes only and would not be divulged to third parties without the express consent of the respondents. Despite the intensive follow-up process, respondents are not overtly threatened with prosecution for nonresponse. Therefore, survey follow-up depends on moral suasion to achieve compliance.

The effectiveness of the process in ensuring statistical reporting is reflected in high average response rates; about 90 percent for the annual establishment survey and 97 percent for the recent household budget survey (HBS).

The MONE has adopted the notable practice of presenting respondents with greetings commemorating special occasions. The aesthetically designed cards include a clear and concise presentation of the main economic indicators. Thus, this represents another mechanism by which respondents are made aware of the uses of the statistics.

0.2 Resources

0.2.1 Staff, facilities, computing resources, and financing are commensurate with statistical programs

The number of staff members for compiling the national accounts statistics is adequate. The National Accounts Division has six staff, two of whom joined the division within the last year. All national accounts staff are university graduates in mathematics, statistics, or economics (except one that has a diploma).

However, the DGES may need to increase the staff complement if it intends to broaden the scope of the statistics in line with the minimum requirements recommended by the Inter Secretariat Working Group on National Accounts (ISWGNA) for implementing the *System of National Accounts 1993 (1993 SNA)* (see also 2.1.1).

All staff have access to up-to-date personal computers that are interconnected via an efficient computer networking system. It therefore allows for the seamless transfer of tasks among staff.

The database is backed up twice weekly onto tapes that are then stored in fire resistant cabinets. In addition, personal computers are fitted with CD-writable drives that allow staff to create backups when necessary.

Field staff are provided with adequate transportation to undertake fieldwork.

0.2.2 Measures to ensure efficient use of resources are implemented

Departments within the DGES use consistent methodology and classification systems, thereby obviating the need for adjustments to the data and duplication of collecting activities. Surveys are designed to meet the needs of a wide cross section of statistical programs. The DGES attempts, as much as possible, to utilize survey data collected by other ministries. The work plan designed at the beginning of the year assesses the resource requirements of each task, and the Director General allocates resources according to the priority of each area.

0.3 Relevance

0.3.1 The relevance and practical utility of existing statistics in meeting users' needs are monitored

The national accounts staff regularly meet with users in the public sector, in particular the staff of the CBO and the MONE's Planning Department. However, the DGES does not solicit the views of private sector users systematically. User surveys are not conducted, and a user advisory group comprising users from a broad spectrum of public and private sector agencies does not exist.

Staff also participate in regular meetings conducted in the region that bring together users and producers. A regional meeting for data users and producers would be hosted by the Omani authorities next year.

0.4 Other quality management

0.4.1 Processes are in place to focus on quality

At the beginning of the year, the DGES prepares a work plan establishing tasks and duties of individuals. This process enables the DGES to determine its resource requirements, and the agency is therefore able to achieve efficiency without compromising accuracy and timeliness.

Before each major survey, the Directorate conducts training programs its staff. The training highlights the need for staff to minimize reporting errors and maintain high standards.

0.4.2 Processes are in place to monitor the quality of the statistical program

DGES computers monitor the productivity of the survey exercise, providing information accessed only by management on, for example, the number of questionnaires distributed during a given period and the processing rate.

The DGES has established working relationships with advanced statistical agencies and international research organizations. The national staff are able to consult with these bodies for guidance on statistical matters.

0.4.3 Processes are in place to deal with quality considerations in planning the statistical program

The DGES takes account of any improvements or efficiencies in the compilation process when planning the statistical program. When new products or data are introduced, the DGES solicits feedback from users in the public sector on the usefulness of the product and on any adjustments that they may require. The views are taken into account when developing the work plan for the following period.

1. Assurances of integrity

1.1 Professionalism

1.1.1 Statistics are produced on an impartial basis

The *Statistical Law* does not explicitly bar interference from outside agencies or individuals on the statistical compilation process. However, the law provides exclusive responsibility for collecting and publishing the statistics to the DGES, and this is not made subject to the agreement of other external authorities.

The terms and conditions for the appointment of staff follow civil service practices. Staff are recruited from a list of applicants compiled by the Ministry of the Civil Service. Only applicants meeting the minimum qualifications for civil service employment are considered. The DGES may only recruit persons identified by the Ministry of Civil Service; however, it can reject applicants if it deems that these individuals may not fit into the statistical framework.

Professionalism is also supported through participation by the Director General and staff in external seminars on statistics. The Director-General attends regular regional meetings on the organization of statistics, and staff participate in regional and international courses on national accounts conducted by the Arab Monetary Fund and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

1.1.2 Choices of sources and statistical techniques as well as decisions about dissemination are informed solely by statistical considerations

The choices of sources and statistical techniques are influenced solely by statistical considerations. Staff, with the occasional assistance of external experts, decide on the statistical techniques, methodology, and data sources to be employed based solely on the need to implement international recommendations.

The Director General is solely responsible for disseminating the statistics. The data presented by the compilers are reviewed for consistency with other aggregates and indicators such as production statistics. Once the Director General is satisfied, the data are approved for release.

The data are not presented to any other authority within or outside the MONE for review and approval before release.

1.1.3 The appropriate statistical entity is entitled to comment on erroneous interpretation and misuse of statistics

The DGES is entitled to comment on the erroneous interpretation of statistics. Comments are made through the MONE's Information and Publication Center.

1.2 Transparency

1.2.1 The terms and conditions under which statistics are collected, processed, and disseminated are available to the public

The survey questionnaires and the correspondence with respondents identify the terms and conditions under which the statistics are being compiled. The questionnaires for the establishment survey state clearly on the first page that the data are being collected under the *Statistical Law*. It notes further that the law stipulates that all data be kept confidential and used for statistical purposes only. The letters to survey respondents cite the relevant articles of the law that give the DGES the authority to conduct the survey and that provide for confidentiality of the individual records. Copies of the *Statistical Law* are also provided to respondents. The law is published in both English and Arabic.

The *Statistical Law* is not available on the website of the MONE.

1.2.2 Internal governmental access to statistics prior to their release is publicly identified

The CBO and the Planning Department are given access to selected aggregates before the data are released to the public. Internal government access prior to the data release to the public is acknowledged in the General Data Dissemination System (GDDS) metadata posted on the IMF website. However, the metadata do not reveal the time lag between when the data are provided to internal government users and when they are disseminated to the public.

1.2.3 Products of statistical agencies/units are clearly identified as such

All products of the DGES are clearly identified with the agency's name and logo on the website and in publications. Reports containing information on surveys conducted jointly with other organizations clearly identify the MONE as being a contributor.

1.2.4 Advance notice is given of major changes in methodology, source data, and statistical techniques

The last set of major changes in the national accounts compilation process was introduced in 1997. The proposed changes and the reasons underlying these changes were noted in the

publications before the data were disseminated. The DGES plans to inform users in advance of the upcoming changes that would include the updating of the base year.

1.3 Ethical standards

1.3.1 Guidelines for staff behavior are in place and are well known to the staff

Staff behavior is guided by the rules and regulations of the civil service. Royal Decree No. 101/96 of 1996 establishes terms and conditions for the conduct of staff. In addition, Royal Decree No. 39/82 sets sanctions for staff participation in political events, using their position for personal gain, and breaching civil service confidentiality. The penalties include salary deductions or outright dismissals.

The rules are made available to staff upon recruitment, and staff are expected to sign an undertaking to follow the rules and regulations of the civil service. Copies of the royal decrees on staff behavior are accessible to staff at the DGES.

Article 10 of the *Statistical Law* provides for penalties for staff who knowingly collect or publish incorrect data. The penalty is a maximum of six months imprisonment or a fine of 500 rials Omani (US\$1,300), or both.

2. Methodological soundness

2.1 Concepts and definitions

2.1.1 The overall structure in terms of concepts and definitions follows internationally accepted standards, guidelines, or good practices

The national accounts statistics are compiled according to the guidelines of the *1993 SNA*. Data compiled using this framework were first disseminated in 1997 and covered the period 1980–96.

2.2 Scope

2.2.1 The scope is broadly consistent with internationally accepted standards, guidelines, or good practices

The regular national accounts system covers the following accounts and tables that are considered by the ISWGNA part of the *minimum requirements* for the implementation of the *1993 SNA*:

- Value added and gross domestic product (GDP) by type of economic activity at current and constant prices; and
- Expenditure components of GDP at current and constant prices.

These accounts are combined with other data sources to produce other key aggregates as follows:

- Government consumption by purpose,
- Gross national income,
- Gross national disposable income,
- Gross saving, and
- Net lending.

In addition, the following accounts and tables that are recommended by the ISWGNA are also compiled:

- Quarterly value added and GDP at current and constant prices by type of activity; and
- Quarterly expenditures of GDP at current prices.

However, the estimates at constant prices and by expenditure categories are not disseminated.

The DGES has compiled additional accounts and tables occasionally, including a supply and use table for 1999.

These accounts and tables do not fulfill the ISWGNA's minimum requirements for implementing the *1993 SNA*. The DGES is in the early stages of compiling the following additional accounts, which it plans to disseminate within the next 12 to 18 months:

- Production account by institutional sector,
- Generation of income account by institutional sector,
- Allocation of primary income account by institutional sector,
- Secondary distribution of income account by institutional account,
- Use of disposable income account, and
- Capital account.

The delimitation of the constituent units of the economy is in accordance with the *1993 SNA*. In particular, the following are considered part of the economic territory of Oman:

- Territorial enclaves in the rest of the world, and
- Bonded warehouses.

Workers who only work part of the year in Oman are excluded from the economic territory of Oman. The number of Omani residents working part of the year abroad is considered statistically insignificant.

The production boundary is in accordance with the *1993 SNA* where feasible. In particular, the following items are within the scope of output measurement:

- Own-account production of goods for own final consumption,
- Research and development on own account,
- Output of own account fixed capital formation,
- Mineral exploration, and
- Production of computer software.

Oman does not have a value-added tax regime.

Illegal output sold to willing buyers and production of entertainment, literary, and artistic originals are not included in the production boundary. However, these items are considered minimal and do not have an impact on the overall accounts.

The assets boundary includes the following items:

Among tangible assets:

- Defense related assets that could be used for civilian purposes

Among intangible assets:

- Mineral exploration (drilling for crude petroleum and natural gas, as well as dry holes).

The following items are not included in the assets boundary because the values are insignificant or measurement may be considered impractical:

- Valuables and historical monuments,
- Agricultural work-in-progress,
- Systems and standard applications software,
- Patented entities, and
- Leases and other transferable contracts.

2.3 Classification/sectorization

2.3.1 Classification/sectorization systems used are broadly consistent with internationally accepted standards, guidelines, or good practices

The classifications used are consistent with internationally accepted standards, guidelines, and good practices as follows:

- The 1993 SNA is used to classify institutional units, transactions, and other flows.
- The International Standard Industrial Classification of all Economic Activities (ISIC) Rev. 3.1 is used to classify the economic activity of establishments and enterprises.
- The Central Product Classification (CPC) is used to classify products.

- A national classification is used to classify consumption; however, this classification is compatible with the Classification of Individual Consumption by Purpose (COICOP), and
- The Classification of Functions of Government (COFOG) is used to classify government transactions.

2.4 Basis for recording

2.4.1 Market prices are used to value flows and stocks

The valuation rules used for recording flows and stocks are consistent with *1993 SNA*, where applicable.

- Market output is valued at producer prices,
- Output for own-use is valued at equivalent market prices,
- Imports and exports are valued f.o.b. in line with the balance of payments statistics, and
- Transactions in foreign currency are converted using the midpoint exchange rate prevailing in the market at the time they take place.

2.4.2 Recording is done on an accrual basis

Most transactions and flows are recorded on an accrual basis.

- Work-in-progress in the form of capital formation is recorded in the period the production takes place, and
- Government revenue and expenditure is recorded in the government accounts on a cash basis and no adjustments are made. However, data on nonfinancial enterprises controlled by government are available on an accrual basis.

2.4.3 Grossing/netting procedures are broadly consistent with internationally accepted standards, guidelines, or good practices

The data are collected at the establishment level; therefore, transactions between two establishments within the same enterprise are recorded on a gross basis.

3. Accuracy and reliability

3.1 Source data

3.1.1 Source data are obtained from comprehensive data collection programs that take into account country-specific conditions

The source data for the national accounts statistics are obtained from a comprehensive program of annual surveys, HBSs, and administrative data sources. The sources, providing adequate data for the compilation process, are reviewed regularly to determine coverage.

Establishment survey

The survey of establishments is conducted annually. It covers establishments engaged in banking, insurance, other financial intermediation, construction, health, education, wholesale and retail trade, petroleum related activities, and hotels. All large establishments are covered. A large establishment is defined according to the economic activity as follows:

- Construction—Establishments with 50 or more employees;
- Wholesale and retail trade—Establishments with 21 or more employees;
- Private schools—Annual revenue greater than 70,000 rials Omani; and
- Private hospitals—Annual revenue greater than or equal to 40,000 rials Omani.

According to these criteria, 1,000 large establishments were included in the sample. The overall size of the establishment survey sample is dependent upon the resource availability in the DGES for conducting surveys.

The sample frame is derived from the 1993 Establishment Census conducted in 1993. The business register is updated regularly using information on the registration of companies from administrative sources. These include the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Muscat municipalities, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Education. In addition, special establishment surveys are undertaken for establishments that may not be covered by administrative sources. The register currently lists about 60,000 establishments.

The frame for selecting the sample is divided into two groups: Group A, if employment data are available, and Group B, if employment data are not. The groups are further subdivided by region and activity. For Group A, the sample is selected using employment based on probability proportional to size. For Group B, simple random sampling techniques are used.

About 1,700 establishments were surveyed, and the response rate was 90 percent.

The survey questionnaires are reviewed regularly to take account of the views of the respondents and the national accounts staff. The questionnaires and all correspondence with respondents are written in both English and Arabic to facilitate the non-Arabic speaking expatriates who may be responsible for communicating with the DGES.

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry conducts an annual census of manufacturing that covers about 900 establishments. These data are also used by the national accounts staff.

Household budget survey

HBSs are conducted infrequently; however, data are available from a HBS conducted during 1999/2000.

The survey was conducted using 12 partially representative samples over a 12-month period, thus addressing the issue of seasonal variations in expenditure patterns. However, for durable goods the reference period is 12 months.

The survey covered 4,160 households representing 1.5 percent of the population of Oman and included citizens as well as expatriates working and residing in Oman on special work visas.

The sample selection was conducted in two phases. In phase I, a preliminary sample was selected based on probability proportional to population size from all the regions. In phase II, 12 household units were selected from each counting area, except the Dhofar Governate, from which 16 households were selected. The sample covered 336 counting areas representing 12.7 percent of the counting areas in Oman.

The 1999/2000 survey recorded a response rate of 97 percent with no refusals. Nonresponse was due to persons being out of the country when the survey was being conducted.

Other major data sources

Additional data are collected from various sources as follows:

Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries—Agricultural production statistics,
MOF—Government finance statistics (GFS),
Oman Oil Refinery —Income and expenditure accounts,
Oman Telecommunications Company—Income and expenditure accounts, and
Petroleum Development of Oman Company—Income and expenditure statements.

Detailed GFS are available from the MOF electronically via a direct link.

Other departments within the DGES are responsible for compiling price statistics and wage indices that are used in the national accounts compilation process.

Ad hoc surveys

The DGES conducts ad hoc surveys to supplement the major data sources. The census of manufacturing does not cover wood manufacturing and fabricated metal products; thus the

DGES has instituted a special survey for this purpose. In addition, surveys are conducted to derive information on the cost structures for agriculture and fishing to supplement the data received from the Ministry of Agriculture.

3.1.2 Source data reasonably approximate the definitions, scope, classifications, valuation, and time of recording required

The annual establishment survey was designed specifically to take account of the needs of national accounts compilation and to approximate the definitions, scope classifications, valuation, and time of recording required. The questionnaires are specifically designed to cover the particular economic activity being surveyed and they vary depending on the industry. The questionnaires were overhauled in 1997 to take account of the changes in the concepts and definitions introduced with the implementation of the 1993 SNA.

3.1.3 Source data are timely

The data are generally received on a timely basis. The preliminary estimates, which are disseminated three months after the end of the reference year, are compiled using data collected to compile the quarterly estimates. The annual establishment surveys and administrative data are collected in time for compiling the provisional estimates, which are disseminated eight to nine months after the end of the reference period. All required data are available in time for the compilation of the final estimates, which are disseminated 20–21 months after the end of the reference period.

3.2 Assessment of source data

3.2.1 Source data—including censuses, sample surveys and administrative records—are routinely assessed, e.g., for coverage, sample error, response error, and nonsampling error; the results of the assessments are monitored and made available to guide statistical processes

Data editing is undertaken primarily in the field by the survey field staff. Secondary validation is undertaken during data entry. The data entry system contains an auto-editing system that was prepared by the Information Technology Department (ITD) of the MONE. The validation rules are designed to capture both data entry errors and consistency errors. A series of built-in validation checks assesses the consistency of each data item and compares these items with others in the unit.

Staff also undertake manual validation checks, comparing the survey results to administrative data sources. They check the returns against financial records, where available. High value transactions are confirmed with respondents, and a record is kept of their confirmation. Adjustments are made only for nonresponse. The staff of the National Accounts Division also conduct checks on the aggregated data for temporal consistency.

Information is available about the sampling error, the nonresponse, and processing errors of the surveys conducted by the DGES. This information is monitored and used to improve the survey process (see also 0.4.2).

Data from administrative sources are assessed for reporting errors and cross-checked against other data sources.

3.3 *Statistical techniques*

3.3.1 Data compilation employs sound statistical techniques to deal with data sources

The adjustment techniques used to estimate nonresponse follow internationally accepted practice. The estimation process is based on employment. The average growth rate of the reporting enterprises with a similar number of employees is applied to the estimates of the previous period for the reporting establishment. If the establishment did not report in the previous period, then the average output per worker for similar establishments is used to estimate output based on the employment of the establishment.

3.3.2 Other statistical procedures (e.g., data adjustments and transformations, and statistical analysis) employ sound statistical techniques

Production approach procedures

The level of detail used to compile estimates of output and intermediate consumption depends upon the relative importance of the activity to overall GDP. Estimates for most activities are derived at the 4-digit level of the ISIC Rev. 3, but estimates for major industries relating to petroleum and commercial banking are derived at the 6-digit level. On the other hand, estimates for manufacturing are derived at the 2-digit level. This level of disaggregation is adequate.

The reliance on fixed ratios is limited to activities in agriculture, which are not very significant.

Specific issues

Owner-occupied dwellings

The output of owner-occupied dwellings is derived as the estimated rental values that owners would pay for similar accommodation. This is in line with international practice. The data are derived from the household budget survey. The survey requests information on dwelling rental value from owner-occupiers.

Work-in-progress

Construction projects that span more than one period are treated as work-in-progress. Activities relating to agriculture are not considered, as these are not significant.

Inventory valuation adjustment

Output is not adjusted for holding gains or losses accruing on inventories. This may introduce bias in the estimates as holdings of large stocks of petroleum products may span more than one period and may be subject to major price fluctuations.

Consumption of fixed capital

The perpetual inventory method is used to estimate consumption of fixed capital for the government sector. For other sectors, the estimates of depreciation obtained from financial records are adjusted and used to approximate consumption of fixed capital.

Cash versus accrual

The data on government operations, which are on a cash basis, are not converted to accrual (see also 2.4.2).

Issues relating to volume measures of GDP

The compilation of volume measures of GDP is based on a combination of double-indicator and single-indicator methods, depending on data availability (see table). Estimates are deflated primarily at the four-digit level of the ISIC. Value added at current prices is never deflated directly using a price index.

The base year for the national accounts estimates is 1988. This is clearly outdated, and the volume measures being used may no longer track the underlying price changes affecting the given economic activities. Therefore, the constant price estimation process does not meet international recommended guidelines of updating the base year at least every five years.

Production Account: Main Data Sources and Constant Price Estimation Methods

Economic Activity	Main Data Sources	Method Used
Agriculture, hunting, and forestry	Ministry of Agriculture	Double deflation: (i) Output—Extrapolation using quantity of production (ii) Int. Consumption—Deflation using prices derived from the CPI and import index for different components
Fishing	Ministry of Agriculture	Double deflation: Output: is deflated using CPI for fish Int. Consumption: deflation using composite index
Petroleum	Detailed accounts of Petroleum Development of Oman	Double deflation: (i) Output—Extrapolation using a volume index of production (ii) Int. Consumption—Composite index representing the major inputs of the oil companies
Natural gas extraction	Detailed financial statements of Petroleum Development of Oman	Double deflation: (i) Output—Extrapolation using a volume index of production (ii) Int. Consumption—Composite index representing the major inputs
Other manufacturing	Ministry of Commerce and Industry	Single deflators are used to deflate sub-activities in manufacturing (in two-digit ISIC) by composite price indices.
Oil refining	Financial Statements	Double deflation: (i) Output: Production index (ii) Int. Consumption: Composite price index of inputs
Manufacturing Gas liquefaction	Financial Statements	Extrapolation using single indicator
Electricity	(i) Government data (ii) Financial Statements	Double deflation is used. Output: Volume index Int. Consumption: Composite price index of inputs
Water supply	Government data	Double deflation Output: Water price index Int. Cons.: Price index of supplies
Construction	(i) Government data (ii) Large establishments (iii) Annual Establishment Survey	Double deflation: (i) Output: Construction cost index (ii) Int. Consumption: housing index
Wholesale and retail	(i) Trade statistics (ii) HBS (iii) Production statistics	Double deflation: (i) Output: appropriate price indices (ii) Int. Consumption: CPI

Production Account: Main Data Sources and Constant Price Estimation Methods (concluded)

Economic Activity	Main Data Sources	Method Used
Hotels	Annual Establishment Survey	Double deflation Output: Volume index of bednights Int. Cons.: composite price index
Transport and communication	(i) Ad hoc surveys (ii) Annual Establishment Survey (iii) Financial statements of transport and communications enterprises	Single deflation: Price and volume indices by subactivity
Financial intermediation	(i) Central Bank Financial Statements (ii) Annual Establishment Survey	No. of employees Selected components of the CPI
Real estate and business services	HBS on imputed rent	Selected components of the CPI
Public administration and defense	MOF	Wage index for government employees
Education	Annual Establishment Survey	Double deflation Output: No. of students Int. Cons.: Price index of supplies
Other services	MOF	Wage index for government employees
Domestic services	HBS	Wage index of domestic services

Expenditure approach procedures

- The GDP estimates by expenditure components are not derived independently. Private final consumption expenditure is derived as a residual. The estimates are not presented by category of consumption. The DGES is currently developing independent estimates of private final consumption using data derived from the recent household budget survey.
- Gross fixed capital formation is derived by types of assets. The activity breakdown is only available for the government sector. Changes in inventories are not presented by type of assets or activities. The DGES is currently compiling the data according to type of assets and activities, and these will be disseminated with the revised estimates.
- Government final consumption expenditure is compiled at the two-digit level of the COFOG, which is in line with international best practice.
- The reliance on fixed ratios in the estimation process is very limited. The estimates are derived mainly from data that are compiled annually.

Proper techniques are used to address specifics of expenditure on GDP compilation.

- Government final expenditure excludes incidental sales.
- Expenditure of residents abroad is included in estimates of imports.
- Expenditure of nonresidents in the domestic economy is included in exports.
- However, valuables are not estimated; therefore, expenditures on items considered stores of wealth are included in private final consumption expenditure.

Expenditure on GDP: Main Data Sources and Constant Price Estimation Methods

Expenditure Category	Main Data Sources	Method Used
Imports of goods and services	CBO	Deflated using import index
Exports of Goods and Services	CBO	Deflated using export index
Government Final Consumption Expenditure	MOF	(i) Wage index (ii) Components of CPI
Household Final Consumption Expenditure	Estimated as a residual	
Gross Capital Formation	(i) Government records (ii) Annual Establishment Survey (iii) Financial statements of large enterprises (iv) Livestock producers	(i) Construction: Deflation using construction cost index (ii) Machinery and Equipment: deflation using import price index (iii) Intangible Fixed Assets: is deflation using import price index (iv) Change in Inventories: deflation using implicit deflator of gross fixed capital formation

3.4 Assessment and validation of intermediate data and statistical outputs

3.4.1 Intermediate results are validated against other information where applicable

Aggregate survey data on the major categories of manufacturing and oil extraction are compared against data on production from the production survey and exports of goods.

3.4.2 Statistical discrepancies in intermediate data are assessed and investigated

Ad hoc assessments of intermediate data are conducted when warranted.

3.4.3 Statistical discrepancies and other potential indicators of problems in statistical outputs are investigated

Private final consumption expenditure is not estimated and is defined as the difference between GDP by activity and the other components of expenditure on GDP. Thus, the DGES is unable to conduct studies on statistical discrepancy.

The DGES does not compile regular supply and use tables. The last supply and use tables were compiled in 1999; however, the framework is not used to investigate the discrepancies in the accounts. The data has been used sparingly to improve the compilation process. Unofficial estimates are not widely disseminated in Oman, and the DGES does not assess its national accounts statistics against other official estimates.

3.5 Revision studies

3.5.1 Studies and analyses of revisions are carried out routinely and used internally to inform statistical processes (see also 4.3.3)

Formal revision studies are not conducted. However, the DGES assesses, on an ad hoc basis, the differences between the preliminary and final estimates at a disaggregated level. Major differences are noted and investigated.

4. Serviceability

4.1 Periodicity and timeliness

4.1.1 Periodicity follows dissemination standards

The data are disseminated annually, thereby adhering to the GDDS recommendations for periodicity.

4.1.2 Timeliness follows dissemination standards

Provisional estimates of annual GDP are disseminated eight–nine months after the end of the reference period, thereby adhering to the GDDS recommendation for timeliness. Preliminary estimates of annual GDP, derived as the sum of the quarterly GDP, are disseminated two–three months after the end of the reference period.

4.2 Consistency

4.2.1 Statistics are consistent within the dataset

The statistical discrepancy between the estimates by type of activity and category of expenditure is not calculated independently but included in private final consumption expenditure as a residual. Thus, the estimates and growth rates are consistent.

4.2.2 Statistics are consistent or reconcilable over a reasonable period of time

A consistent series of GDP by type of activity and category of expenditure is available from 1980. The data were revised backwards from 1996 when the 1993 SNA was introduced in 1997, using benchmarks and production indicators.

4.2.3 Statistics are consistent or reconcilable with those obtained through other data sources and/or statistical frameworks

The statistics are consistent and reconcilable with the balance of payments, merchandise trade, and GFS.

The DGES reclassifies the estimates of compensation of employees in the balance of payments as workers' remittances. Thus, income payments abroad are lower in the national accounts by the amount of compensation of employees. Likewise, workers' remittances are higher by that amount. As mentioned in the balance of payments dataset (4.2.3), the compensation of employees item is currently a relatively small value (about 15 million rials Omani).

4.3 Revision policy and practice

4.3.1 Revisions follow a regular and transparent schedule

The cycle for revisions follows a regular and transparent schedule. The first set of provisional data is disseminated three to four months after the end of the reference period. Preliminary estimates, based on available administrative data and the results of the establishment survey, are disseminated eight to nine months after the end of period. The final revised set of estimates is disseminated 20 to 21 months after the end of the period, along with the first set of preliminary data for the immediately preceding period.

4.3.2 Preliminary and/or revised data are clearly identified

The *National Accounts Bulletin (NAB)* and the *Statistical Yearbook* only identify the provisional estimates. The preliminary and revised estimates are not identified as such.

4.3.3 Studies and analyses of revisions are made public (see also 3.5.1)

Ad hoc analyses of revisions are conducted; however, the results are not disseminated.

5. Accessibility

5.1 Data accessibility

5.1.1 Statistics are presented in a way that facilitates proper interpretation and meaningful comparisons (layout and clarity of text, tables, and charts)

The national accounts data are published clearly; charts and tables are disseminated with the data to facilitate the analysis. The publications include notes on methodology and comparative summary indicators for other major economies.

Datasets are published with varying levels of detail in different publications that target diverse user groups. The accounts and aggregates are presented in a time series format with annual data for at least three years.

5.1.2 Dissemination media and format are adequate

The data are presented in hardcopy publications of the MONE, on CD-ROM, and on the ministry's website³ in both Arabic and English. In addition, the MONE produces occasional brochures that provide summary data. The data are first published in the *Statistical Yearbook*, which is available on CD-ROM. The *NAB* is an annual publication in its sixth year of production that provides summary data, a brief analysis, and methodological notes. Other publications and the website provide summary data for key accounts and aggregates.

5.1.3 Statistics are released on a preannounced schedule

Statistics are not released according to a preannounced schedule. However, the general timing of release has remained stable over time, and regular users are generally aware of when the data are to be released. On the other hand, occasional users are not guided as to when the statistics should be expected, and this is a major weakness of the dissemination process. The dates are not fixed and may vary by up to one month but remain within the timeliness recommendations of the GDDS.

5.1.4 Statistics are made available to all users at the same time

The data are not made available to all users at the same time. The Central Bank and the Planning Department are given prior access before data are made widely available.

5.1.5 Statistics not routinely disseminated are made available upon request

Users may request additional information not disseminated in the regular formats.

³ [Http://www.moneoman.gov.om](http://www.moneoman.gov.om).

5.2 *Metadata accessibility*

5.2.1 *Documentation on concepts, scope, classifications, basis of recording, data sources, and statistical techniques is available, and differences from internationally accepted standards, guidelines, or good practices are annotated*

The DGES has prepared detailed documents on the statistical techniques, methodology, and data sources used to compile the estimates. These documents also highlight some of the shortcomings of the national accounts compilation process. These documents are part of the reference material used by staff but are available to other users on request.

Summary information on the methodology and data sources used to compile the estimates is provided in the *NAB* and in the *Statistical Yearbook*. Metadata are also available on the IMF's DSBB website; however, they are not linked to the website of the MONE.

5.2.2 *Levels of detail are adapted to the needs of the intended audience*

The metadata contained in the *NAB* are intended for a broad audience who are primarily interested in the economic significance of the data. Thus, it provides summary information on the activities or transactions covered by each aggregate. The *NAB* does not provide details on how these aggregates are compiled. On the other hand, the source and method documents available at the DGES outline all the data sources, the compilation techniques, methodology, and the weaknesses of the compilation methods in detail. These documents are therefore more appropriate for users and researchers who are interested in measurement techniques.

5.3 *Assistance to users*

5.3.1 *Contact points for each subject field are publicized*

Publications and the website list the name of the compiling agency; however, the names, email addresses, and telephone numbers of relevant contact persons are not included in the *NAB*.

5.3.2 *Catalogs of publications, documents, and other services, including information on any changes, are widely available*

The MONE disseminates a list of publications in hard copy and on its website. The list indicates the language of publication, the period covered by the publication, and the price in both rials Omani and U.S. dollars. It also provides information for nonresidents wishing to place orders.

Table 1. Oman: Data Quality Assessment Framework (July 2003): Summary of Results for National Accounts
(*Compiling Agency: Ministry of National Economy*)

Key to symbols: NA = Not Applicable; O = Practice Observed; LO = Practice Largely Observed; LNO = Practice Largely Not Observed; NO = Practice Not Observed						
Element	Assessment			Comments on Assessment	Plans for Improvement and Target Dates*	
	O	LO	LNO			NO
0. Prerequisites of quality						
0.1 Legal and institutional environment	X					
0.2 Resources	X					
0.3 Relevance		X		No user advisory group exists and the views of users in the private sector are not solicited in a systematic manner.		
0.4 Other quality management	X					
1. Assurances of integrity						
1.1 Professionalism	X					
1.2 Transparency		X		Internal access publicized only in the GDDS metadata. The time lag between internal access and public dissemination is not made public.		
1.3 Ethical standards	X					
2. Methodological soundness						
2.1 Concepts and definitions	X					
2.2 Scope		X		The scope is limited. Income accounts are not disseminated.	Prepare supply and use tables and estimates of capital account by institutional sectors for 2000-01. Publish data by institutional sectors.	
2.3 Classification/sectorization	X					
2.4 Basis for recording		X		Government transactions recorded on a cash basis.		
3. Accuracy and reliability						
3.1 Source data	X					
3.2 Assessment of source data	X					
3.3 Statistical techniques		X		The base year is outdated. Private final consumption expenditures are estimated as a residual. Estimates not adjusted for holding gains or losses on inventories.	Develop independent estimates of household final consumption expenditure. Change the base year to 2000.	
3.4 Assessment and validation of intermediate data and statistical outputs		X		Discrepancies in the statistical output are not determined or assessed.		
3.5 Revision studies		X		Revision studies are not conducted in a systematic manner.		

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Element	Assessment			Comments on Assessment	Plans for Improvement and Target Dates*	
	O	LO	LNO			NO
4. Serviceability						
4.1 Periodicity and timeliness	X					
4.2 Consistency	X					
4.3 Revision policy and practice		X		Revision cycle is not made known to the public. Preliminary or revised data are not clearly identified.		
5. Accessibility						
5.1 Data accessibility		X		The release schedule is not available.		
5.2 Metadata accessibility		X		Comprehensive metadata not widely available.		
5.3 Assistance to users		X		Contact information is poor. Email and telephone numbers of National Accounts Division are not included in publications.		

* Authorities' plans as of February 23, 2004.

II. PRICE STATISTICS (CONSUMER PRICE STATISTICS)

0. Prerequisites of quality

0.1 *Legal and institutional environment*

0.1.1 *The responsibility for collecting, processing, and disseminating the statistics is clearly specified*

The *Statistical Law*, promulgated by Royal Decree No. 29/2001, makes the two Director Generals (of Social and Economic Statistics) of the Ministry of National Economy (MONE) responsible for publishing the data and results of statistical surveys according to an annual work plan. They are also responsible for the standardization, harmonization, and analysis of the information and its preparation for publication. The *Statistical Law* gives other government authorities the right to publish statistical data that fall within their jurisdiction, but they must provide copies to the MONE. Private sector entities also have the right to conduct statistical surveys concerning marketing of their products but only with written authority from the MONE.

The *Statistical Law* does not explicitly mention the Consumer Price Index (CPI). However, it does establish a Statistics Advisory Committee (SAC) of representatives from all the major government bodies. This body ensures that there is no challenge to the responsibility of the MONE's Directorate General of Economic Statistics (DGES) for compiling and disseminating the CPI.

0.1.2 *Data sharing and coordination among data-producing agencies are adequate*

The *Statistical Law* specifies that all entities are required to supply all data requested by the MONE. It also stipulates that data must be accurate and constructed using international standards. However, rather than relying on the *Statistical Law*, the MONE prefers to build good relationships with the other agencies. One of the main approaches is to set up working groups with each agency to specify data requirements and to resolve any issues that may arise.

0.1.3 *Individual reporters' data are to be kept confidential and used for statistical purposes only*

The *Statistical Law* clearly states that all respondents' data shall be kept confidential and only used for statistical purposes. Any breach of this rule could result in a maximum of six months imprisonment and/or a fine not exceeding 500 rials Omani (around US\$1,300). All survey forms and brochures specify the commitment to confidentiality.

Individual data are kept securely and are only available to authorized staff. When required, destruction of confidential data is undertaken in-house under strict controls. Access to the office is tightly controlled, both at the site entrance and each building. Visitors are escorted

to their meetings with staff. Computer records are controlled by individual passwords, to both the equipment and the data.

0.1.4 Statistical reporting is ensured through legal mandate and/or measures to encourage response

The *Statistical Law* clearly establishes that all persons in Oman need to supply data on request from the MONE and/or from the authorized data-producing agency. Failure to comply could result in a fine not exceeding 300 rials Omani, (around US\$780). However, this is not done; the MONE prefers to encourage response through direct contacts. The MONE has produced a brochure with sample CPI data for retailers explaining the importance of price collection in constructing the CPI. Additionally, the MONE sends out greeting cards and appreciation certificates to respondents.

0.2 Resources

0.2.1 Staff, facilities, computing resources, and financing are commensurate with statistical programs

Twenty staff members are working on the CPI, 18 of whom are collectors/supervisors. The staff have the qualifications required to undertake the work and are encouraged to develop their skills. This means that the staff are extremely flexible, being able to change roles to meet changing demands. For instance, the director of the department is currently away studying for a statistics degree, so his position is being filled by one of the senior supervisors. The number of staff is just about right for normal operations. However, some overtime is currently done because of the absence of the head and the fact that a new CPI is being developed. The salaries paid by the MONE are set by the Ministry of Civil Service, but bonuses are used to reward good work. Staff turnover is low.

The work is supported by state-of-the-art computer systems, with price quotes entered immediately onto handheld computers and transmitted automatically to the mainframe. As much processing and validation as possible is computerized to reduce the need for staff. The CPI makes its own backup of data on a frequent basis. The Computer Department also backs up data twice a week and stores the tapes in fire resistant cabinets.

The offices are well maintained with all required facilities. Furniture and equipment are all modern and in good condition. Good quality motor vehicles are available for use in price collection.

Financial resources for the CPI program are adequate and well controlled.

0.2.2 Measures to ensure efficient use of resources are implemented

All staff are evaluated annually. Systems are subject to efficiency reviews as evidenced by the sophisticated computer system used for the CPI. Staff regularly consult experts from the United Nations, Statistics Sweden, and the Tilbury University in Holland on technical issues.

0.3 Relevance

0.3.1 The relevance and practical utility of existing statistics in meeting users' needs are monitored

The MONE regularly consults government users on all aspects of the statistical program through bilateral meetings and the SAC. However, there is no structured program of discussions with nongovernment users. Staff take all available opportunities to attend international and regional statistical seminars and workshops.

0.4 Other quality management

0.4.1 Processes are in place to focus on quality

Management of the MONE has built quality into all of its systems. Managers are fully responsible for the quality of their own operations. There are regular efficiency reviews to improve quality.

0.4.2 Processes are in place to monitor the quality of the statistical program

The DGES has a sophisticated computer system that allows it to monitor all aspects of the surveys in operation. Heavy use is made of external experts to improve the quality of processes.

0.4.3 Processes are in place to deal with quality considerations in planning the statistical program

Program planning and resource allocation takes full account of identified quality improvements.

1. Assurances of integrity

1.1 Professionalism

1.1.1 Statistics are produced on an impartial basis

The production of economic statistics is just one function of the MONE. However, the independence of the DGES is well established by internal MONE procedures. The DGES has total autonomy in terms of the published CPI. Promotion of staff is based on aptitude and

experience. The MONE is strongly committed to the continuous training of staff. Suitable people are encouraged to specialize in specific subjects, and the MONE is prepared to finance appropriate training courses, even in other countries.

1.1.2 Choices of sources and statistical techniques as well as decisions about dissemination are informed solely by statistical considerations

All aspects of the CPI program are solely governed by the availability of statistics and appropriateness to the job. Although the existing CPI is published in the MONE's monthly statistical bulletin, the authorities recently decided that the more comprehensive system currently being developed warrants its own publication, enabling more timely publication of the CPI.

1.1.3 The appropriate statistical entity is entitled to comment on erroneous interpretation and misuse of statistics

The MONE will always contact the relevant media when data are misinterpreted or misused. The Information Department of the MONE monitors all media channels to identify all references to its statistics.

1.2 Transparency

1.2.1 The terms and conditions under which statistics are collected, processed, and disseminated are available to the public

The *Statistical Law* is published in hardcopy, both in Arabic and English. The DGES regularly takes part in radio and press interviews to fully explain the terms and conditions under which statistics are produced.

1.2.2 Internal governmental access to statistics prior to their release is publicly identified

The extent of internal government access to statistics prior to their release to the public is not publicly identified (although prior access is acknowledged in the GDDS metadata).

1.2.3 Products of statistical agencies/units are clearly identified as such

All publications of statistics clearly identify the MONE as the source.

1.2.4 Advance notice is given of major changes in methodology, source data, and statistical techniques

Advance notice of significant changes to the statistics is given but only through radio and press interviews. However, the DGES has indicated that such notifications should be included in statistical publications in the future.

1.3 Ethical standards

1.3.1 Guidelines for staff behavior are in place and are well known to the staff

All staff are required to comply with the mandated procedures applicable to all civil servants.

2. Methodological soundness

2.1 Concepts and definitions

2.1.1 The overall structure in terms of concepts and definitions follows internationally accepted standards, guidelines, or good practices

The concepts and definitions fully conform to standards set by the *System of National Accounts 1993 (1993 SNA)* and the *CPI Manual* currently being developed by the International Labor Organization. The product classification used for the CPI is country specific, but it can be readily converted to the Classification of Individual Consumption by Purpose (COICOP) classification. The level of detail of the classification used for the CPI is more detailed than the four-digit Central Product Classification (CPC). The level of detail applies equally to goods and services.

2.2 Scope

2.2.1 The scope is broadly consistent with internationally accepted standards, guidelines, or good practices

The CPI weights include most types of resident households, including those of foreigners. However, as is the usual practice, institutions such as hospitals and army barracks are not covered. Also excluded are camps containing seven or more single migrant workers. The consumption of households that are also producers is included, as is the consumption of their own production. If households cannot value their production, the enumerator will visit the local market to establish a price.

The CPI covers all transactions recorded in household final consumption and none contained in fixed capital formation, that is, residential property, which is consistent with international standards. Included is the imputed rent of owner-occupied dwellings and rent free accommodation. The weights also include other forms of income-in-kind, such as goods supplied by employers free of charge. However, illegal activities will only be covered to the extent that they are reported in the Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES). In any event, illegal activities in Oman are considered to be insignificant by the DGES.

2.3 Classification/sectorization

2.3.1 Classification/sectorization systems used are broadly consistent with internationally accepted standards, guidelines, or good practices

DGGS follows the 1993 SNA to classify consumption of households and their transactions. The product classification used is country specific, but it can be converted to COICOP and CPC down to at least the four-digit level.

2.4 Basis for recording

2.4.1 Market prices are used to value flows and stocks

The CPI weights are based on the full purchaser prices paid by consumers. Collected prices also relate to actual transaction prices, that is, after any discounts have been deducted. These valuations are consistent with international standards.

2.4.2 Recording is done on an accrual basis

Collectors have to report the price as of the day of collection. Also, changes in centrally collected prices are allocated to the month when they were introduced.

2.4.3 Grossing/netting procedures are broadly consistent with internationally accepted standards, guidelines, or good practices

The weights for secondhand goods are correctly recorded as purchases less sales.

3. Accuracy and reliability

3.1 Source data

3.1.1 Source data are obtained from comprehensive data collection programs that take into account country-specific conditions

The outlets from which prices are collected were comprehensively reviewed in 1995. Field staff selected and reviewed the outlets based on considerations such as location, likelihood of remaining for some time, popularity with consumers, and the range of products sold. The collectors and their supervisors keep the outlets under continuous review, changing the list of outlets as considered necessary.

Currently, field staff collect prices for Muscat and four other major cities. The revised CPI, to be introduced shortly, will be extended to five other cities, chosen to more fully represent all regions of Oman.

The current weights are from the 1990/91 HIES, which was conducted too long ago to represent current consumption patterns. Good practice is for the weights to be changed at least every five years. This is supported by the fact that the MONE felt necessary to comprehensively review in 1995 the items for which prices are collected. Fortunately, the weights are about to be changed using the 1999/2000 HIES. It is expected that there will be another HIES in about 2005. However, it is unlikely that there could be another HIES in 2010, because there will be a population census that year.

3.1.2 Source data reasonably approximate the definitions, scope, classifications, valuation, and time of recording required

All source data are specifically collected for the CPI. So, the data collection systems have been designed to fully meet the requirements of the CPI in all respects.

3.1.3 Source data are timely

All price quotations are received on time. However, the prices of some centrally provided services are collected quarterly. This means that price changes can occasionally be reported later than the month to which they relate.

3.2 Assessment of source data

3.2.1 Source data—including censuses, sample surveys and administrative records—are routinely assessed, e.g., for coverage, sample error, response error, and nonsampling error; the results of the assessments are monitored and made available to guide statistical processes

The sampling and nonresponse errors for the HIES are available and are reviewed by the CPI staff. Price quotes are entered into handheld computers and are automatically sent to the central office. This level of computerization is impressive. The handheld computer checks the price against that for the previous month and highlights any odd changes. The collector then has to identify the reason for the change from a standard list. This information is reviewed, and appropriate action is taken.

3.3 Statistical techniques

3.3.1 Data compilation employs sound statistical techniques to deal with data sources

The comprehensive computer and visual checks of the data minimize the possibility of errors. Prices for temporarily missing and seasonal products are imputed using the group price change. Replacement items for which there is an overlap price are treated appropriately. However, when there is no overlap price, the main approach is to assume that there is no price change in the month when the replacement item is introduced. Though inflation in Oman is low, this cannot be considered to be a good approach. It would be better to impute a price change using the group index in these cases. When there is a quality change in a

particular product, staff makes adjustments based on details from the retailer and any other appropriate source. New products are introduced when necessary, but only if there is an appropriate weight. For instance, mobile phone services are included, but linked to the 1990/91 weight for telecommunication services. Totally new products such as the purchase of mobile phones themselves cannot be covered because there is no weight.

3.3.2 *Other statistical procedures (e.g., data adjustments and transformations, and statistical analysis) employ sound statistical techniques*

The CPI weights are fully consistent with the concepts specified in the 1993 SNA. They are also the same as household consumption used in the national accounts. Staff collect prices for the CPI from all types of retail outlets, including informal street traders. The prices collected are those actually charged by the retailer, although sometimes these will be checked with purchasers. The weights incorporate goods and services produced for own final consumption. Staff value these at market prices, even if the enumerator has to visit a local market to identify the price.

The staff used to construct the elementary level indices by taking the ratio of average prices of the individual quotes. However, an international expert advised them that it would be better to use the average of price relatives. Unfortunately, this conflicts with best practice because the latter method is likely to produce an upward bias in the index over time. For this reason, the first method is preferred. Aggregation of the indices uses the internationally accepted Laspeyres formula.

The method the DGES uses to calculate the CPI is known as the Lowe index, P_{Lo} . For a basket of n products, with prices p_i and quantities q_i , where b is the weight reference period and 0 is the price reference period:

$$P_{Lo} \equiv \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n p_i^t q_i^b}{\sum_{i=1}^n p_i^0 q_i^b}$$

This can be rewritten as:

$$P_{Lo} \equiv \sum_{i=1}^n \left(\frac{p_i^t}{p_i^0} \right) s_i^{0b} \quad \text{where} \quad s_i^{0b} = \frac{p_i^0 q_i^b}{\sum_{i=1}^n p_i^0 q_i^b} \quad \text{are the weights.}$$

These weights can be rewritten as:

$$s_i^{0b} = \left(\frac{p_i^0}{p_i^b} \right) \frac{p_i^b q_i^b}{\sum_{i=1}^n p_i^b q_i^b}$$

The second part of this equation represents the base year weights multiplied by the price change between the weights reference period and the price reference period. Unfortunately, the weights currently used for the CPI are derived from the HIES for May 1990 to May 1991; that is, no adjustment is made to bring the data into line with the price reference period, 1995.

The old 1995 index will be linked to the new 2000 index using the standard approach of applying the ratio for the price reference year. The new index for Muscat will be linked to the corresponding old one, which was also monthly. However, the index for the whole country will be linked to the previous quarterly one, which did not represent the whole country as fully as the new version does.

3.4 Assessment and validation of intermediate data and statistical outputs

3.4.1 Intermediate results are validated against other information where applicable

Staff check the CPI against all other available price movements.

3.4.2 Statistical discrepancies in intermediate data are assessed and investigated

Staff check all components of the CPI against each other to identify any unusual movements, which are investigated.

3.4.3 Statistical discrepancies and other potential indicators of problems in statistical outputs are investigated

The CPI is derived totally consistently, so there are no statistical discrepancies.

3.5 Revision studies

3.5.1 Studies and analyses of revisions are carried out routinely and used internally to inform statistical processes (see also 4.3.3)

When a new set of weights is introduced, it is compared with the old set and the changes are evaluated. The prices of the CPI are not normally revised.

4. Serviceability

4.1 Periodicity and timeliness

4.1.1 Periodicity follows dissemination standards

Currently, there are two indices—a Muscat index, which is monthly, and a national index, which is quarterly and covers the five largest cities in Oman, including Muscat. Therefore, the periodicity of the CPI is not fully in line with the GDDS recommendation. However, the new CPI will be monthly and cover a larger and more representative number of cities.

4.1.2 Timeliness follows dissemination standards

The existing CPI for Muscat is published one month after the reference period. The quarterly index for the whole country is published two months after the end of the quarter. Therefore, the timeliness of the CPI is in line with the GDDS recommendation. All components of the new CPI will be published within one month of the end of the reference period.

4.2 Consistency

4.2.1 Statistics are consistent within the dataset

The existing and new indices are constructed totally consistently.

4.2.2 Statistics are consistent or reconcilable over a reasonable period of time

A consistent time series is available from 1987.

4.2.3 Statistics are consistent or reconcilable with those obtained through other data sources and/or statistical frameworks

The CPI weights are consistent with household final consumption as this would be recorded in the national accounts. The CPI prices are also consistent with other published price statistics.

4.3 Revision policy and practice

4.3.1 Revisions follow a regular and transparent schedule

Revisions to prices are rare and only occur when a price change for some centrally provided service is reported late, because these are only collected quarterly.

4.3.2 Preliminary and/or revised data are clearly identified

Revised values are clearly identified in the publication with a footnote explaining the reason.

4.3.3 *Studies and analyses of revisions are made public (see also 3.5.1)*

The weights have never been revised before, but the study of the revision shortly to be introduced will be published.

5. Accessibility

5.1 Data accessibility

5.1.1 Statistics are presented in a way that facilitates proper interpretation and meaningful comparisons (layout and clarity of text, tables, and charts)

The CPI is published clearly, showing the actual values, changes over relevant periods, and the weights. However, no explanation is given about current-period developments. The monthly publication shows the index for the latest three months, while the annual publication contains much longer time series. The CPI is not seasonally adjusted, which is consistent with the approach taken in most countries.

5.1.2 Dissemination media and format are adequate

No press release is produced, but the presentation in the MONE's monthly statistical bulletin is good, with both indices shown on facing pages.

5.1.3 Statistics are released on a preannounced schedule

There is no formal preannounced schedule for publication. However, the MONE's monthly statistical bulletin is always released right at the end of the month.

5.1.4 Statistics are made available to all users at the same time

The publications of the MONE are available to all users at the same time and their release is publicized.

5.1.5 Statistics not routinely disseminated are made available upon request

Additional available breakdowns can be provided free of charge on request.

5.2 Metadata accessibility

5.2.1 Documentation on concepts, scope, classifications, basis of recording, data sources, and statistical techniques is available, and differences from internationally accepted standards, guidelines, or good practices are annotated

Currently, the only available documentation on the CPI is the GDDS metadata on the IMF's Dissemination Standards Bulletin Board (DSBB) website. There is no link on the MONE

website. A comprehensive methodological guide is not currently available but will be published shortly.

5.2.2 Levels of detail are adapted to the needs of the intended audience

The GDDS metadata meet the needs of users, except for those seeking detailed technical information. Brief details of the CPI are also given in the brochures produced by the MONE.

5.3 Assistance to users

5.3.1 Contact points for each subject field are publicized

Publications contain only a general contact point for the MONE.

5.3.2 Catalogs of publications, documents, and other services, including information on any changes, are widely available

The MONE provides a full list of its publications.

Table 2. Oman: Data Quality Assessment Framework (July 2003): Summary of Results for Price Statistics (Consumer Price Statistics) (Compiling Agency: Ministry of National Economy)

Key to symbols: NA = Not Applicable; O = Practice Observed; LO = Practice Largely Observed; LNO = Practice Largely Not Observed; NO = Practice Not Observed						
Element	Assessment			Comments on Assessment	Plans for Improvement and Target Dates*	
	O	LO	LNO			NO
0. Prerequisites of quality						
0.1 Legal and institutional environment	X					
0.2 Resources	X					
0.3 Relevance		X		Views of nongovernment users are not actively sought.		
0.4 Other quality management	X					
1. Assurances of integrity						
1.1 Professionalism	X					
1.2 Transparency		X		Internal government prerelease access only stated in the GDDS metadata published on the DSBB.		
1.3 Ethical standards	X					
2. Methodological soundness						
2.1 Concepts and definitions	X					
2.2 Scope	X					
2.3 Classification/sectorization	X					
2.4 Basis for recording	X					
3. Accuracy and reliability						
3.1 Source data		X		The 1990/91 weights are out of date.	Weights for 1999/2000 and more representative geographical coverage will be introduced in the near future.	
3.2 Assessment of source data	X					
3.3 Statistical techniques		X		Some replacement items are treated as having zero price change in the month of introduction.		
3.4 Assessment and validation of intermediate data and statistical outputs	X					
3.5 Revision studies	X					
4. Serviceability						
4.1 Periodicity and timeliness		X		Only the index for Muscat is available monthly.	A monthly index for the whole country will be introduced in the near future.	
4.2 Consistency	X					
4.3 Revision policy and practice	X					

Table 2. Oman: Data Quality Assessment Framework (July 2003): Summary of Results for Price Statistics (Consumer Price Statistics)
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Key to symbols: NA = Not Applicable; O = Practice Observed; LO = Practice Largely Observed; LNO = Practice Largely Not Observed; NO = Practice Not Observed						
Element	Assessment			Comments on Assessment	Plans for Improvement and Target Dates*	
	O	LO	LNO			NO
5. Accessibility						
5.1 Data accessibility		X		There are no explanations of current-period developments; there is no preannounced schedule of release dates.	A detailed methodological guide will be published in the near future.	
5.2 Metadata accessibility			X	The only methodological guide currently available is the GDDS metadata on the DSBB.		
5.3 Assistance to users		X		Only a general contact point is included in the publications.		

* Authorities' plan as of February 23, 2004.

III. GOVERNMENT FINANCE STATISTICS⁴

0. Prerequisites of quality

0.1 *Legal and institutional environment*

0.1.1 *The responsibility for collecting, processing, and disseminating the statistics is clearly specified*

The responsibility to collect, process and disseminate fiscal data of government is clearly assigned in the *Financial Law*, Royal Decree No. 47/98 (disseminated only in Arabic, but translated in English for the benefit of the mission). In compliance with the law, the Ministry of Finance (MOF) was assigned the responsibility to deal with all matters related to the financial affairs of government. These responsibilities include measures taken to safeguard the property of government and the recording of all government transactions, including all revenue, expenditure, and financing transactions. The law provides the MOF with the authority to control all government accounts and instructs the MOF to issue a complete set of instructions to other government units on the processing and recording of all government transactions. Applicable to all budgetary and autonomous government agencies, these instructions cover all activities related to revenue, expenditure, financing, and debt of government. The law specifically stipulates that the final audited accounts of government must be made available six months after the end of the fiscal year.⁵ In addition, the *Financial Law* also stipulates line ministries' responsibilities in ensuring compliance with the requirements of the *Financial Law* and all regulations forthcoming from it. Each ministry is held accountable to the MOF for all forms of financial misconduct and is compelled to take immediate action should any form of financial misconduct come to their attention. The law provides for penalties to be imposed for financial misconduct of government officials.

Although the responsibility to compile government finance statistics (GFS) was not explicitly assigned in the *Financial Law*, the MOF adopted a chart of accounts in 1988, broadly aligned with the *Manual on Government Finance Statistics, 1986 (GFSM 1986)*. By implication, the compilation of fiscal data and the GFS became the responsibility of the MOF, who assigned it to its General Accounts Department (GAD). This development resulted in the integration of the production and the use of GFS in fiscal policy formulation, budget processing, and monitoring. The MOF also uses the accounting records to compile monthly and annual final

⁴ The assessment of government finance statistics is against the international standard, as set out in the IMF's *A Manual on Government Finance Statistics, 1986 (GFSM 1986)*. In this section, "fiscal data" refers to data on government's budgetary operations in general, and "GFS" refers to the fiscal data compiled and disseminated in accordance with the *GFSM 1986*.

⁵ The fiscal year of government commences on January 1.

accounts for analytical purposes and fiscal policy formulation. These accounts are disseminated in various publications, and details contained in the accounting system of government are used to compile the GFS for publication in the *Government Finance Statistics Yearbook (GFSY)* published by the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

0.1.2 Data sharing and coordination among data-producing agencies are adequate

Data sharing among government units, as well as data sharing with other data producing agencies, is adequate. All the financial data are captured on the Integrated Financial System (IFS), a sophisticated yet easily operated electronic accounting system. All government units as described in the scope of government are connected to the GAD by this system. The system allows for real time online access to all transactions of government. Each reporting entity has writing and reading access to their own data, while the State Audit Office and the Ministry of National Economy (MONE) were provided reading access to all records. The GAD has reading and writing access to the IFS and is the only unit that could affect any changes to data after they have been captured in the IFS. The MONE uses the accounting records from this system in the compilation of the national accounts. Data sharing and coordination with the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) are also adequate, and data feed into the balance of payments and monetary accounts. The MOF provides the CBO with data for use in the compilation of its statistics, and the CBO reproduces and analyzes MOF data in its monthly, quarterly, and annual publications. Data on the external debt of government feed directly into the balance of payments.

Data sharing and coordination among the CBO and the MOF on debt of government is also adequate. The CBO issues government securities on behalf of government. For this purpose, a technical committee, namely the Domestic Debt Committee, has been formed, including representative officials from the MOF and the CBO. The committee meets regularly to discuss government's financing requirements and to consider the liquidity of the domestic market. In addition to this formal contact, working relations among officials of the respective agencies are conducive to regular informal contact.

Regular meetings of the Financial Affairs and Energy Resources Council facilitate data sharing among executive government officials. Representatives of several government ministries at ministerial level, the deputy governor of the CBO, Advisors of the Sultan of Oman, the Secretary General of the Cabinet, and the Under Secretary of Financial Affairs serve on this council. The council meets frequently to discuss the stance of the economy, and special meetings of the council could be scheduled upon the identification of special needs.

0.1.3 Individual reporters' data are to be kept confidential and used for statistical purposes only

Fiscal data compiled in accordance with the *Financial Law* are based on actual accounting records. By nature, they are considered to be public information after the necessary quality controls are exercised and releases are approved by senior officials. Confidentiality of the data contained in regular releases is therefore not a relevant issue at the MOF. However, the

law on *Safeguarding of Public Property and Preventing of Conflict of Interest*, Royal Decree No. 39/82 (translated into English for the benefit of the mission), prohibits all government employees from using any information for personal gain and demands that all civil servants act according to the best conduct of their positions. To this effect, personnel regulations (circulars) clearly indicate to employees their code of conduct with regard to the maintenance of confidentiality. All government employees are also subject to the “Employee’s Rights and Duties Directory”, which describes employment conditions and employees’ rights. According to this document, all government employees are prohibited from disclosing any confidential matters of which they have knowledge as a result of their position.

0.1.4 Statistical reporting is ensured through legal mandate and/or measures to encourage response

Data on the revenue, expenditure, financing, and debt of government are recorded and reported to the MOF in accordance with the *Financial Law*. The law stipulates that annual final accounts of government must be released six months after the end of the fiscal year. However, the law also requires continuous monitoring of the budget execution process, which allows for monthly compilation of the fiscal data. The law includes provisions to enforce timely reporting to the MOF and also provides the MOF with the authority to require all units of central government to report fiscal data according to a format (template) determined by the MOF. Noncompliance with reporting requirements would constitute financial misconduct, which could result in prosecution.

The MOF Loans Department is responsible for the management of loan disbursements and repayments. The administration of domestic debt is the responsibility of the CBO on behalf of the MOF. In addition, the CBO and other depository corporations (ODCs) operate under the regulations stipulated in *General Instructions for the Maintenance of Government Accounts*. To this effect, these institutions are compelled to regularly provide data on the government’s bank accounts to the MOF. These instructions not only regulate the creation of new bank accounts, but also the operational and reporting issues related to government accounts. Data on loans and repayments are based on accounting records held by the MOF in the IFS, as well as in the Debt Management System of the Loans Department. These records are additional to the records kept in the government debt administration system of the CBO.

0.2 Resources

0.2.1 Staff, facilities, computing resources, and financing are commensurate with statistical programs

The GAD compiles GFS data as an output from its accounting system. The department, which comprises a director and eight other members, reports to the Director General of Treasury and Accounts. The staff cope with the current workload, although they are often under pressure, as is evident from the fact that staff members have to regularly work additional hours. This situation leaves no spare capacity for additional training and development work, which will have to be considered in light of envisaged improvements to

the accounting and statistical systems. Good management practices, such as officials working in close collaboration to provide back-up assistance for each position, are firmly in place.

The staff are well trained for their current needs; a high priority has been placed on continued in-house and external training in computer literacy, English, economics, and the GFS. The Director of the GAD attended GFS courses in Washington D.C., as well as in the Arab Monetary Fund in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. All the senior staff in the GAD, as well as subordinates, are well qualified and experienced in either accounting, or economics, or both. Several staff members attended courses on the *GFSM 1986* and other subjects in the Arab Monetary Fund. One member of the directorate recently attended the IMF course based on *Government Finance Statistics Manual 2001 (GFSM 2001)* at the Arab Monetary Fund.

Staff in the civil services are appointed in accordance with the *Civil Service Law*, Royal Decree No. 8/80 (translated into English for the benefit of the mission). All government employees, including the MOF staff, receive remuneration in accordance with and as regulated by the Civil Service Law without any exception made for specific professions. Although the remuneration is not at par with equivalent staff in the financial sectors (such as the CBO, commercial banks, and other financial institutions in the private sector), the government is highly regarded as a secure employer, which results in a low staff turnover. In cases where GAD loses staff members, the staff primarily move to the accounting offices of other government units, which indirectly benefit the GAD owing to the improvement in quality that these staff members bring to those institutions. The Civil Service Law also stipulates all other conditions of employment and provides for a code of conduct to be followed by all government employees.

The fiscal accounts of government are fully computerized. The IFS is in use in all government units, is integrated with the Human Resource System, and provides the facilities for all data collection and processing in the MOF. The system integrates the five-year plan, the budget process, and the recording of final outcomes of government's finances. Adequate protection of the IFS system is provided through secured access controls and several back-up procedures that are in place. Special efforts have been made to train staff in computer literacy and on the IFS system. Currently, about 95 percent of all the MOF staff are computer literate. Both hardware and software needs are sufficiently served by the network.

The budget of the GAD is integrated with the budget of the MOF. Within budgetary constraints, sufficient provision was made for the acquisition and maintenance of a pleasant working environment, adequate office equipment, and all other costs resulting from the collection of statistics. The financial planning of all government units falls within the five-year development plan, which provides rolling finances over the medium term for the development needs of the government.

0.2.2 Measures to ensure efficient use of resources are implemented

The allocation and management of resources is part of the overall management responsibilities of each ministry, including the MOF. In accordance with the *Financial Law*,

all ministers are responsible for ensuring that the resources of government, including financial resources, are used efficiently and in accordance with the law during the execution of their tasks. Misuse of resources must immediately be reported to the MOF, and ministers must take immediate action to rectify and protect the property of government.

In addition to the *Financial Law*, the *Protection of Public Property and Preventing of Conflict of Interest Law* (Royal Decree No. 39/82) also ensures the protection of the resources of government. The law (only available in Arabic) applies to all public employees, including all permanent and temporary government employees. The law reportedly stipulates that government employees (1) must at all times ensure the proper use of government property, (2) may not in any way derive additional personal benefits from their employment position, (3) may not assist any third party to benefit from government property, and (4) must at all times act according to the best expectations of them according to their position. This law also prohibits use of government resources for private purposes or for any purpose other than for the intended service of government. Provision was made for prosecution and strict punishment in the case of misconduct. Additional to punishment provided for in the criminal law, misconduct is punishable with immediate discharge, additional penalties, and the forfeiture of all end-of-services benefits.

The efficient use of staff resources is ensured through sound management practices and also through the conditions of employment provided for in the Civil Service Law. In accordance with this law, the performance of all employees of government is evaluated annually in accordance with a set of performance criteria. Both the performance criteria and promotion policies rigidly apply to all government employees and do not differentiate between employees in different professional positions. However, managers have the opportunity to differentiate and reward exceptional performance through a system of performance bonuses. Local expertise is supplemented by expert advice on management, technical and work processes, which are regularly sought in order to ensure the most efficient conduct of business.

0.3 *Relevance*

0.3.1 The relevance and practical utility of existing statistics in meeting users' needs are monitored

The MOF, line ministries, and other policymakers (including the CBO) use primarily fiscal data in determining, monitoring, and evaluating fiscal policy.

User needs other than that of government are not determined, and users are not consulted on the usefulness of fiscal statistics through any formal means. The fiscal data compiled by GAD serves as the basis of GFS, which is primarily compiled for publication in the *GFSY*. While the MOF publishes sufficient details for analytical purposes, more details from the final accounts are available (in Arabic and English) on the MOF's website. Although no formal feedback on the relevance of data is sought from users, a culture of informal contact

and feedback is imbedded in the government system. The website of the MOF (<http://www.mof.gov.om>) provides general contact details for any inquiries.

0.4 Other quality management

0.4.1 Processes are in place to focus on quality

The focus on quality within the MOF is evident from the legal framework, sound management practices, built-in quality controls of the IFS, internal routine audits, and independent state audit processes. Statistics are produced directly from the accounting records of government. Accounting and classification rules are imbedded in the system, and work processes include continuous reviews of the quality of the output with the aim to identify steps necessary to maintain and/or improve quality. The MOF regularly seeks expert guidance on technical, management, and technological aspects of the work processes.

0.4.2 Processes are in place to monitor the quality of the statistical program

The basis for the compilation of GFS is the administrative accounting records of government. The quality of the collection, processing and dissemination of GFS is ensured and monitored through well-established quality control processes. All payment transactions are automatically verified against approved budgeted amounts in the fully computerized IFS. Once verified, a payment voucher is requested and subjected to a pre-audit by internal auditors, checking, and validating the nature of the transaction. After approval the payment request is captured in the IFS, controlled by GAD before the final payment is affected. Similar quality control processes with regards to revenue and debt transactions are also well established.

The process of quality control ultimately results in random and routine audits performed by the State Audit Institution. In terms of the *State Audit Law* (Royal Decree No. 55/2000), the institution is an autonomous legal entity and enjoys financial, administrative, and operational independence. The institution is responsible for both performance and financial audits of all government entities, wholly and partially owned public entities, entities that receive guaranteed or subsidized debt, and all companies that have been granted a concession for a public utility or natural resources. The audit process requires regular reviews of noncompliance with the provisions of financial laws, rules, regulations, and systems in use in government entities. Audit reports document the contravention and require the entity concerned to investigate the situation. The result of the investigation, steps taken to rectify the situation, and steps instituted to prevent a recurrence of the contravention must be properly documented and submitted to the State Audit Office within 30 days. An annual report, containing issues of special significance, is submitted to His Majesty, the Sultan.

0.4.3 Processes are in place to deal with quality considerations in planning the statistical program

The MOF places a high priority on quality improvements in the work program and planning processes. External consultants were recently contracted to investigate the IFS with the view to modernizing and upgrading the system or replacing it. The need for this investigation was primarily instigated by the need to have a fully integrated e-government system. Consideration was also given to emerging needs resulting from international developments in accrual accounting for the public sector and the new approach to GFS presented in the *GFSM 2001*.

The planning process of the MOF is informed by regular feedback from users in general government units and the CBO through informal contact. However, no specific arrangements are in place to obtain feedback from other users of fiscal data. Since data are based on timely administrative records, the need for a trade-off between quality and timeliness was eliminated.

1. Assurances of integrity

1.1 Professionalism

1.1.1 Statistics are produced on an impartial basis

GFS are compiled from underlying administrative records of fiscal data and government accounts. The *Financial Law*, in assigning the responsibility for compiling government accounts, ensures the independence and authority of the compilers of the fiscal statistics. The law ensures the professional independence of the MOF without interference from other government agencies. Professionalism is actively promoted and supported within the MOF through formal and on-the-job training of staff and continuous participation in seminars, courses, and workshops arranged by regional and international organizations. Processes and activities in the workplace also promote a culture of professionalism through peer review of statistical work. Government statistics only cover budgetary accounts.

1.1.2 Choices of sources and statistical techniques as well as decisions about dissemination are informed solely by statistical considerations

The GFS data are based on actual records found in the IFS used by the MOF for its operational work. The availability of these records eliminates the need for a choice between other means of collection of statistical information. The choice of statistical techniques, for example processing and validation techniques, is based on measurement objectives and data requirements. Decisions on data dissemination, timing, media, and other aspects of dissemination are primarily vested in legal requirements and other regulations, which took into account statistical considerations when initially implemented.

1.1.3 The appropriate statistical entity is entitled to comment on erroneous interpretation and misuse of statistics

The MOF monitors media coverage of its data, allows senior officials to provide interpretation on technical aspects of the data, and permits response to the public on misinterpretations of the GFS data. Well-established customs and regulations deal with data misinterpretations, and cross-checking procedures are in place between the MOF, the CBO, and the MONE.

1.2 Transparency

1.2.1 The terms and conditions under which statistics are collected, processed, and disseminated are available to the public

Since the chart of accounts is aligned with *GFSM 1986*, the *Financial Law* implicitly governs the compilation of GFS. Circulars and regulations related to the budgeting and planning process are regularly issued and published in the government gazette available from the Ministry of Legal Affairs. The code of conduct applicable to all government employees has a legal basis and is available to the public on request. The MOF also issues financial circulars every year to spell out the budgeting process and terms and conditions for compiling government accounts. However, several documents disclosing the terms and conditions under which statistics are collected are available only in Arabic. The unavailability of these documents in English restricts the access of the wider international community to them. In addition, MOF officials are quite willing to assist users with acquiring these documents; however, the availability of these documents is not publicized.

1.2.2 Internal governmental access to statistics prior to their release is publicly identified

Annual government accounts are subjected to audit and approval procedures, as a legal requirement. Thus, since the annual GFS are compiled based on these accounts, they are not accessed prior to their release. However, monthly and quarterly fiscal data are released to the State Audit Institution, the CBO, and MONE approximately 15 days after the end of the reference period. At that time these accounts are also made available to all members of the Financial Affairs and Energy Resources Council (responsible for analyzing and formulating financial and economic policy) and the Secretariat-General of Cabinet. Information on the extent of internal government access to statistics prior to their release to the public is not made public.

1.2.3 Products of statistical agencies/units are clearly identified as such

Fiscal data disseminated in publications and websites are well identified as being compiled by the MOF. Where data are obtained from other agencies or sources, they are clearly acknowledged in footnotes, and the MOF requests attribution when its statistics are used or reproduced.

1.2.4 Advance notice is given of major changes in methodology, source data, and statistical techniques

The MOF has been using the same methodology (*GFSM 1986*), source data, and statistical techniques to compile GFS since 1988, which eliminated the need for such advance notice. Notices on changes and improvements in compilation practices and procedures, should there be any, are announced in regulations and circulars published in the government gazette.

1.3 Ethical standards

1.3.1 Guidelines for staff behavior are in place and are well known to the staff

All civil servants are recruited and appointed according to guidelines vested in the *Civil Service Law* (Royal Decree No. 8/80). The law regulates the appointment and conditions of appointment of all civil servants. All government employees are also subject to the *Protection of Public Property and Preventing of Conflict of Interest Law* (Royal Decree No. 39/82) that regulates the misuse of privileged information for personal gain and the misuse of any other property of government. In addition, the *Financial Law* stipulates certain specific responsibilities and behavior of MOF staff. Copies of these laws are readily available to all staff members.

The civil servants sign a code of conduct at the time of appointment. Ethical behavior is also guided by the “Employee’s Rights and Duties Directory,” available to all staff members. The directory stipulates the details of conditions of employment, the conduct expected of all civil servants, and the duties and responsibilities. The directory also stipulates disciplinary actions to be taken against any employee who breaches any condition of employment. The code of conduct firmly establishes the position of civil servants and demands that all employees act at all times with the dignity appropriate to their positions.

A strong culture for maintaining ethical standards is further enhanced by sound management practices and a system of mentoring and of peer review of individual behavior.

2. Methodological soundness

An interim period is provided for countries that have yet to adopt *GFSM 2001*, during which such countries will be assessed on the basis of the *GFSM 1986* guidelines outlined in the Data Quality Assessment Framework (DQAF) for GFS. After the interim period, assessment of methodological soundness for all countries should be based on *GFSM 2001*. To this effect it is important to note that the data for Oman were assessed against the *GFSM 1986*.

2.1 Concepts and definitions

2.1.1 The overall structure in terms of concepts and definitions follows internationally accepted standards, guidelines, or good practices

The compilation of fiscal accounts follows the analytical framework used by the MOF for its operational work and budgetary purposes. This framework is broadly based on the framework and recommendations promulgated in the *GFSM 1986*. All civil ministries follow this framework. *GFSM 1986* is embedded in the chart of accounts of these ministries. However, the exception is the non-civil units.⁶

Although a “migration path” from the *GFSM 1986* to *GFSM 2001* is not yet prepared, the MOF is well aware of the change in data requirements for the GFS. External consultants were recently contracted to investigate the IFS with the view to modernize and upgrade the system or to replace it with a new system. The need for this investigation was primarily instigated by the need to have a fully integrated e-government system. Consideration was also given to emerging needs related to international developments in accrual accounting for the public sector and the new approach to GFS presented in the *GFSM 2001*.

2.2 Scope

2.2.1 The scope is broadly consistent with internationally accepted standards, guidelines, or good practices

Fiscal data only cover central government budgetary accounts and central government debt. This is a significant departure from international standards. In Oman, the budgetary central government could be seen as the equivalent of the general government, owing to the absence of state governments and the inclusion of municipalities in the budgetary central government accounts. Municipalities in Oman do not form a separate level of government but are regarded as a specific budget vote in the central government account. The municipalities do not have independent government accounts but conduct their finances in exactly the same way as other government departments.

The fiscal data for the budgetary central government include the gross transactions of several market producers⁷ that market goods and services on a large scale—classified by *GFSM 1986* as public enterprises outside of general government. These types of institutions should be reported as public business enterprises/corporations and could be consolidated with general government to compile accounts for the public sector as a whole. However, the fiscal data in budgetary accounts identify the gross transactions of these market producers, allowing the correct treatment of them in the final GFS data contained in the *GFSY*.

⁶ Also referred to as self-accounting units.

⁷ Including the providers of posts, electricity, and water services.

Several fully and partially owned government agencies⁸ involved in financial and nonfinancial market activities are correctly excluded from the scope of the data. The scope also excludes several government employees' pension funds and a publicly run pension fund for private sector employees (Public Authority of Social Insurance (PASI)). The authorities classify these funds as public financial corporations (and hence, out of the general government sector) on the grounds that they are (1) separate institutional units, (2) autonomous and managed according to business principles, and (3) not social security schemes providing cover to the whole or a large part of the community. Contributions to PASI are borne by private sector employers, employees, and the government; while contributions to government employees' funds are borne by employees and the government (as the employer).

Fiscal data, as presented on a monthly and quarterly basis, include summarized details on revenue, expenditure, and financing, broadly in line with international requirements. Data contained in the fiscal accounts of government contain enough details to reasonably facilitate economic analysis and to serve as a proxy for GFS data. The scope of data available from the State's Final Accounts includes the detailed tables on revenue, expenditure (classified both economically and functionally), and financing by type of debt holder and instrument. The scope of data on government debt currently compiled (but not disseminated) includes details on the stock of government debt, as recommended by the General Data Dissemination System (GDDS). However, debt data are currently only disseminated in the *GFSY* and presented as a total of domestic and foreign debt respectively.

Fiscal data in the monthly accounts presentation are replaced by the State's Final Accounts, which become available annually after the completion of the State Audits. Details used in these accounts are subsequently used to compile the final GFS dataset.

2.3 Classification/sectorization

2.3.1 Classification/sectorization systems used are broadly consistent with internationally accepted standards, guidelines, or good practices

Fiscal data are compiled for the budgetary central government, which broadly is equivalent to the general government (see 2.2.1 for a discussion on the coverage of government). Revenue, grants, expenditure, lending, repayments and financing are broadly classified according to the *GFSM 1986*. Fiscal data in the summarized tables are presented with the following classification:

⁸ Including institutions such as the Public Authority for Stores and Strategic Food Reserves, Muscat Securities Market Authority, Oman Exhibition Center, Al Bustan Hotel, etc.

Revenue data are classified into five categories:

- Net oil revenue,
- Natural gas revenue,
- Other current revenue (subdivided into taxes and non-tax revenue in the detailed tables),
- Capital revenue, and
- Capital repayments (which comprise of repayments of lending to public authorities and other establishments).

Expenditure are classified into the following categories:

- Current expenditure
 - Salaries and wages
 - Purchases of commodities, transport, furniture, equipment and services
 - Interest paid on loans
- Investment expenditure
 - Construction projects and public acquisition and other investment expenditure
- Subsidies and transfers

The presentation of fiscal accounts broadly resembles the classification of the GFS, although certain differences in presentation should be noted.

Revenue: Transactions are appropriately classified as revenue according to international standards. A distinction is made between tax and non-tax revenue. Tax revenue is classified by whether they are (1) tax on income and profits, (2) tax on goods and services, and (3) tax on foreign trade. These main tax categories are generally consistent with GFS methodology, the exception being that net oil revenue (as presented in the fiscal accounts) includes certain taxes raised on the sale of oil. These taxes are, however, reclassified in the GFS. Non-tax revenues are defined according to the 1986 GFS methodology. However, grants received are not presented as revenue in the fiscal accounts—these are presented as financing. In the annual GFS data these grants are presented in the correct way.

Expenditure: Transactions are classified into current and investment (capital and development) expenditure. Transactions of civil ministries are appropriately classified as expenditures according to international standards. The classification of expenditure follows the economic classification according to *GFSM 1986*. Expenditure is also presented classified by government department, ministry, and by function of government according to the international standard (COFOG). However, the total expenditure of non-civil units is classified as current expenditure and is presented as a separate item in the fiscal accounts. Disaggregation and reclassification of these amounts in the GFS is currently not possible, owing to the unavailability of details on the nature of this spending.

Lending and repayments: In the fiscal accounts, financial investments of government and lending are included in expenditure, and the repayment of these presented as revenue.

However, in compiling the annual GFS data, the net of lending minus repayment is correctly presented in expenditure and net lending.

Grants: Net grants are included as an item of financing; however, in GFS compilation, these are included as revenue and expenditure, respectively.

Financing: The fiscal accounts present all the sources of funds obtained to cover government deficit as financing (including net grants as earlier discussed). This includes short-, medium-, and long-term loans. Domestic and foreign financing are shown separately.

Government debt: Data on government debt are classified in accordance with international standards, by type of debt instrument and by type of debt holder, by maturity, and by currency. Debt data are compiled on a monthly basis, but not disseminated accordingly.

Other methodological differences between the fiscal accounts and the international practice include the following:

Revenue and expenditure differ from the *GFSM 1986* in that:

- Revenue includes the gross receipts from sales by agencies that market goods and services to the public on a large scale (such as the post office, electricity, and water agencies).
- Expenditure includes the gross operating and other expenditure by these agencies.

It should be noted that the annual GFS data contain adjustments to the fiscal data to treat the revenue and expenditure of market producers in accordance with internationally accepted guidelines.

2.4 Basis for recording

2.4.1 Prices used to value flows and stocks reflect actual or expected cash payments

Data on government transactions are compiled in accordance with the *GFSM 1986*. Only cash transactions, reflecting actual prices, are recorded in GFS. Debt liabilities are recorded at face value (i.e., the amount to be paid at the end of the contract), rather than market value. Amounts denominated in foreign currency are converted into rials Omani using the exchange rate prevailing at the end of the financial year (31 December) as provided by CBO.

2.4.2 Recording is done on a cash basis

All budgetary government revenues and expenditure, lending, and repayments transactions are valued and recorded on a cash basis, and checks received and paid/issued basis, i.e., receipts and payments according to *GFSM 1986*. Borrowing is recorded at the value prevailing at the time of the drawing made, and foreign currency is converted into rials Omani at the time of transactions. All financing data are recorded on a cash basis in accordance with *GFSM 1986*.

2.4.3 Grossing/netting procedures are broadly consistent with internationally accepted standards, guidelines, or good practices

Although fiscal data do not strictly follow the *GFSM 1986* guideline in respect of grossing/netting, GFS data are correctly shown on a gross and/or net basis, as recommended by the *GFSM 1986*.

3. Accuracy and reliability

3.1 Source data

3.1.1 Source data are obtained from comprehensive data collection programs that take into account country-specific conditions

Data collection programs used to collect source data are comprehensive and based on accurate and reliable administrative records available in well-established electronic systems. These systems provide complete geographical coverage of government in Oman and therefore provide comprehensive and all-inclusive data sources. Source data on the operations of government (revenue and expenditure) are obtained from actual transactions by individual budgetary government units captured in the IFS. The system provides a real-time online link to the GAD. The MOF maintains complete sets of records of government internal and external borrowings, lending and repayments, guarantees issued by government, and the related interest flows in the IFS. The Loans Department, by means of a customized debt management system, also records these. The MOF maintains detailed records of government investments, subsidies, and transfers to government agencies. Online revenue, expenditure, lending, repayment, and financing data are available to the MOF in real time. Data on amounts owed to the PASI and government employee pension funds, necessary to calculate government's contribution to these funds, are received monthly directly from PASI and the government's human resources management system, respectively.

3.1.2 Source data reasonably approximate the definitions, scope, classifications, valuation, and time of recording required

Source data differentiate between the treatment of civil ministries and non-civil units. The definitions and classifications in use for the civil ministries are fully aligned with *GFSM 1986*. The IFS provides the GAD access to detailed records of all transactions defined, classified, and valued in accordance with *GFSM 1986*. Data on the spending of non-civil units are included in total current expenditure.

3.1.3 Source data are timely

The IFS enables online and real-time access to source data. Monthly fiscal data are available about two weeks after the end of the reference period, following the completion of aggregations and controls on the source data. Reporting units are aware of the reporting requirements that are firmly vested in the accounting rules and regulations.

3.2 *Assessment of source data*

3.2.1 Source data—including censuses, sample surveys and administrative records—are routinely assessed, e.g., for coverage, sample error, response error, and nonsampling error; the results of the assessments are monitored and made available to guide statistical processes

Source data are comprehensive and based on administrative records. The fully automated IFS and quality control procedures serve as a regular assessment of source data with the result that human error is to a great extent eliminated. All source data are subject to stringent auditing and authorization procedures. The output data are also subjected to routine audit and analyzing of figures, checking errors, and comparison of output with budget amounts and previous performance, to check for consistencies. All source data are assessed by cross-checking across different sources to ensure accuracy and reliability of data. Any peculiar data reported are investigated by follow-ups before the release of any data.

3.3 *Statistical techniques*

3.3.1 Data compilation employs sound statistical techniques to deal with data sources

The data compilation employs sound statistical techniques to deal with data sources. The MOF assesses monthly data to eliminate errors and omissions before their release. Should any discrepancies be discovered after release, the data are revised following corrections in the accounting records of the following month. Estimation of missing data is not needed because the data are based on actual and comprehensive accounting records. Monthly data cumulate to the preliminary outcome for the fiscal year. This preliminary outcome is replaced with final data subsequent to the completion of the audit of the State Final Accounts. Projections of annual budget outcomes are routinely done, based on the actual data for the completed months of the fiscal year and historic tendencies. Staff apply accepted statistical techniques, including extrapolation, to this estimation. Otherwise, no statistical techniques are applied to compile fiscal data.

3.3.2 Other statistical procedures (e.g., data adjustments and transformations, and statistical analysis) employ sound statistical techniques

To compile the annual GFS data, staff adjust the fiscal data. These adjustments include the netting of the transactions of the market producers currently included on a gross basis in the fiscal accounts and the consolidation of intragovernment transactions. No other statistical procedures are employed in compiling GFS, because the accounting records are based on the *GFSM 1986*.

3.4 Assessment and validation of intermediate data and statistical outputs

3.4.1 Intermediate results are validated against other information where applicable

The intermediate data on government finances comprise the financial results of individual government units. These are subject to quality controls as described in the processes in place to monitor quality (see 0.4.2).

3.4.2 Statistical discrepancies in intermediate data are assessed and investigated

Statistical discrepancies found in the results of individual government units are dealt with in accordance with the processes in place to monitor quality (see 0.4.2).

3.4.3 Statistical discrepancies and other potential indicators of problems in statistical outputs are investigated

Statistical discrepancies are regarded as an indicator of possible problems in source data and are investigated with a view to making improvements. All statistical output is routinely assessed for statistical discrepancies. To this effect, the Domestic Debt Committee, formed between MOF and CBO, investigates the discrepancy between financing data as calculated by the MOF and change in net claims on the government as derived from the records of the banking sector. In addition, an external firm of consultants was tasked to investigate the IFS system with the view to identifying any indicators of problems with the system and making recommendations on possible improvements or, alternatively, a replacement of the system. This investigation was also done with the view to assessing the feasibility of introducing e-government and enhancing government accounting systems to be aligned with international developments.

3.5 Revision studies

3.5.1 Studies and analyses of revisions are carried out routinely and used internally to inform statistical processes (see also 4.3.3)

All fiscal data are available in both electronic and hardcopy formats for revision studies. Because of the administrative nature of data and the practice of following *GFSM 1986* since 1988, revisions mainly result from reclassifications and corrections of human errors. Revisions result from the regular (annual) audit processes, which are supplemented with random audits and internal audits. No other revisions or revision studies are performed for fiscal statistics. The audit trail serves as well-documented revision studies. Audit reports document the nature of any discrepancies discovered and require a full investigation into the matter by the government entity involved. All government entities are required to document the result of their internal investigation, the remedial steps taken, and the measures introduced to avoid a reoccurrence of the contravention. No analyses are made of the revisions resulting from this process, but significant deviations between preliminary and final

data are explained when they occur. The documented audit reports are available internally but are not disclosed to the public.

4. Serviceability

4.1 Periodicity and timeliness

4.1.1 Periodicity follows dissemination standards

The GDDS recommends that countries disseminate central government budgetary aggregates quarterly and central government debt data at least annually, but it encourages countries to disseminate debt data quarterly. The periodicity of data on government budgetary operations and central government debt follows the GDDS recommendations. Although GFS data are only available annually, fiscal data that reasonably serve as a proxy for GFS data are disseminated monthly, as well as quarterly. The monthly and quarterly data are replaced by data contained in the State's Final Account when that account becomes available. The periodicity of the compilation of comprehensive debt data (available only in Arabic) also exceeds the recommendation of the GDDS, because data are compiled monthly although they are not disseminated to the public.

4.1.2 Timeliness follows dissemination standards

The GDDS recommends that central government budgetary aggregates be released with a timeliness of one quarter after the end of the reference period. Central government debt data are recommended to be released within one–two quarters after the end of the reference period. Oman's central government budgetary operations are in line with the timeliness recommended by the GDDS—they are released 45 days after the end of the reference period. MOF provides them to the CBO and the MONE 15 days after the end of the reference period, which by far exceeds the GDDS recommendation. These aggregates are replaced by data contained in the State's Final Account, which becomes available six months after the end of the reference month. The MOF does not disseminate any central government debt data in its national publications and websites. The only dissemination of central government debt relies on the publication of the *GFSY*, which is normally available within 11 months after the end of the reference period. The result is that the dissemination of central government debt data does not adhere to the recommendation of the GDDS. However, a comprehensive debt report, including data on the guaranteed debt, is compiled monthly, but is not disseminated to the public.

4.2 Consistency

4.2.1 Statistics are consistent within the dataset

Fiscal data were found to be internally consistent. Monthly and quarterly data accumulate to the annual data, and major aggregates equal the sum of their components. The deficit calculated by the MOF equals financing, and all bank balances are routinely reconciled with

accounting records. Data on financing of government could be reconciled with data on the changes in government debt if adjustments for revaluation of foreign debt (which were found to be small) and discounts were taken into consideration.

4.2.2 Statistics are consistent or reconcilable over a reasonable period of time

The MOF has compiled a set of consistent time series covering the period from 1980 onward. A break in some of the data was recorded in 1988 when the classification of accounts was revised to align with *GFSM 1986*. Changes in source data, mergings, and separations of government units, and new classifications are not introduced that often. However, in such instances, the historical series is reconstructed on a best effort basis. If breaks and discontinuities in the component time series occur, the causes are explained in footnotes and commentary in the States' Final Accounts.

4.2.3 Statistics are consistent or reconcilable with those obtained through other data sources and/or statistical frameworks

Fiscal accounts—the primary source of information used in compiling national accounts data on the general government sector—also directly feed into the balance of payments. Data are therefore consistent between the GFS, national accounts, and balance of payments. However, data on the financing of government compiled by the CBO and the MOF, respectively, were found to be inconsistent. The differences could result from differences in coverage of government and timing differences between the recording of transactions in the accounts of government and the processing of transactions in the banking system and differences in the valuation of debt instruments. A Public Debt Committee, established between the CBO and MOF, is investigating the nature of the discrepancies and has reduced them in recent periods. It should however be noted that other major aggregates are reconcilable between the MOF and the CBO. Data from the MOF records are consistent with data for claims on the government in the monetary survey, published in the CBO's monthly statistical bulletin in the case of commercial banks (the total negotiable and nonnegotiable domestic debt instruments). In addition, government external debts recorded in the MOF books are consistent with the banking sector data reported by the CBO for the balance of payments. Changes in outstanding debt could be checked with borrowing in the period, allowing for valuation changes. Foreign grants, revenue of exported commodities (oil, natural gas, and others), external financing, and external debt are also reconcilable with balance of payments data.

4.3 Revision policy and practice

4.3.1 Revisions follow a regular and transparent schedule

The revision policy and practice for fiscal data are firmly vested in the internal and external controls mandated by the legal framework within which government accounts are compiled. Revisions to monthly data are not permitted because of the forced closure of government accounts. The GAD can only effect minor corrections to monthly data in the month following

the reference month. Revision of annual data is effected after the completion of the independent state audits. These revisions were found not to be material and are usually the result of minor corrections and misclassifications. The revision cycle for fiscal accounts follows a regular and well-understood schedule, whereby preliminary data are replaced by final audited data. Although these revisions are few and of small amounts, revised data are not explicitly indicated. The nature and extent of the revisions are not widely available because the audit reports are not disseminated to the public.

4.3.2 Preliminary and/or revised data are clearly identified

Annual data of MOF clearly identify all preliminary data. Although the CBO publications clearly indicate preliminary and final data, they do not indicate specific revisions. Users are not generally informed about the cause or effect of revisions, owing to the unavailability of audit reports to the public.

4.3.3 Studies and analyses of revisions are made public (see also 3.5.1)

Because the MOF relies on actual administrative records, the only revisions that apply are those resulting from corrections following the audit. An audit trail records all discrepancies discovered, the investigations into the cause of the discrepancy, the steps taken to correct them, and the measures introduced to avoid reoccurrence. However, these documents are only available internally and could not be used to inform the public on the nature of revisions. It should however be noted that preliminary data are usually close to final data and could be relied upon for analytical purposes. Deviations between preliminary and final data for a specific year are explained in the MOF government final accounts.

5. Accessibility

5.1 Data accessibility

5.1.1 Statistics are presented in a way that facilitates proper interpretation and meaningful comparisons (layout and clarity of text, tables, and charts)

Annual GFS data are disseminated according to the standard components of the *GFSM 1986* as presented in the *GFSY*. Annual fiscal data on the operations of government as presented in the State's Final Accounts are disseminated clearly in national publications and on the MOF website. These accounts include charts and tables to facilitate analysis. Data tables are clearly laid out and annotated by footnotes where appropriate. Comparable data for the last five years are presented and analyzed, and the current year outcome is also compared with the budget of the reference period.

In addition, to the annual data disseminated by the MOF, the CBO and MONE also disseminate data on government operations with a higher frequency in their respective publications. These publications include commentaries on current-period developments according to sound statistical analysis practices.

Data on the outstanding stock of government debt are only disseminated in the *GFSY*. These data are only presented as a breakdown between domestic and foreign debt. Explanatory notes or details on the total government debt are therefore not available, which reduces the usefulness of the debt data. However, it should be noted that the internally available government debt report (available in Arabic) contains details on the outstanding debt of government with appropriate breakdowns according to debt holder, instrument, currency, and maturity. These internal records also include detailed information on all guarantees issued by government.

5.1.2 Dissemination media and format are adequate

The MOF disseminates annual fiscal data in the State's Final Account and GFS data in the *GFSY*. Monthly fiscal data, from which quarterly data could be derived, are routinely compiled and provided to the CBO and MONE for use in the compilation of their statistics. These two institutions also include the monthly and annual data in several of their respective monthly, quarterly, and annual publication.⁹ The monthly time series are relatively short in these publications, but users could access them through special requests to the disseminating agencies. Other official publications such as the State's Budget and the MOF website (<http://www.mof.gov.om>), also include annual data on fiscal operations. The publications mentioned above are available in both Arabic and English.

Limited data on central government debt are available in the annual publication of the *GFSY*. No other dissemination medium exists for the release of government debt. The dissemination format for government debt statistics does not provide the details users may need.

5.1.3 Statistics are released on a preannounced schedule

The *Financial Law* and regular financial circulars specify the release schedule for the State's Final Accounts. These accounts are regularly released six months after the end of the fiscal year—coming at the end of June each year. The State's budgets are released on January 1, beginning the fiscal year. The release of GFS for publication in the *GFSY* relies on the release announced by the IMF's Statistics Department (STA). The MOF has no other release schedule that preannounces the release of the monthly data. Although the internal releases to the CBO and MONE follows a regular pattern, it is not made known to the public. The MOF relies on these institutions for the announcement of the release of their publications (including fiscal data).

⁹ The CBO disseminates a monthly statistical bulletin, quarterly statistical bulletin, and an annual report. The MONE disseminates a monthly statistical bulletin and a statistical yearbook.

5.1.4 Statistics are made available to all users at the same time

Annual statistics are made available to all interested users simultaneously. However, the public is not informed of the availability of monthly or quarterly data and of the procedures to access them. No preferential treatment of selected users was identified.

5.1.5 Statistics not routinely disseminated are made available upon request

Special requests for statistics not routinely disseminated are subject to management approval. The unpublished data are made available free upon request. However, the availability of this service is not specifically stated in the MOF's publications, and details on the procedure to obtain such requests are not explicitly made known. General contact details for the MOF are provided on their website, and the metadata on the IMF's DSBB website also contains contact details of the MOF.

5.2 Metadata accessibility

5.2.1 Documentation on concepts, scope, classifications, basis of recording, data sources, and statistical techniques is available, and differences from internationally accepted standards, guidelines, or good practices are annotated

No detailed documentation exists of concepts, scope, classification, basis for recording data sources, and statistical techniques, although some broad guidelines are provided in the *Financial Law*. Summarized metadata are available on the IMF's DSBB website, but users are not cross-referred to the DSBB website on the MOF website or in its publications. The MOF has stated its intent to hyperlink its website to the DSBB website to improve accessibility to these summary GFS metadata. The summarized metadata are updated according to a regular revision schedule and immediately if major changes in any of the aspects of the metadata occur.

5.2.2 Levels of detail are adapted to the needs of the intended audience

Metadata are not specifically adapted to the needs of different users.

5.3 Assistance to users

5.3.1 Contact points for each subject field are publicized

The MOF's website provides a general telephone and facsimile number to be used for queries to the MOF. However, the published State's Final Accounts and Budget documents do not identify a contact point for the MOF. Although data contained in publications of CBO and MONE cross-refer to the MOF, no contact details for fiscal related inquiries are provided. Access points for clients to obtain statistical information are not advertised, and no material to raise users' awareness of the availability or use of the statistics is available. The contact person for GFS is publicized in the metadata for Oman on the IMF's DSBB website. In cases

where users require assistance, these cases are monitored through informal follow-up, as an integral part of the general management in the ministry.

5.3.2 Catalogs of publications, documents, and other services, including information on any changes, are widely available

Catalogs of publications containing GFS are not available, and general assistance in obtaining any MOF publications is not available.

Table 3. Oman: Data Quality Assessment Framework (July 2003): Summary of Results for Government Finance Statistics
(Compiling Agency: Ministry of Finance)

Key to symbols: NA = Not Applicable; O = Practice Observed; LO = Practice Largely Observed; LNO = Practice Largely Not Observed; NO = Practice Not Observed						
Element	Assessment			Comments on Assessment	Plans for Improvement and Target Dates*	
	O	LO	LNO			NO
0. Prerequisites of quality						
0.1 Legal and institutional environment	X					
0.2 Resources	X	X		User needs other than that of government agencies are not surveyed.		
0.3 Relevance						
0.4 Other quality management	X					
1. Assurances of integrity						
1.1 Professionalism		X		GFS only cover budgetary accounts.		
1.2 Transparency		X		Internal government access to statistics prior to release are not publicly identified.		
1.3 Ethical standards	X					
2. Methodological soundness						
2.1 Concepts and definitions		X		Broadly follows <i>GFSM 1986</i> with certain exceptions.		Improve government accounting system with the aim to improve methodology.
2.2 Scope			X	GFS only cover budgetary accounts. This is a significant departure from international guidelines. Only summary tables of government operations are disseminated on a monthly and quarterly basis. No detailed data on government debt.		
2.3 Classification/sectorization		X		Non-civil units' detailed expenditure is not classified correctly in fiscal data. Grants are presented as financing. Oil revenue includes taxes on oil companies. Sectorization of government—currently including market producers on a gross basis. Municipalities are not regarded as separate level of government.		
2.4 Basis for recording	X					

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Element	Assessment			Comments on Assessment	Plans for Improvement and Target Dates*	
	O	LO	LNO			NO
3. Accuracy and reliability						
3.1 Source data		X			Investigate government accounting system with the aim to improve source data.	
3.2 Assessment of source data	X					
3.3 Statistical techniques	X					
3.4 Assessment and validation of intermediate data and statistical outputs	X					
3.5 Revision studies	X					
4. Serviceability						
4.1 Periodicity and timeliness		X			Disseminate annual central government debt data.	
4.2 Consistency		X			Timeliness of debt data does not adhere to GDDS recommendation. Discrepancy between financing calculated by MOF and claims on the government calculated by CBO. Revised data are not specifically identified and explained when reproduced in CBO publications. Audit reports are not made public.	
4.3 Revision policy and practice		X				
5. Accessibility						
5.1 Data accessibility		X			Improve the MOF website with the aim to disseminate data and metadata.	
5.2 Metadata accessibility			X		Limited debt data are only available in <i>GFSY</i> . Debt data are not available with commentaries or explanation. Government operations (M, Q) are only available in summarized format. Metadata are only available on IMF's DSBB website. No cross-reference or hyperlink to DSBB. No specific contact point for MOF data is identified. No catalog of publications is available. No assistance to obtain MOF data or publications is published.	
5.3 Assistance to users			X			

* Authorities' plans as of February 23, 2004.

IV. MONETARY STATISTICS

0. Prerequisites of quality

0.1 *Legal and institutional environment*

0.1.1 *The responsibility for collecting, processing, and disseminating the statistics is clearly specified*

The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) is responsible for collecting, compiling, and disseminating the analytical accounts of the central bank and the banking sector. The legal authority is provided for the CBO by the *Banking Law* (Royal Decree No. 114/2000). Article 17(a) of the law states, “The Central Bank shall prepare a monthly statement for distribution to each governor showing the financial condition of the Central Bank, including a statement of the domestic and foreign currencies held as reserves, the amount, nature and maturity of commercial papers and other negotiable instruments owned or held by the Central Bank and a statement of the assets and liabilities of the Central Bank. A summary of such statements shall be prepared for publication in the official gazette quarterly.”

The *Banking Law* also empowers the CBO with the authority to collect data from the banks. Article 72(a) of the *Banking Law* states, “Each licensed bank shall submit to the Central Bank an annual report, audited by independent auditors, pursuant to procedures established by the Central Bank, and such other interim reports, and a monthly report, at such times and in such form as may be prescribed by regulations of the Central Bank.” Article 72(f) implicitly provides for the CBO to compile and disseminate monetary statistics. It stipulates, “The Central Bank shall establish regulations regarding the accounting and reporting procedures to be utilized in the preparation and submission of reports under this Article 72 to ensure accuracy and uniformity in the collection, compilation, and distribution of information submitted or requested pursuant to any provision of this Law.” The *Banking Law* does not explicitly provide a requirement for the CBO to compile and disseminate the data. However, the CBO has been compiling and disseminating monetary statistics since its inception.

The CBO may also conduct surveys either solely or together with the Ministry of National Economy (MONE) as part of the annual plan approved by the Statistical Advisory Committee (SAC) as per *The Statistical Law* (Royal Decree No. 29/2001).

0.1.2 *Data sharing and coordination among data-producing agencies are adequate*

The CBO is the sole institution involved in compiling monetary statistics. The responsibility for compilation of monetary statistics is assigned to the Economic Research and Statistics Department (ERSD). The ERSD collects all the requisite source data needed for this purpose. There are arrangements in place to ensure the smooth flow of information between the ERSD and the departments of Banking Development (BDD), Banking Examination (BED), Banking Surveillance (BSD), Financial Management (FMD), and Treasury and Monetary Operations (TMOD).

The CBO also collects detailed records on quarterly credit and deposit positions of government units with the banks in the report forms RD7 and transmits them routinely to the Ministry of Finance (MOF) for the MOF's needs for its own statistical compilation and data verification programs.¹⁰ The CBO also conducts regular meetings with the MOF, including monthly meetings of the public debt committee, called Working Group on the Government of Oman Financial and Domestic Debt Management Policies.¹¹ Sometimes subcommittees from these institutions meet more frequently to assess the liquidity situation in the economy and the issuance of treasury bills. During these meetings data issues are discussed and data collected from both institutions are shared.

The CBO considers that arrangements with other data producing agencies are well-coordinated. There does not appear to be duplication of efforts in collecting or compiling statistics.

0.1.3 Individual reporters' data are to be kept confidential and used for statistical purposes only

The CBO does not disclose data on individual banks to anyone outside the institution. However, within the CBO, ERSD and the banking control departments (BDD, BED, and BSD) have access to the returns from individual banks as submitted in the report forms RD1 through RD15 (see 3.1.1). All other CBO departments have access only to the aggregated balance sheet of the banks, which is provided to any outside requestor as well. Within the ERSD, each concerned staff member has access to both the electronic and hardcopy versions of the data for individual banks. Each computer workstation within the ERSD is password protected. Within other banking control departments, only a selected few have access to the data for individual banks.

Each staff member of the CBO is required to maintain the confidentiality of data submitted by banks. Article 24(a) of the *Banking Law* states, "Members of the Board of Governors and all officials, employees, advisers, special experts or consultants appointed hereunder shall not disclose any information acquired in the performance of their functions except when such disclosure is necessary to the fulfillment of their duties and is made to other central bank personnel or other authorized representatives of the Central Bank, when such person is called

¹⁰ It is because the existing legal mandate does not allow the MOF to obtain data directly from the banks as per the *Banking Law*. Article 70(a) of the law states, "neither government agency nor any person shall ask a licensed bank directly to disclose any information or to take any action relating to any customer. Such request in all cases shall be submitted to the Central Bank."

¹¹ Several other committees/working groups have been formed in Oman with representatives from various government agencies (e.g., Capital Market Authority). They also provide alternative ways to discuss any statistical issues that arise.

to give evidence in a judicial or similar proceeding before a tribunal created under the laws of the Sultanate or when such disclosure is necessary to the fulfillment of obligations imposed by other laws of the Sultanate or to foreign Central Banks or other regulators responsible for the supervision of any aspect of activities of banks in Oman or their branches or affiliates abroad.” Furthermore, Article 24(c) indicates, “Any person who contravenes the provisions of this Article shall be subject to prosecution under the provisions of Chapter Two, Title Two, Book Two of the Penal Code of Oman as amended from time to time.”¹²

In addition to the *Banking Law*, the *Statistical Law* provides the required legal framework to maintain confidentiality. Article 10 of the *Statistical Law* stipulates that violations to confidentiality may be penalized by up to six months of imprisonment and/or a fine not to exceed 500 rials Omani (US\$1,300).

In addition to the two laws mentioned above, the CBO’s *Staff Regulations* (1995) establish the confidentiality issue in Article 3–4. Accordingly, staff are required to sign a form called “Central Bank of Oman Declaration of Secrecy” when they join the CBO. This form says, “In accordance with Article 2.1.19 of the Sultanate of Oman Banking Law of 1974 and Article 3-4-2 of the Bank’s Staff Regulations for Employees and Article 164 of the Penal Law of 1974, I _____, having entered the service of the Central Bank of Oman on the _____, do solemnly, upon honor, declare that I will not, at any time, disclose any information acquired in performance of my duties either during my term of service or at any future time should I cease to be in the service of the Bank, except only when I am legally bound to do so in the course of my duties, or to a competent court or in compliance to other laws of the Sultanate of Oman. I also agree that any violation of confidence on my part as herein-before expressed shall render me liable to summary dismissal.”

Therefore, staff are well trained and fully cognizant of the requirements of confidentiality. Reportedly, no cases of prosecution have occurred in this regard.

0.1.4 Statistical reporting is ensured through legal mandate and/or measures to encourage response

The *Banking Law* contains legal provisions underpinning the obligation of licensed banks to report data to the CBO. This law has provisions for imposing penalties and/or sanctions for noncompliance or failure to submit reports. Article 74 of the law stipulates, “A licensed bank which shall fail to cooperate in any examination by the Central Bank or to submit reports required under this Law shall be subject to suspension or withdrawal of its license or such

¹² Article 164 of the *Penal Code of Oman* (issued by Royal Decree No. 7/74), Chapter Two, Title Two, and Book Two concerns the offenses committed by the government employees. It states, “An employee who without lawful cause discloses any confidential information acquired by reason of his post, shall be punished with a term of imprisonment not exceeding three years or with a fine of 20 to 200 rials Omani.”

other sanctions as may be appropriate pursuant to Article 14(g) and 83 of this Law.” Article 10 of the *Statistical Law* also provides for penalties for refusing to provide data. It states, “Any person who refuses to provide the required data or knowingly provide incorrect data as per the provisions of this Law shall be punishable with a fine not exceeding 300 rials Omani.” However, noncompliance has been very rare.

The banks submit to various departments of the CBO several reports on a daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, and yearly basis. The CBO is mindful of not overburdening the banks on data reporting. New reports are requested from the banks only upon consultation among all the relevant departments and upon making sure that the duplication of reporting is not created. The CBO staff also maintain goodwill with the banks by providing appropriate support in preparing the report forms, transmitting data, and identifying contact persons in the CBO for banks to consult for any data-related issues.

0.2 Resources

0.2.1 Staff, facilities, computing resources, and financing are commensurate with statistical programs

The ERSD has 26 staff members, five of whom are assigned to the Money and Banking Section to compile monetary statistics. These staff are responsible for collecting, compiling, and disseminating monetary statistics. Some staff are also responsible for statistical concepts and methodology, improvement of the coverage and accuracy of monetary data, and the compilation and dissemination of data to international financial organizations.

Overall, staff resources are commensurate with statistical programs. There is little turnover of staff. The new staff are recruited on a competitive basis. Only candidates with bachelor’s degrees (economics/computer science) or, preferably, with master’s degree are recruited to professional posts. The new recruits are provided on-the-job training and are encouraged to participate in the seminars/courses offered within and outside the CBO. The staff also attend the courses offered by the international organizations (such as the Arab Monetary Fund and the IMF), and by the other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries.

Computer resources are adequate and are available to those who require them for their work. The Information Technology Department (ITD) backs up the database weekly on a network server, while the ERSD does it monthly on compact disks.

Every year, ERSD submits its budget to the CBO’s Budget Committee. If any increase is needed, the additional resources are requested in the budget process. The Budget Committee reviews the proposals and submits its recommendations to the Executive President. The draft budget of the CBO is then debated and approved by the Board of Governors.

0.2.2 Measures to ensure efficient use of resources are implemented

Each year, the ERSD staff undergo the performance review process. Accordingly, the Head of the Money and Banking Section evaluates the performance of each staff in the section and sends the evaluations to the Senior Manager of the ERSD. The staff are rated on a scale from one to five. Upon further review by the Senior Manager, these reports are submitted to the Annual Increment Review Committee for salary increase and promotion. In addition, the work performed by the staff is continuously monitored throughout the year. The performance appraisals and continuous monitoring of the work of the staff ensure the efficient use of resources. The efficiency is also gained by providing adequate computer facilities (both hardware and software) to the staff members. The staff are well trained and motivated, and computer resources are suitable for statistical needs. An annual budget from the ERSD submitted to the Budget Committee incorporates any additional resources necessary. The periodic discussions with the banking control departments streamline the process of data gathering from the banks and data reporting to other departments within the CBO, thereby making the data collection process more efficient.

0.3 Relevance

0.3.1 The relevance and practical utility of existing statistics in meeting users' needs are monitored

In the compilation of monetary statistics, priority is given to meeting the requirements of macroeconomic analysis and policymaking within the CBO. The ERSD monitors the usability of published monetary statistics through the bilateral and annual meetings with the bankers, as well as requests from the press for data and information. The senior CBO officials participate in statistical meetings and seminars organized by professional organizations, such as the International Statistical Institute (including the Irving Fisher Committee on Central Bank Statistics), Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency, and so on. However, there are no formal meetings with data users. There is no user advisory group either.

0.4 Other quality management

0.4.1 Processes are in place to focus on quality

The CBO places high importance on the quality of statistics. The CBO itself follows, for its balance sheets, the international accounting standards (IAS), such as IAS 39 (see 2.4.1). The ERSD staff, in turn, exercise great care in compiling accurate monetary statistics. The department has a yearly action plan and periodic work program on various aspects of monetary statistics compilation. One of its plans in the medium term is to integrate its work program to compile and disseminate monetary statistics fully according to the *Monetary and Financial Statistics Manual (MFSM)*. Staff training programs, computer facilities (including computerized data processing and cross-checking procedures), and ongoing discussions with other departments, banks, and the MOF on data issues emphasize the CBO's commitment to

data quality. As will be explained in 3.4.2, if data for any major category for any given bank exceed data in a previous monthly return by more than 10 percent, the bank is immediately contacted for explanation.

The ERDS's training budget enables the staff to enhance the language skills in English and in the subject fields, such as accounting and finance. Some staff are also sent abroad for higher education (graduate program) with an explicit contract that they stay in service for several years upon their return to improve the methodological and compilation issues on monetary statistics. Two staff (including the Senior Manager of the ERSD) have returned to the CBO after obtaining their higher education from abroad, and have been working for a number of years since their return. Each staff in the Money and Banking section is expected to be completely knowledgeable about the banking return forms (source data—see 3.1.1). Therefore, in the absence of any one staff member another will be able to contact banks in case any data problems arise so that the monthly data are compiled on a timely basis.

0.4.2 Processes are in place to monitor the quality of the statistical program

The whole system of bank reporting contains built-in algorithms that facilitate cross-checking within a bank return and across various returns from an individual bank. The monitoring of the quality of the statistical program is an ongoing process. The ERSD's work program and the yearly action plan provide a mechanism to monitor the quality of its statistical program. The CBO balance sheet itself goes through internal and external auditing.

0.4.3 Processes are in place to deal with quality considerations in planning the statistical program

An ongoing process is in place to deal with the quality considerations in planning the statistical program—the CBO monitors the financial markets for any new developments and for any new instruments; IAS 39 has been adopted since 2001 to value financial instruments both by the CBO and the banks; and feedback from internal and external users, as well as the MOF, is carefully considered with a view to improving the CBO's collection and compilation system. In the event of a trade-off between timeliness and accuracy/reliability, the latter is given priority.

1. Assurances of integrity

1.1 Professionalism

1.1.1 Statistics are produced on an impartial basis

Statutory provisions in the *Banking Law* provide the legal basis for institutional independence and professionalism in compiling the monetary statistics. Article 6 of the law states, "The Central Bank shall be a juristic person, financially and administratively independent." And, Article 8(a) indicates, "The management of the Central Bank shall be entrusted to the Board of Governors which shall have full authority to perform all acts

required for the management and operations of the Central Bank and the supervision of the banking business in the Sultanate. . . .”

Professionalism of the ERSD staff is aided by the CBO recruitment process. Successful candidates are selected solely on the performance in the written test and oral interviews. After the initial three-to-six month probationary period, either the new recruits are confirmed as regular staff or their employment contracts are terminated. The staff are provided on-the-job training and are encouraged to attend internal and external seminars. The staff are also encouraged to publish on economic and banking issues in the CBO’s bimonthly publication of *Al Markazi*. In addition, the staff are allowed to present papers in seminars or publish in external publications upon obtaining the clearance from the CBO.

1.1.2 Choices of sources and statistical techniques as well as decisions about dissemination are informed solely by statistical considerations

The choices of source data and statistical techniques are based solely on statistical considerations. The objective of the compilation system is to provide data suitable for the CBO’s macroeconomic policy decisions and for publication meeting the international standards. Accordingly, the ERSD collects source data from all the 14 commercial banks. No estimation is used. The dissemination of monetary statistics is based solely on statistical considerations. Monthly data on balance sheets of the CBO and commercial banks, as well as the monetary survey and various interest rate tables are produced within 45 days after the end of the reference month.

1.1.3 The appropriate statistical entity is entitled to comment on erroneous interpretation and misuse of statistics

The CBO has an active monitoring and response mechanism to comment on erroneous interpretation of its statistics. Usually, the BDD gathers articles appearing in various newspapers and other media on the CBO, and provides copies of them to other departments. Instances of misinterpretation have generally been few and far between. If the CBO identifies any erroneous interpretation of the statistics, it seeks clarifications from the news media and comments publicly in a timely manner through a press release in the same news media. All the outgoing press statements go with the signature of the Executive President.

1.2 Transparency

1.2.1 The terms and conditions under which statistics are collected, processed, and disseminated are available to the public

The public can obtain a copy of the *Banking Law* by contacting the CBO. The hardcopy of the law is available at an affordable price. The law explicitly refers to the CBO’s right to collect data and implicitly refers to the CBO’s responsibility to compile and disseminate monetary statistics. The law also discusses confidentiality and penalty for noncompliance of reporting (see 0.1.3). The table of contents of this document is shown on the CBO website,

although the entire document is not posted. The CBO website provides a list of publications and carries background information on the CBO.

1.2.2 Internal governmental access to statistics prior to their release is publicly identified

The extent of internal government access to statistics prior to their release to the public is not publicly identified (although prior access is acknowledged in the GDDS metadata). Data on monetary and credit aggregates are provided to the MONE for the purpose of including them in the MONE's *Monthly Statistical Bulletin* and/or for data production within the MONE.

1.2.3 Products of statistical agencies/units are clearly identified as such

The CBO's *Monthly Statistical Bulletin* and *Quarterly Statistical Bulletin* identify that the ERSD is responsible for publishing these documents. Both bulletins have tables and charts prepared from data provided by various departments within the CBO, by other government institutions (MOF and MONE), and by some banks. The tables based on CBO data identify the source as CBO (without indicating the name of the department). Tables based on data from the other institutions identify these institutions as the data source.

1.2.4 Advance notice is given of major changes in methodology, source data, and statistical techniques

Advance notice is not usually given of major changes in methodology, source data, and statistical techniques. Changes are indicated by footnotes only after they are introduced.

1.3 Ethical standards

1.3.1 Guidelines for staff behavior are in place and are well known to the staff

Guidelines for staff behavior, covering conflicts of interest, discipline, and ethical issues, are set out in the CBO's *Staff Regulations* (1995). This document is currently being revised. These procedures are well established and known to the staff and are strictly enforced. For example, the staff are required every year to make detailed declarations on their outside business interest, and seek permission from the CBO to obtain loans from the commercial banks beyond certain maximum levels, among others. New recruits are briefed on the staff regulations. Copies of the *Staff Regulations* (1995) in Arabic and English are kept in the reference section of the library. All staff members are required to sign a declaration of secrecy, which remains in effect even after they have left the CBO's employment (see 0.1.3).

2. Methodological soundness

2.1 Concepts and definitions

2.1.1 The overall structure in terms of concepts and definitions follows internationally accepted standards, guidelines, or good practices

The concepts and definitions used by the CBO to compile monetary statistics broadly conform to the guidelines outlined in the *MFSM*. The monthly monetary survey compiled by the CBO (Monetary Survey)¹³ is equivalent to the *MFSM*'s depository corporations/broad money survey. It presents measures of liquidity and its counterparts. There are two measures of monetary aggregates—M1 and M2. M1 is composed of currency in circulation (outside commercial banks) plus demand deposits of the resident nonbank, noncentral government sectors in rials Omani. M2 comprises M1 plus quasi money. Quasi money comprises savings and time deposits in rials Omani plus all foreign currency deposits (demand, savings, and time) of the sectors identified above. It also includes the certificates of deposits (CDs), in both the national and foreign currencies, issued by the commercial banks and held by the sectors identified above, and margins (commercial prepayments, held by the commercial banks for opening letters of credit and letters of guarantee for imports). These margins are equivalent to import deposits, which are not that restricted, account for less than 1 percent of all deposits, and have been stable over time.

The counterparts of the monetary aggregates are net claims on nonresidents and net domestic assets. Gross positions of foreign assets and foreign liabilities are not separately shown.¹⁴ Net domestic assets have the following four components: (1) net claims on central government; (2) claims on private sector; (3) claims on public enterprises; and (4) other items (net). In Oman, there are no state and local governments, and therefore the entire government sector refers to central government. The monetary survey does not provide any further sector and instrument breakdown.

The statistical bulletins also publish the sectoral balance sheet of the CBO (CBO: Assets and Liabilities) and of the commercial banks (Commercial Banks Combined Balance Sheet). These tables provide data for major categories of the balance sheets, without detailed sectoral and instrument breakdown. Since the CBO does not transact with domestic private sector and public nonfinancial corporations (identified in Oman as government wholly-owned entities and quasi government bodies), the entire domestic credit is accounted for by net claims on

¹³ Parenthetical references are to the tables in the CBO's *Monthly Statistical Bulletin* that are also disseminated in the CBO's *Quarterly Statistical Bulletin*, and in the CBO's *Annual Report*.

¹⁴ However, they can be derived from the sectoral balance sheets of the CBO and commercial banks, published separately in the CBO's statistical bulletins and the *Annual Report*.

the central government. The bulletins also contain tables with data on interest rates and breakdown of private sector deposits with the commercial banks by instruments and by currency. As mentioned in 0.4.1., authorities have work plans in the medium term to fully integrate their classification and sectorization scheme in line with the *MFSM*. These plans are also identified in the GDDS metadata.

2.2 *Scope*

2.2.1 *The scope is broadly consistent with internationally accepted standards, guidelines, or good practices*

For analytical purposes, the *MFSM* defines the other depository corporations (ODCs) as comprising resident financial corporations (except the central bank) and quasi-corporations mainly engaged in financial intermediation. The liabilities of these institutions consist of deposits or financial instruments considered deposit substitutes included in the definition of broad money. The national definition of broad money is thus fundamental to the methodology of the *MFSM*, in that it determines which units in the financial corporations sector are classified as ODCs. In line with the *MFSM* guidelines, the ODC subsector should include all financial corporations that issue liabilities (accept deposits or issue instruments that are considered as their substitutes) to be included in the national definition of broad money.

The scope of monetary statistics in Oman is broadly consistent with guidelines in the *MFSM*. The financial corporations sector in Oman consists of the CBO and 14 resident commercial banks, of which, five are domestic, and nine are branches of foreign banks. Branches of domestic banks abroad are considered nonresidents and are not included in the coverage.

There are also three specialized banks, which fall under the category of other financial corporations (OFCs) in the *MFSM* terminology. Of these three, the only private bank—Alliance Housing Bank—has begun to accept deposits over the last few years. The authorities have been monitoring this bank with a view to including it in the coverage of monetary statistics in the future. As of end-2003, customer deposits and the CDs at the Alliance Housing bank in relation to those of 14 commercial banks amounted to 1.4 percent (and assets of about 1.7 percent). A Bank Deposit Insurance Scheme is in place to guarantee the net deposits of any customer with a bank of up to 20,000 rials Omani or 75 percent of net deposits, whichever is less.¹⁵ In addition to the above institutions, the financial sector in Oman consists of OFCs, such as consumer finance and leasing companies, money exchange companies, insurance corporations, pension funds, money exchange companies, brokerage houses, and Muscat Securities Market (MSM).

¹⁵ See CBO, *Circular BM 756* (April 22, 1995), Article 12.

2.3 *Classification/sectorization*

2.3.1 *Classification/sectorization systems used are broadly consistent with internationally accepted standards, guidelines, or good practices*

The CBO uses the residency criterion to distinguish between domestic and external accounts for the compilation of monetary statistics. The delineation between resident and nonresident institutional units is in accordance with the *Balance of Payments Manual*, fifth edition (*BPM5*) and the *System of National Accounts 1993 (1993 SNA)*.¹⁶

The sectoral classification of the resident units, recommended in the *MFSM*, is as follows: (1) central bank; (2) ODCs; (3) OFCs—insurance corporations and pension funds; other financial intermediaries, except insurance corporations and pension funds; and financial auxiliaries; (4) central government; (5) state and local government; (6) public nonfinancial corporations; (7) other nonfinancial corporations; and (8) other resident sectors.

In Oman, the resident sectors are classified as follows: (1) CBO; (2) commercial banks; (3) specialized banks; (4) financial institutions other than banks; (5) government proper; (6) government wholly-owned entities; (7) quasi-government bodies; (8) private corporate sector; (9) individuals; and (10) others. Although the terminology used is not entirely in conformity, the sectorization of institutional units in Oman is mostly in line with the *MFSM*. Specifically, ODCs correspond to commercial banks; OFCs include specialized banks and financial institutions other than banks; public nonfinancial corporations comprise wholly-owned entities plus quasi-government bodies; other nonfinancial corporations refer to private corporate sector; and other resident sectors encompass households and nonprofit institutions serving households.

The principles underlying the classification of financial instruments in the monetary statistics are broadly consistent with the *MFSM*. Both the CBO and the commercial banks issue the CDs, but the purposes of these CDs differ. The CDs issued by the CBO are held only by the commercial banks for liquidity management purposes. On the other hand, commercial banks issue CDs to its customers as a substitute for deposits. The CBO Balance Sheet (CBO: Assets and Liabilities) identifies the issuance of CDs by the CBO separately under “Other Liabilities” and not in “Total Reserve Money” because as mentioned above these CDs are exclusively held by the commercial banks for liquidity management purposes (repo and reverse repo). The reserve money includes currency outside the CBO plus “Due to Local Banks” (see 4.2.1 for explanation for “Due to Local Banks”). Commercial banks, between them, and with the CBO, conduct repo operations using government bonds, treasury bills, and CDs issued by the CBO. These repo operations are correctly classified as collateralized loans as the *MFSM* recommends.

¹⁶ See CBO, *Circular BM 736* (October 25, 1994).

However, the practices followed by the CBO in compiling monetary statistics deviate from the recommendations of the *MFSM* in the following aspects:

- Deposits of pension funds with the commercial banks are indistinguishably included within the private sector deposits; the *MFSM* recommends classifying these funds separately under OFCs;¹⁷
- The category of “Securities” on the asset side of the table “Commercial Banks Combined Balance Sheet” includes both the shares and other equity (shares traded in the MSM) and securities other than shares (treasury bills and government bonds); the *MFSM* recommends classifying them into two distinct categories of (1) securities other than shares, and (2) shares and other equity;
- CDs issued by the commercial banks, sometimes, are classified under time deposits; the *MFSM* recommends classifying the CDs under the category of “securities other than shares”;
- Sectoral breakdown of the category “Private Sector Deposits” in the table “Commercial Banks Combined Balance Sheet” is not available; the *MFSM* recommends the breakdown of deposits by sectors;
- Accrued interest for deposits at the CBO, CDs issued by the CBO (and held by the commercial banks) and by the commercial banks, and treasury bills held by the commercial banks are not included with the underlying instruments; rather, they are classified under other assets and other liabilities as appropriate; the *MFSM* recommends including the accrued interest with the underlying instruments; and
- Financial derivatives are indistinguishably included under other assets/other liabilities;¹⁸ the *MFSM* recommends that they be kept as separate categories on the balance sheet, outside other assets/other liabilities because of their distinct nature as financial instruments.

¹⁷ Reclassification of pension fund deposits from those of private sector to those of the OFCs will affect only the composition and not the magnitude of the monetary aggregates, because deposits of both the private sector and the OFCs are already included in the monetary aggregates.

¹⁸ It is because only one commercial bank has positions in financial derivatives and they are correctly recorded on the balance sheet. However, the amount of these derivatives in terms of total assets of all 14 commercial banks is insignificant. Even the notional amount as of end-2003 was 27 million rials Omani (0.6 percent in terms of total assets of the commercial banks). The commercial banks supply the notional amount data as off-balance-sheet items in the report form RD3 (as discussed in 3.1.1).

2.4 Basis for recording

2.4.1 Market prices are used to value flows and stocks

The general recommendation of the *MFSM* is that the valuation of financial assets and liabilities should be done on the basis of market prices or market-price equivalents (fair values). The valuation of loans is an exception to this principle, and loan values should be based on creditors' outstanding claims without adjustment for expected loan losses. This amount comprises the outstanding principal plus any accrued interest and is referred to as the book value of a loan. Monetary gold and nonmonetary gold should be valued on the basis of the market price of gold. Holding gains and losses arising from changes in market values (or fair values) of financial assets and of outstanding liabilities should be recorded separately in a revaluation account.

In Oman, beginning in January 2001, the CBO and the banks have been following the IAS 39 to value financial assets and financial liabilities (see CBO, *Banking Circular*, BM 913 (May 5, 2001)).¹⁹ This new standard recommends the use of fair values and is in line with the *MFSM* recommendations on valuation of financial assets and financial liabilities. The current valuation system for various assets and liabilities of the CBO and commercial banks is as follows:

¹⁹ IAS 39 establishes standards for recognizing, measuring, and disclosing information on an enterprise's financial assets and financial liabilities. Among other things, IAS 39 requires the use of fair value for (1) derivative assets and liabilities, and (2) debt securities, equity shares, and other financial assets held for trading and available for sale. The held-to-maturity investments are usually valued using amortized cost method. The CBO and commercial banks follow these principles, except that the treasury bills are recorded at face value on the balance sheets of the commercial banks.

Financial Instruments	Valuation Methods Followed in the CBO Balance Sheet	Valuation Methods Followed in the Commercial Bank Balance Sheets
Monetary gold	Market price; New York closing price at the end of the last working day of the month	Not applicable
Special Drawing Rights (SDRs)	From the IMF website; last working day of the month	Not applicable
Foreign exchange (currency/deposits)	Last working day of the month in international markets; midpoint of the buying and selling rates	Last working day of the month in Oman; ²⁰ midpoint of the buying and selling rates
Deposits	Nominal value	Nominal value
Loans	Book value	Book value
Securities other than shares	Government bonds (market prices/fair values) CDs (nominal value)	T-bills (face value) Government bond (market prices/fair values) CDs (nominal value)
Shares and other equity (asset side)	Market prices	Market prices
Shares and other equity (liability side)	Book value	Book value

According to the *MFSM*, all stocks and flows denominated in foreign currency should be converted to national currency values at the market exchange rate prevailing at the time they are entered in the accounts. The midpoint between the buying and selling rates of exchange should be used so that any service charge is excluded. Both the CBO and commercial banks follow this principle. Consistent with the recommendation of the *MFSM*, the loan portfolio on the balance sheets of the commercial banks is valued at book value (to include the outstanding principal amount plus accrued interest) and is not adjusted for expected loan losses. Provisions for expected loan losses are recorded as a separate liability item called “Provisions for Bad and Doubtful Debts” in the RD2 form, and are classified as a separate liability category called “Provisions and Reserve Interest” in the table “Commercial Banks Combined Balance Sheet.” The CBO does not have any provisions for bad loans because it does not lend to banks. Therefore, in monetary statistics for Oman, except for treasury bills, all other financial instruments are valued according to the international standards, and are consistent with the *MFSM*.

The *MFSM* recommends that data be compiled on stocks and on each of the three flows components: *transactions*, *revaluations*, and *other changes in the volume of assets*. The CBO does not yet compile data on flows.

²⁰ Working week for commercial banks in Oman is Saturday through Thursday, and Friday is the weekend day. Therefore, the last working day of the week is Thursday.

2.4.2 Recording is done on an accrual basis

The *MFSM* recommends the compilation of monetary statistics on an accrual basis. Revenues and expenses should be recognized in the period in which they arise, regardless of when the corresponding cash flow actually occurs. The *MFSM* approach provides an economically meaningful way to obtain an accurate measure of the value of the asset/liability at a given point of time. The value of an instrument at any moment equals the discounted value of the future payments (interest and/or capital). Therefore, an instrument that is valued to include accrued interest reconciles past economic flows with future expected economic flows. In accordance with this principle, the *MFSM* recommends that interest due but not paid on financial instruments be incorporated into the outstanding amount of the financial asset or liability, rather than being treated as part of other accounts receivable/payable (other assets/other liabilities). Monetary statistics in Oman are compiled on an accrual basis, in line with the recommendations of the *MFSM*. Nevertheless, accrued interest for some financial instruments (as section 2.3.1 identifies) is not included within the underlying instruments, but classified as other assets/liabilities. Interest arrears (interest that is overdue for payment) are included in the underlying loan amount.

2.4.3 Grossing/netting procedures are broadly consistent with internationally accepted standards, guidelines, or good practices

In line with the principles of the *MFSM*, assets and liabilities of the CBO and commercial banks are collected and subsequently compiled on a gross basis. Claims on particular transactors are not netted against liabilities to those transactors. Gross data on assets are collected, and the various provisions (including the loan-loss provisions) are classified in a separate liability category called “Provisions and Reserve Interest.” The monetary survey is obtained by consolidating the CBO and commercial banks’ balance sheets by canceling out all outstanding claims and liabilities between the CBO and commercial banks and among the commercial banks.

3. Accuracy and reliability

3.1 Source data

3.1.1 Source data are obtained from comprehensive data collection programs that take into account country-specific conditions

The source data for compiling the balance sheet data of the CBO are from the monthly balance sheet of the CBO prepared by the FMD. The source data for compiling the sectoral balance sheet of the commercial banks is the monthly report forms submitted in hard copies and electronically as Excel spreadsheets by the commercial banks to the CBO. These forms are called RD forms (RD1–RD5), and they are transmitted to the server located in the ITD of

the CBO.²¹ From this network server the ERSD can directly download the individual bank returns to compile monetary statistics. The CBO also receives separate reports on the operations conducted by the branches of local banks abroad. All the report forms contain fairly sufficient details to classify sectors and instruments in line with the *MFSM* (as further discussed in 3.1.2), although the terminologies differ. To fully integrate with the *MFSM*, a detailed sectoral and instrument breakdown of data will be needed.

3.1.2 Source data reasonably approximate the definitions, scope, classifications, valuation, and time of recording required

The source data, reported in accordance with the CBO requirements, provide a reasonable approximation to the definitions, scope, classification, valuation, and timing of reporting needed for monetary statistics. But a detailed sectoral breakdown of private sector deposits with the commercial banks is not available. The accuracy of sectorization in the source data is enhanced by the registration process that the companies undergo to operate in Oman. All the companies should get a commercial registration number from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry as part of a licensing process, and the banks use this number to classify the companies into appropriate subsectors.

3.1.3 Source data are timely

The source data are timely. The balance sheet data of the CBO are available within 10 days after the end of the reference month. The commercial banks are required to submit the return forms within 15 days after the end of the reference month. The CBO takes about seven working days to compile monetary statistics. Therefore, monetary statistics are usually compiled within 25 days after the end of the reference month. Once the aggregate balance sheet is compiled and finalized by the ERSD, a summary version is placed in a secured network at the CBO. The commercial banks are provided secured access to download this aggregated balance sheet as soon as it is ready for their use (see 5.1.4).

²¹ Report forms RD1 and RD2 provide information on assets and liabilities, respectively, of the commercial banks, classified by resident and nonresident sectors. RD3 (“Contra Accounts and Other Information”) provides data on off-balance sheet items and some additional information underlying RD1 and RD2. Report forms RD4 and RD5 provide the currency breakdown (into rials Omani and foreign currency) of various categories of assets and liabilities (specified in RD1 and RD2, respectively). Previously, banks were also submitting foreign currency positions in RD6 to ERSD. But now this form has been sent directly to the BSD for risk management purposes. The banks also submit reports RD7 on government accounts, RD8 on domestic interbank lending rates, RD9–RD12 on deposits and lending by interest rates, and RD15 on lending by sectors.

3.2 *Assessment of source data*

3.2.1 Source data—including censuses, sample surveys and administrative records—are routinely assessed, e.g., for coverage, sample error, response error, and nonsampling error; the results of the assessments are monitored and made available to guide statistical processes

Once the commercial banks submit their returns, the ERSD undertakes a number of steps to validate the accuracy of data. A number of internal built-in checks verify the accuracy and consistency of data within a single return and across various returns submitted by an individual bank (see 3.1.1 for a list of returns submitted by each bank each month). The aggregate balance sheet prepared from the source data for all the commercial banks is carefully inspected by the Head of the Money and Banking Section and approved by the Senior Manager of the ERSD. The analysts also visually check these returns. If there are any unusual movements in any category, the ERSD staff contact the commercial banks for follow-up information and explanation. If any misreporting is noticed, the commercial banks are required to correct the mistake and resubmit both the hard copies and the electronic version of the returns. The current system also allows the CBO to examine “due to” and “due from” any two individual banks involved. Therefore, the current verification mechanism assures the accuracy of the source data.

3.3 *Statistical techniques*

3.3.1 Data compilation employs sound statistical techniques to deal with data sources

The CBO uses sound statistical techniques. Electronic data reporting, data processing, and automated validation procedures contribute to the production of accurate and timely monetary statistics. The ERSD staff compare the current monthly data with those from the previous months. If any series changes by more than 10 percent between these two periods, the ERSD staff immediately act to identify the source of these changes (either due to changes taking place in the commercial bank operations or due to any reporting error).

3.3.2 Other statistical procedures (e.g., data adjustments and transformations, and statistical analysis) employ sound statistical techniques

Because the commercial banks report data on time (with rare occurrences for slight delay of one or two days after the prescribed time period for submission) and the data collection program is comprehensive, there is no need to make any adjustments to compile monetary statistics. No seasonal adjustments are carried out.

3.4 *Assessment and validation of intermediate data and statistical outputs*

3.4.1 *Intermediate results are validated against other information where applicable*

The accuracy of the aggregate balance sheet of the commercial banks computed from the individual return forms (RD1–RD5) is cross-checked against the aggregate data from a number of other returns (e.g., RD9–RD12 on deposits and lending by interest rates, RD 15—lending by sectors). In some instances, the banking control departments contact the commercial banks for some specific data and they share these data with the ERSD. The ERSD, in turn, uses these opportunities to cross-check the returns submitted by the commercial banks previously for accuracy. In general, the ERSD uses a number of verification mechanisms to assess the intermediate data and statistical output.

3.4.2 *Statistical discrepancies in intermediate data are assessed and investigated*

The CBO investigates the nature and origin of any statistical discrepancies observed in the intermediate data. For example, in an event when the data between two months differ by more than 10 percent, the ERSD contacts the respective commercial banks immediately and seeks explanation for the sudden movements. If the movements are caused by misreporting, the commercial banks are required to resubmit the revised data, both in hardcopy and as electronic version.

3.4.3 *Statistical discrepancies and other potential indicators of problems in statistical outputs are investigated*

Any reporting errors and out-of-trend reporting by the banks are immediately investigated and addressed within a short time.

3.5 *Revision studies*

3.5.1 *Studies and analyses of revisions are carried out routinely and used internally to inform statistical processes (see also 4.3.3)*

Deviations, omissions, misreporting, processing error, and other potential problems in the data (e.g., erroneous sectorization of institutional units/misclassification of financial instruments) are identified, investigated, eventually corrected, and published as definitive monetary data. Nonetheless, neither formal revision studies nor documentation exist to explain the methods of revising the data, from which new compilers could benefit. Data are considered final when first released.

4. Serviceability

4.1 Periodicity and timeliness

4.1.1 Periodicity follows dissemination standards

GDSS recommends disseminating the analytical accounts of the central bank and the commercial banks on a monthly frequency, which is followed.

4.1.2 Timeliness follows dissemination standards

The analytical accounts of the CBO and the banking sector are disseminated on a monthly basis, consistent with the recommendations of the GDSS.

4.2 Consistency

4.2.1 Statistics are consistent within the dataset

The monetary statistics presented in the sectoral balance sheets of the CBO and commercial banks are internally consistent. The CBO does not have any claims on the commercial banks (shown as zero in the table “CBO: Assets and Liabilities” [Table 3 of the CBO’s *Monthly Statistical Bulletin*], which is confirmed by data showing no borrowing from the CBO in the table “Commercial Banks Combined Balance Sheet” [Table 7 of the CBO’s *Monthly Statistical Bulletin*]). The claims on the central bank (shown as “Cash and Deposits with the CBO”) in the table “Commercial Banks Combined Balance Sheet” are slightly lower than the “Currency with Commercial Banks” plus “Due to Local Banks” as shown in the table “CBO: Assets and Liabilities.” The slight differences are explained by the fact that the “Due to Local Banks” in the table “CBO: Assets and Liabilities” also contains a small amount of capital deposits of exchange companies (engaged in draft business, mainly to facilitate the remittances of the expatriates), brokerage and investment houses, and differences in timing of recording on the balance sheet. However, any minor differences are reconcilable.

4.2.2 Statistics are consistent or reconcilable over a reasonable period of time

Consistent time series are available for monetary statistics for about 10 years. Some of the major aggregates, including money supply figures, are available for longer time periods (back to January 1976) on a monthly basis. Breaks in the series owing to methodological developments are explained in footnotes.

4.2.3 Statistics are consistent or reconcilable with those obtained through other data sources and/or statistical frameworks

The source data for the banking flows in the balance of payments statistics are the foreign assets and foreign liabilities as reported in monetary statistics (except that the monetary statistics publish foreign assets/liabilities of 14 commercial banks, while the balance of

payments statistics also incorporate data from three specialized banks), and hence, they are largely consistent. However, there is a discrepancy between monetary statistics and government finance statistics (GFS), especially due to the differences in (1) coverage (as explained below), (2) time of recording (between the recording of transactions in the accounts of government and the processing of transactions in the banking system) of central government deposits with banks (in monetary statistics), and borrowings from the banks (in GFS), and (3) valuation of government bonds (the GFS record government bonds at face value, while monetary statistics at market prices or fair values). The public debt committee and various subgroups from the CBO and the MOF have been reconciling the differences for some time and the differences have been narrowing. In order to reduce the discrepancies much further, the MOF has requested the CBO to issue a circular to banks requesting them not to allow the government agencies to open accounts without permission from the MOF. Previously some agencies were opening accounts with commercial banks without informing the MOF.

4.3 *Revision policy and practice*

4.3.1 Revisions follow a regular and transparent schedule

There is no formal revisions policy. Revisions are infrequent and are made when needed. When the revised data are published, they are identified by footnotes.

4.3.2 Preliminary and/or revised data are clearly identified

Monetary data are considered final when first released. Since it is highly unlikely that data will be revised, the CBO's statistical publications do not include notes on the status of the data (preliminary or final) on a regular basis. However, for any reasons, if the data are revised, they are shown with appropriate footnotes in the publications.

4.3.3 Studies and analyses of revisions are made public (see also 3.5.1)

No studies and analyses are carried out routinely on the revisions to monetary data. Errors and data shortcomings in the data reported by banks are the focus of internal analysis. However, the public is not informed on the procedures that determine preliminary and revised data. In short, users are not informed of the causes of the revisions. The brief section on review of monetary and banking developments in the CBO's *Monthly Statistical Bulletin* and the discussion on monetary developments in the CBO's *Annual Report* implicitly discuss the reasons for revisions.

5. Accessibility

5.1 Data accessibility

5.1.1 Statistics are presented in a way that facilitates proper interpretation and meaningful comparisons (layout and clarity of text, tables, and charts)

The CBO's *Monthly Statistical Bulletin*, *Quarterly Statistical Bulletin*, and *Annual Report* include three standard tables: (1) CBO: Assets and Liabilities; (2) Commercial Banks Combined Balance Sheet; and (3) Monetary Survey. The monthly and quarterly bulletins also have a number of other tables on interest rates. Although the tables are presented to provide information on various balance sheet items, the presentation of the tables does not fully provide information to derive quasi money as presented in the monetary survey table from the underlying tables on the CBO and commercial bank balance sheets. Also, there is inadequate sectoral and instrument breakdown of various instruments (e.g., the category of "Other Domestic Securities" in the table "Commercial Banks Combined Balance Sheet"). Therefore, the tables, in general, provide several asset and liability items, but they do not have detailed sectoral and instrument classification to satisfactorily derive the categories presented in the table on monetary survey. The table "Commercial Banks Combined Balance Sheet" identifies the treasury bills "at cost," while the underlying data are indeed at face value.

5.1.2 Dissemination media and format are adequate

Monetary data are available as tables in the CBO's *Monthly Statistical Bulletin*, *Quarterly Statistical Bulletin*, and *Annual Report*. These publications are available as hard copies and are posted on the CBO website to meet the needs of data users. The CBO's monthly and quarterly statistical bulletins have historical data for three years (with a mix of monthly for a year and quarterly for some quarters of the previous two years), while the annual data are reported for five years in the CBO's *Annual Report*. The existing dissemination arrangement does not facilitate obtaining historical data conveniently.

5.1.3 Statistics are released on a preannounced schedule

An advance release calendar is posted on the CBO website indicating that both the CBO's monthly and quarterly statistical bulletins will be available within 45 days after the end of the reference month and quarter, respectively. The users are aware of this schedule and expect the publication of the bulletins on this date. Usually, the reports are released on time. However, the advance release calendar does not provide precise dates of release of these bulletins.

5.1.4 Statistics are made available to all users at the same time

The CBO's monthly and quarterly statistical bulletins are usually posted on the CBO website a few days before the hard copies are released. However, the ERSD makes available to all

commercial banks (providing both hardcopy and electronic access) prior to the data release to the public a table showing the combined balance sheet positions of all the 14 commercial banks for major aggregates. The ERSD compiles this table based on data submitted by the commercial banks in report forms RD1-RD5. According to the authorities, the existing practice helps each commercial bank assess its relative position within the banking system in a timely manner.

5.1.5 Statistics not routinely disseminated are made available upon request

Unpublished and nonconfidential data are made available upon request free of charge to the users. The CBO often receives such requests.

5.2 Metadata accessibility

5.2.1 Documentation on concepts, scope, classifications, basis of recording, data sources, and statistical techniques is available, and differences from internationally accepted standards, guidelines, or good practices are annotated

The CBO website has documentation on methodological notes listing selected variables appearing in various tables of the CBO's statistical bulletins and the *Annual Report* with a brief description, but the publications do not include such documentation. The GDDS metadata posted on the IMF's Dissemination Standards Bulletin Board (DSBB) website (<http://dsbb.imf.org/Applications/web/dsbbhome/>) provide important details on concepts, scope, classifications, basis for recording, data sources, statistical techniques, and deviations of the country practices from the internationally accepted guidelines or good practices. The CBO website, however, does not hyperlink to the GDDS metadata. ERSD staff respond promptly to all users' queries, when received.

5.2.2 Levels of detail are adapted to the needs of the intended audience

No brochures have been prepared to inform external users about monetary statistics. In general, no comprehensive documentation exists that meets the various needs of different users.

5.3 Assistance to users

5.3.1 Contact points for each subject field are publicized

Both the CBO's monthly and quarterly statistical bulletins identify that the ERSD is responsible for these publications, but show only the CBO's website address. The CBO's *Annual Report*, in addition, presents general telephone and facsimile numbers and e-mail address. Specific contact information for monetary statistics, however, is provided in the GDDS metadata posted on the IMF's DSBB website and on the CBO website. The CBO website also allows the users to submit their data requests online. The CBO has a policy of

replying to all the e-mails it receives, irrespective of the type of users. The ERSD responds promptly to these data requests and keeps documentation of the responses.

5.3.2 Catalogs of publications, documents, and other services, including information on any changes, are widely available

A list of publications is shown on the CBO website. The publications are available free of charge.

Table 4. Oman: Data Quality Assessment Framework (July 2003): Summary of Results for Monetary Statistics
(*Compiling Agency: Central Bank of Oman*)

Element		Assessment				Comments on Assessment	Plans for Improvement and Target Dates*
		O	LO	LNO	NO		
0. Prerequisites of quality							
0.1	Legal and institutional environment	X					
0.2	Resources	X					
0.3	Relevance		X			No user advisory group; no regular user meetings.	
0.4	Other quality management	X					
1. Assurances of integrity							
1.1	Professionalism	X					
1.2	Transparency		X			The extent of internal government access to statistics prior to their release is not publicly identified; charts in the statistical bulletins do not identify the source; and advance notice of major changes in methodology, source data, and statistical techniques is not usually given.	Give advance notice to the public when major changes are planned to take place in methodology.
1.3	Ethical standards	X					
2. Methodological soundness							
2.1	Concepts and definitions	X					
2.2	Scope	X					
2.3	Classification/sectorization		X			Pension fund deposits with the commercial banks are indistinguishably included within the private sector deposits; accrued interest on several financial instruments is not included in the respective underlying instruments (but included as other assets/other liabilities); and sectoral breakdown of private sector deposits with commercial banks is not available. Treasury bills are valued at face value.	Present monetary survey data consistent with the classification method of <i>MFSM</i> .
2.4	Basis for recording		X				
3. Accuracy and reliability							
3.1	Source data		X			Need further sectoral breakdown of private sector deposits with the commercial banks.	
3.2	Assessment of source data	X					
3.3	Statistical techniques	X					
3.4	Assessment and validation of intermediate data and statistical outputs	X					
3.5	Revision studies		X			Data are considered final when first released; no formal revision studies.	

Key to symbols: NA = Not Applicable; O = Practice Observed; LO = Practice Largely Observed; LNO = Practice Largely Not Observed; NO = Practice Not Observed; GDDS = Complies with GDDS Criteria

Table 4. Oman: Data Quality Assessment Framework (July 2003): Summary of Results for Monetary Statistics
(Compiling Agency: Central Bank of Oman)

Element	Assessment				Comments on Assessment	Plans for Improvement and Target Dates*
	O	LO	LNO	NO		
	Key to symbols: NA = Not Applicable; O = Practice Observed; LO = Practice Largely Observed; LNO = Practice Largely Not Observed; NO = Practice Not Observed; GDDS = Complies with GDDS Criteria					
4. Serviceability						
4.1 Periodicity and timeliness	X				Data discrepancy exists between monetary statistics and GFS; but the discrepancy is narrowing owing to regular reconciliation between the CBO and MOF.	
4.2 Consistency		X			The revisions to data are only implicitly discussed in the statistical publications.	
4.3 Revision policy and practice			X			
5. Accessibility						
5.1 Data accessibility		X			Need further sectoral and instrument breakdown of the tables—CBO: Assets and Liabilities, Commercial Banks Combined Balance Sheet, and Monetary Survey; longer time series on a monthly basis is not available; the advance release calendar does not provide precise dates of release; commercial banks have access to a monthly table showing the combined balance sheet positions of all commercial banks for major aggregates prior to the data release to the public.	Make the advance release calendars public.
5.2 Metadata accessibility			X		Only a very brief documentation on methodological notes is disseminated on the CBO website or in the statistical publications; no brochure and no clear documentation in other forms on the compilation of monetary statistics is available.	
5.3 Assistance to users			X		The CBO's monthly and quarterly statistical bulletins do not provide specific contact information for monetary statistics. The CBO's <i>Annual Report</i> identifies only the CBO's telephone and facsimile numbers, and e-mail address.	

*Authorities' plans as of February 23, 2004.

V. BALANCE OF PAYMENTS STATISTICS

0. Prerequisites of quality

0.1 *Legal and institutional environment*

0.1.1 *The responsibility for collecting, processing, and disseminating the statistics is clearly specified*

The legal and institutional environment under which the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) engages in statistical work on balance of payments statistics is largely set out in the *Banking Law* (Royal Decree No. 114/ 2000, December 2000), which provides the CBO with the authority to collect data from banks but does not explicitly mandate the publication of statistics. The *Statistical Law* additionally supports the CBO data collection process from the nonfinancial sector. Article 4 of the law clearly establishes that government units may collect and publish the statistical data in their areas of responsibility as approved in the annual statistical plan. The CBO has a tradition of compiling and disseminating balance of payments statistics as a public service. The *Statistical Law* creates the Statistical Advisory Committee (SAC), which is responsible for reviewing regulations under the *Statistical Law* before approval by the Ministry of National Economy (MONE), and coordinating statistical activities in Oman. The Executive President of the CBO is a member of this committee.

While the mission was in Oman, Ministerial Decision (7/2004) from the MONE was received. This decision describes, in detail, the formal procedures for conducting surveys under the *Statistical Law*. In order to implement and carry out surveys to collect balance of payments and international investment position (IIP) statistics, the CBO prepared a detailed work plan and submitted it to the SAC for review and approval. The plan included the reasons for the survey, the usefulness of the data, and a special form—*Survey of Requirements for Training in Statistical Area*. This form includes questions on the level and type of education of the staff and what type of experience they have working with statistics.

0.1.2 *Data sharing and coordination among data-producing agencies are adequate*

Balance of payments data compilation involves a coordinated process under which many ministries/government agencies (currently the primary sources of information on individual items of Oman's balance of payments) make available the necessary timely information to the CBO. The CBO, given its responsibility for timely compilation of balance of payments statistics, remains in regular contact with other agencies such as the Directorate General of Customs, Ministry of Finance (MOF), Ministry of Oil and Gas, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Awqaf & Islamic Affairs, and the MONE. Coordination failure or lack of cooperation from data providing agencies has never been a constraint to timely compilation of balance of payments statistics in Oman.

0.1.3 Individual reporters' data are to be kept confidential and used for statistical purposes only

The confidentiality of individual reporters' data is guaranteed through the following: the *Banking Law* (Articles 24 and 70), the *Statistical Law* (Article 8), the oath of secrecy sworn and signed by CBO staff, and the CBO code of conduct. In addition, covers of surveys state that the CBO guarantees the confidentiality of the information provided and that the purpose of the survey is to collect information for balance of payments statistics, which will be published. However, the questionnaire cover does not explicitly refer to the *Statistical Law*. The authorities state that information from public companies is published if the information is already in the public domain.

Penalties against staff who disclose confidential data are included in the rules and regulations to prevent disclosure—*Statistical Law* (Article 10) and the CBO code of conduct. Access to individual data is restricted to staff who require the information in the performance of their statistical duties. Confidentiality of data is appropriately guarded during storage and during the process of destruction of records (after six years data are archived, shredded, and subsequently incinerated).

0.1.4 Statistical reporting is ensured through legal mandate and/or measures to encourage response

The *Banking Law* (Article 72) facilitates statistical reporting for banks and the *Statistical Law* (Articles 6 and 10) for the nonbank sectors. Collection activity is consistent with the legal authority. Although there are penalties for noncompliance, the CBO prefers persuasion and goodwill rather than the use of legal force. With the surveys introduced in 2000–2001, the response rate has ranged from 67 percent to 100 percent.

The CBO has carefully designed its new surveys to minimize response burden. Surveys include the name and telephone number of a contact person to call for assistance, and this is an active practice in Oman.

0.2 Resources

0.2.1 Staff, facilities, computing resources, and financing are commensurate with statistical programs

The Economic Research and Statistics Department (ERSD) of the CBO has 26 staff and there is little turnover. In addition to the Senior Assistant Manager in charge of the balance of payments section, there are currently three staff members dedicated full-time to balance of payments issues. The staff benefit from the expertise of an experienced expert from the Reserve Bank of India working in their department.

Given the complexities of balance of payments compilation and the diversity of data sources, the present number of staff resources devoted to this area of work is not adequate and needs

to be augmented. The recent introduction of surveys to collect balance of payments transactions for the private nonbank sector and stock data for the IIP (and external debt of the private sector), more surveys planned for the future, statistical techniques to be updated, and documentation on methodology to be prepared, will require additional staff resources.

New staff are recruited on a competitive basis. Only candidates with a bachelor's degree in a related field (example, economics/computer science) or, preferably, with master's degree, are recruited to professional posts. The new recruits are provided with on-the-job training and are encouraged to participate in the seminars/courses offered within and outside the CBO.

Computing resources for compiling the statistics are adequate to perform the required tasks. An adequate emergency back-up system protects computer resources—the Information Technology Department (ITD) backs up the database weekly on a network server, while the department does it monthly on compact disks. Physical facilities and other resources are adequate to perform required tasks.

Every year, the department submits its budget to the CBO's Budget Committee where in, if need be, the department requests additional resources. The Budget Committee reviews the proposals and submits its recommendations to the Executive President. Finally, the Board of Governors discusses and approves the budget document.

0.2.2 Measures to ensure efficient use of resources are implemented

The review process of staff performance is transparent. An annual performance review by the Head of the Section assigns staff ratings on a scale from 1 to 5. The department Senior Manager reviews the appraisal and makes any additional comments. The appraisal then goes to the Annual Increment Review Committee. Constant monitoring of the work of the staff ensures the efficient use of available resources.

In June 2003, in response to a request for technical cooperation through the Arab Monetary Fund, an outside expert was assigned to assess in detail the sources and methods underlying the compilation of balance of payments statistics and related data on the IIP. The expert assisted the authorities to identify areas for improvement and expansion in the current coverage of data. The expert also evaluated the statistical methodologies and compilation systems for balance of payments statistics and made recommendations on staffing levels and future developments. The expert's report is being used extensively in the CBO's planning processes.

0.3 Relevance

0.3.1 The relevance and practical utility of existing statistics in meeting users' needs are monitored

In the compilation of balance of payments statistics, utmost importance is assigned to meeting the requirements of macroeconomic analysis and policymaking. A Balance of

Payments Committee meets to review and monitor the developments relevant for statistical and economic analysis. The committee met for the first time in 2002, with the Senior Manager of the ERSD as the Chairman. Other members of the committee include the General Manager of Planning in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the Manager of National Accounts Department in the MONE, the Director General of Customs & Royal Oman Police, and the General Manager of Oman's Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The March 2002 agenda comprised several items on balance of payments issues, including the roll of the committee in developing and updating the balance of payments to cope with different economic requirements. The committee also facilitates more effective coordination among various agencies, which provide primary information for the compilation of balance of payments data and are also important users of the data.

Needs of international organizations are also kept in mind, and suggestions for improvement in data that can help in enhancing the quality of analysis are included as part of future action plans to the extent possible. Consultations also take place with large public corporations, such as Petroleum Development Oman. Compilers monitor, and treat as useful feedback, the data needs and analyses appearing in the press and other academic work.

However, no formal, regularly scheduled consultations actively seek the needs of other nongovernmental users, including the press and academia, to review the usefulness of existing statistics and to identify emerging data requirements through users' advisory committees, or user surveys.

0.4 Other quality management

0.4.1 Processes are in place to focus on quality

There is recognition throughout the organization that quality builds trust and thus is a cornerstone of statistical work. Staff are aware of the importance of quality and use well-established processes to focus on quality management, such as measures to monitor and review the quality for ongoing activities. Their training includes quality awareness—quality statistics are their priority in terms of trade-offs, and they understand the interrelationships between datasets. Seeking the evaluation of an outside expert on the methodologies and compilation practices used to compile balance of payments statistics demonstrates the CBO's dedication to quality balance of payments statistics.

0.4.2 Processes are in place to monitor the quality of the statistical program

Measures are in place for a systematic monitoring and review of quality. With the introduction of surveys there is a need to monitor the quality achieved for response rates, timeliness evaluations, and revision history. The five surveys that were implemented between 2000 and 2001 have relatively small frames, and nonresponse is closely monitored. Timeliness is evaluated, and revisions although small are monitored.

Staff conduct reviews at least yearly to identify gaps in the data and plans for improvements of the quality of the balance of payments statistics. This is evident by the systematic improvements that have taken place since 2000.

The presence on the staff of an expert from the Reserve Bank of India provides access to expert guidance on the quality of the statistics and on strategies for improving data production.

0.4.3 Processes are in place to deal with quality considerations in planning the statistical program

The report carried out through the Arab Monetary Fund is being used as a tool in planning the statistical program for the balance of payments. Quality issues addressed in this report are taken into consideration in the planning process. Quality improvements have been identified (examples: increased coverage and classification, expansion of data sources such as surveys, and an increase in staffing), and some have already been put in place.

1. Assurances of integrity

1.1 Professionalism

1.1.1 Statistics are produced on an impartial basis

Statutory provisions in the *Banking Law* (Article 6 and Article 8A) provide the legal basis for institutional independence and professionalism in compiling balance of payments statistics. Professionalism is actively promoted and supported within the organization.

Recruitment and promotion are based on relevant aptitude and/or expertise in statistics (see review process in 0.2.2). Formal training is provided through attendance at the balance of payments course in Washington, D.C., as well as through regional courses at the Arab Monetary Fund and other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) institutions. The Senior Manager of the ERSD attends the International Financial Statistics Fisher Committee meeting/seminar. Experts from abroad who join the CBO staff provide on-the-job training. The CBO promotes a culture of professionalism—the staff are encouraged to write and present papers within and, subject to CBO approval and clearance, outside the CBO. *Al Markazi*, a bimonthly publication of the CBO, provides a forum for analytical and research work—for example Special Issues 2003/2004, Volume 28, includes an article on “Foreign Trade Analysis.”

1.1.2 Choices of sources and statistical techniques as well as decisions about dissemination are informed solely by statistical considerations

The choice of source data is based on measurement objectives and data requirements. The recent introduction of surveys to the balance of payments compilation system was designed to capture the external transactions and stocks of the private sector. Consideration has been given to a partial International Transactions Reporting System (ITRS) to further supplement

and cross-check data sources. Decisions to disseminate data are based solely on statistical considerations. Balance of payments data are disseminated annually in the CBO's *Annual Report*, which is scheduled to be published every year, around June.

1.1.3 The appropriate statistical entity is entitled to comment on erroneous interpretation and misuse of statistics

The Department closely monitors press writings on balance of payments issues, which at times may contain misinterpretation of statistics or their misuse. If the Department staff find any misrepresentations, they talk/meet with the parties involved for clarification (and also may arrange a meeting with the Executive President, if necessary).

1.2 Transparency

1.2.1 The terms and conditions under which statistics are collected, processed, and disseminated are available to the public

Public availability of the *Banking Law* and the *Statistical Law* foster transparency. However, apart from this, only limited written information is available to the public about the terms and conditions under which the statistical series are compiled and disseminated in national publications and on the CBO website. The tradition has been to make information available as requested—balance of payments staff are available to respond to any inquiry and provide prompt and comprehensive advice. However, no published compilation manual of balance of payments discusses the country-specific systems and procedures that underpin the compilation process in Oman (although an internal handbook on compilation procedures exists for CBO staff). Detailed information is available on the IMF's DSBB website.

1.2.2 Internal governmental access to statistics prior to their release is publicly identified

Balance of payments data released to the public (i.e. annual data) are not subject to preferential access by any agency, including the ministries. Estimates of quarterly balance of payments (not released to the public) are made available to the MONE as an input for generating quarterly GDP data. According to authorities, it is commonly known to the users of macroeconomic statistics of Oman that the CBO makes these internal estimates available for this purpose.

1.2.3 Products of statistical agencies/units are clearly identified as such

Data released to the public are clearly identified as the data-producing agency's product. The CBO requests attribution when its statistics are used or reproduced.

1.2.4 Advance notice is given of major changes in methodology, source data, and statistical techniques

It has not been the practice in Oman to provide formal advance notice before undertaking any major changes in methodology, source data, or statistical techniques. However, the Balance of Payments Committee addresses issues that include these changes. According to authorities, the practice has been to issue contemporaneous notices along with the actual data release.

1.3 Ethical standards

1.3.1 Guidelines for staff behavior are in place and are well known to the staff

The CBO has prepared a clear and comprehensive set of ethical standards in a code of conduct, which is detailed in the document “Central Bank of Oman Staff Regulations.” For example, section 3-7 deals with conflict of interest, and section 3-5-1 states that employees are forbidden from engaging in any political activity. Staff are made aware of the ethical standards at the time of hiring and are reminded of these standards periodically by management.

2. Methodological soundness

2.1 Concepts and definitions

2.1.1 The overall structure in terms of concepts and definitions follows internationally accepted standards, guidelines, or good practices

The overall conceptual framework and the methodology for the compilation of balance of payments statistics have broadly conformed to guidelines outlined in the *Balance of Payments Manual*, fifth edition (*BPM5*) since 2000. A revised data series is available from 1996.

Concepts and definitions used to compile the balance of payments statistics broadly conform to guidelines outlined in the *BPM5*. The residency principle is followed, transactors are defined correctly, and balance of payments transactions are defined according to *BPM5* guidelines—this includes applying the 10 percent ownership rule for foreign direct investment transactions.

2.2 Scope

2.2.1 The scope is broadly consistent with internationally accepted standards, guidelines, or good practices

The scope of the balance of payments is broadly consistent with guidelines outlined in the *BPM5*. Improvements have been made lately in the collection of data, including the coverage

of resident-nonresident transactions of the resident airline (Oman Air), foreign airlines, resident insurance companies, and the international receipts and settlements of the communications sector, as well as the international transactions of the port authorities.

Despite this progress, several gaps in the coverage remain. The main gap involves the nonfinancial private sector. The private oil sector is presently included; however, improvements in the collection of transactions for this industry would allow for better measurement and classification of these transactions.

Other gaps include the following:

- Transactions of foreign embassies in Oman and Omani embassies abroad,²²
- Pension funds,
- Portfolio assets,
- Interest income of bank's foreign security holdings (primarily U.S. treasury bills) and loans extended abroad,
- Direct investment abroad, although this is thought to be small (any direct investment by the government in Gulf Air),
- Any financial or operating leases Oman Air may have,
- Goods and services purchased by government entities abroad, and
- Short-term/long-term attribution of transactions in the other investment component.

To address some of the gaps, in January 2004, the CBO launched a survey of the nonfinancial private sector, targeting corporate enterprises. The CBO is also collecting stock data through this survey of corporate enterprises as well as through surveys designed for banks, nonbanking financial institutions, specialized financial institutions, insurance firms, pension funds, and the Capital Market Authority. Results are expected later this year.

2.3 Classification/sectorization

2.3.1 Classification/sectorization systems used are broadly consistent with internationally accepted standards, guidelines, or good practices

Classification and sectorization systems are generally consistent with internationally accepted standards. Institutional units are classified and attributed to the relevant sector. Transactions are generally classified to the relevant standard component, although there are exceptions:

²² Data for Omani embassies abroad are available to the authorities; however, they have not been included in the balance of payments because estimates for foreign embassies in Oman are not available.

- Goods are not broken down into the five categories recommended by *BPM5* (general merchandise, goods for processing, repairs on goods, goods procured in ports by carriers, and monetary gold). Presently, the customs authorities are working to collect the relevant information.
- Gross premiums and claims on insurance are included in “insurance services”²³ while freight insurance for imports is not classified in “insurance services” but included with goods (although this is believed to be small).
- The CBO includes the total change in commercial banks’ claims on nonresidents under other investment. Transactions in foreign securities (equities and debt instruments) should be reclassified to portfolio investment.
- The present method of recording the nonresident flows into local banks under portfolio investment includes some amounts that should be classified as direct investment.
- To be in line with the definition of reserve assets in the *BPM5* and the *International Reserves and Foreign Currency Liquidity: Guidelines for a Data Template*, the following conditions need to be met for these transactions to be considered reserve assets: (1) they are foreign currency claims on nonresidents, (2) they meet the criteria of liquidity or marketability, and (3) they are under the effective control of and readily available to the monetary authorities to meet a balance of payments need. If the above conditions are not met, the transactions need to be recorded under portfolio or other investment as appropriate. In reporting reserve position for the *IFS*, the CBO includes only foreign assets of the central bank and does not include relevant government funds. The classification of stocks in the forthcoming IIP will need to be consistent with the flows.

2.4 Basis for recording

2.4.1 Market prices are used to value flows and stocks

Oman’s balance of payments is expressed in millions of rials Omani. To the extent possible, market prices are used to value flows—this includes monetary gold and financial instruments generally traded on a regular market. Nontradable financial instruments, such as loans, are

²³ *BPM5* calls for a rearrangement into two components: (1) the service charge (premiums earned less claims paid) that should be entered in “insurance services” and (2) the difference between gross premiums and the service charge (net premiums) and claims that should be recorded under “other investment” in the financial account (for life insurance) and under “current transfers” in the current account (for nonlife insurance).

valued at nominal value. Where transaction estimates are derived from stock data (reserves), the value of the transaction excludes valuation and other changes. Transactions recorded in other currencies are converted into rials Omani using average market exchange rates at the time of the transaction. End-of-period exchange rates are used for conversion when flows are derived from stock data (reserves).

2.4.2 Recoding is done on an accrual basis

In general, change of ownership is the principle governing the recognition of transactions and their time of recording. Merchandise trade statistics are recorded largely according to the time of clearance by customs (as with other countries). For financial instruments bearing interest, the accrual of interest is recorded for the banking sector. However, for government and public corporations, interest is recorded on an actual (cash) basis. Interest for official reserve assets is recorded on an accrual basis. No adjustments are made to approximate accrual. Interest for the private nonbank sector is not measured.

2.4.3 Grossing/netting procedures are broadly consistent with internationally accepted standards, guidelines, or good practices

Grossing/netting procedures are broadly consistent with *BPM5*. Current and capital account transactions are recorded on a gross basis. Financial account transactions are recorded on a net basis, separately for the individual asset and liability components.

3. Accuracy and reliability

3.1 Source data

3.1.1 Source data are obtained from comprehensive data collection programs that take into account country-specific conditions

The core data sources employed to compile the balance of payments have largely been based on administrative data sources although surveys have been introduced recently (see 2.2.1). Existing core sources provide reasonable though not sufficient coverage to compile comprehensive balance of payments statistics. There is a need to expand the data sources. The recent expert's report provided recommendations on improving the source data, and many of these recommendations have already been initiated.

The main administrative sources are as follows:

- International merchandise trade statistics, which are based on customs recording, are used to compile data on trade in goods.
- The Money and Banking Section of the CBO provides monetary statistics on the external positions to derive the financial transactions for these units.

- Data on reserve assets with transactions distinguished from valuation changes are also provided by the staff of the CBO.
- The MOF provides information on the government's external transactions.

The gaps in terms of detail and coverage are known and kept under review. Where possible, adjustments are made (for example, including an adjustment in imports for Ministry of Defense). Staff monitor the financial press and research papers for information on international transactions and transactions that need to be taken into account in the balance of payments compilation system. Staff also monitor international standards, guidelines, and practices for changes that need to be taken into account.

Data collection based on surveys is as follows:

- Comprehensive lists for the frame are obtained from the Secretary General for Taxation and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- The surveys currently used to compile balance of payments estimates are small; therefore, there is no sample selection—it can be considered a census (example, port authorities, foreign airlines, national airlines, insurance, and telecommunications).
- Questionnaires have been reviewed by the MONE's Directorate General of Economic Statistics (DGES) and are designed for efficient data capturing and processing that minimizes nonsampling errors.

Following is an outline of the main data sources for the balance of payments statistics.

Exports and imports of goods

The CBO obtains data on exports of crude oil and refined oil from the Ministry of Oil and Gas and the MOF, while it obtains data on exports of liquefied natural gas from Oman LNG. The Directorate General of Customs (DGOC) provides data on non-oil exports (including re-exports) based on customs declarations completed by exporters.

The DGOC derives data on recorded imports of goods based on customs documents completed by importers. In addition, the Ministry of Defense provides data on imports of defense goods.

Services

The CBO derives data for *transportation services* from surveys of the national airline (Oman Air), foreign airlines, Directorate General of Civil Aviation, and the port authority. These data were first included in the 2001 edition of the CBO's *Annual Report*.

The CBO obtains data for *travel services* from various sources: For travel receipts, the number of tourists is compiled on the basis of data on arrivals by the appropriate Ministry.

Per capita expenditure is derived from a survey undertaken by the Directorate of Tourism. The sources for travel payments are as follows: for students going abroad, the number of Omani students abroad and average student expenditure are obtained from the Ministry of Higher Education; for Omanis going abroad for medical treatment, the number and average expenditure are furnished by the Ministry of Health; for Omanis going on pilgrimage, the number and the average outlay is provided by the Ministry of Awqaf & Islamic Affairs; for other Omanis going abroad, immigration records are utilized for the number of departures and the travel survey is used for average expenditure (see 3.3.1 travel).

For *insurance services*, and *communications services*, the CBO introduced surveys in the 2000 edition of its *Annual Report*.

For *other services*, the CBO obtains administrative data for a number of government ministries. A general estimate is made from data on government civil current and capital expenditures.

Income

For income, the source for data on *compensation of employees* is an outdated benchmark survey concerning the number of residents crossing the border, their wage earnings, and an assumption concerning the share of their earnings brought home. Sources for *direct investment income* include the MOF (for the oil companies) and the CBO (for banks). For *other investment income*, the CBO and the MOF report interest earned on their foreign assets as well as interest payments on government bonds issued to nonresidents. The CBO also reports interest earnings of the deposit claims abroad of commercial banks, and the Oman's LNG company reports interest payments made on its foreign loans.

Current transfers

For *workers remittances*, the information on the number of expatriates engaged in employment in Oman and their average salary is received from the Ministry of Manpower. To assess the plausibility of the estimates of workers' remittances, the CBO collects, on a quarterly basis, information from banks and money-changers to cross-check cash transfers effected by expatriates (calculations explained in 3.3.1).

Capital transfers

The source for these data is the budgetary statistics provided by the MOF.

Direct investment

The CBO obtains the data relating to the oil sector and banks from primary sources.

Portfolio investment

The Muscat Securities Market (MSM) authorities provide the data on the net inflow of funds into the securities market. Commercial banks provide the data for capital brought in by the branches of local banks. The CBO is the source for transactions on government development bonds.

Other investment

Sources include the CBO and the MOF.

Reserve assets

The CBO is the source for reserve assets.

3.1.2 Source data reasonably approximate the definitions, scope, classifications, valuation, and time of recording required

The CBO staff ensure consistency with the requirements of the *BPM5* through coordination/discussions with the primary source organizations. When the CBO itself conducts the survey (such as the recent IIP survey), it brings definitions and concepts to the notice of the survey participants. The CBO staff often request the primary source organization to modify their systems and compile additional information (as in the case of the fivefold classification of merchandise trade data, which may not be of relevance to the customs authorities). As the use of surveys increases, it would be helpful to have a booklet for respondents on the main definitions, classifications, valuation, and time of recording for balance of payments reporting.

3.1.3 Source data are timely

The data collection programs provide for the timely receipt of data. All primary administrative sources make data available to the CBO on time. Survey respondents are made aware of the deadlines set for reporting on the cover of the questionnaires. The CBO rigorously follows up to ensure the timely receipt of respondents' data. To date, the survey frame has been quite small, and the CBO contacts the respondents directly.

3.2 Assessment of source data

3.2.1 Source data—including censuses, sample surveys and administrative records—are routinely assessed, e.g., for coverage, sample error, response error, and nonsampling error; the results of the assessments are monitored and made available to guide statistical processes

The CBO has routinely assessed the accuracy of the data from recent surveys. It currently uses no sample surveys in the estimates. It monitors nonsampling errors, such as processing

and nonresponse. For example, the survey of the national airlines is for one company only; the survey for the port authorities has three respondents—both of these surveys have response rates of 100 percent. The survey of foreign air transport companies in Oman has a larger frame (18 companies), and 12 companies (the largest companies) have responded. Timeliness is evaluated, and revisions, although small, are reviewed.

The most recent surveys, introduced to measure transactions of the nonfinancial private sector and stock data, have larger frames, and these surveys are still in the field. The survey for corporate enterprises, aimed at collecting both flows and stocks, includes all enterprises that are 100 percent foreign owned (approximately 350 enterprises). For enterprises that have more than 10 percent but less than 100 percent foreign ownership, there is a threshold of 150,000 rials Omani. For the other stock surveys, the frame is a census—all commercial banks, all specialized banks, all nonbank financial institutions, all insurance firms, all pension funds, and the Muscat Capital Market Authority. The CBO is closely monitoring the response rates on these surveys, following-up, and keeping records of these activities.

A very useful section has been included on questionnaires such as the survey for foreign air transport companies in Oman, which asks for details on any significant revisions to data previously reported incorrectly. Extreme values are confirmed with correspondents, and records maintained on the confirmation.

For the primary administrative data sources, the CBO seeks clarifications on the estimates when necessary. It cross-checks specific datasets such as the important estimates for oil exports. The quantity and average price are obtained from the Ministry of Oil and Gas and compared with the value of oil exports at the MOF. The estimate for workers remittances is cross-checked with records from banks and money changers (see also 3.4.1).

3.3 *Statistical techniques*

3.3.1 *Data compilation employs sound statistical techniques to deal with data sources*

Generally, data compilation employs sound statistical techniques to deal with data sources, which are mainly administrative.

For *travel* payments, the techniques used to generate the estimates are generally sufficient (see 3.1.1 *Services*) with one exception. The estimates for per capita expenditure of tourists—other than for education, medical treatment, or religious pilgrimage—are based on a study of travel patterns undertaken in 1996 by a private firm. Similarly, for travel receipts the estimates for per capita expenditures of tourists are based on a survey undertaken by the Directorate of Tourism in 1994. Results of the latest tourism surveys²⁴ for 2001–2002 have

²⁴ Published by the MONE and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (Directorate of Tourism).

just been released and will be used to update this source for both receipts and payments with a view to including the estimates in the 2003 release. In addition, it may be useful to cross-check the data on travel credits with the revenue data of hotels and restaurants as collected by the DGES.

The methodology for estimating *workers remittances* (debit) is straightforward. The CBO obtains data from the government sector on the number of expatriate workers in the nonsecurity wing of the government sector. In addition, the CBO obtains data from the Ministry of Labor on the number of workers by type of economic activity and by type of occupational category as well as average salary payments in each group. From this, it determines an average salary figure. The CBO computes the total compensation of the expatriate workforce by applying the average salary to the number of employees and making assumptions about remittance rates. The remittance rates (or saving ratios) currently used need to be updated (see 3.4.1 for cross-checking with banks and money changers).

Despite the broad soundness of the statistical techniques, some benchmarks for smaller series are outdated. For example:

- Entries shown for credits of *compensation of employees* represent the earnings of Omani individuals who reside in the border areas vis-à-vis the UAE and travel daily or frequently for purposes of employment in that country. The estimates are based on a benchmark study done almost two decades ago on the number of individuals, their average earnings, and an assumption about the proportion of income spent on their personal consumption of goods and services abroad. At present, a constant of 15 million rials Omani has been shown under the item. Although the methodology may be acceptable, there is a need to update the above estimate.
- The CBO estimates imports of *other business services* such as consultancy, technical services, and services associated with feasibility studies as a constant factor of 5 percent of the government's civilian expenditure and 5 percent of government capital expenditures. The constant benchmark has been used since 1983.
- In estimating the *profit remittances* of foreign owned companies, other than oil companies and banks, a percent indicator has been used since 1985. The methodology used to estimate profit remittances is limited—more relevant information is expected when the results of the survey on external financial transactions of the private sector become available. In the meantime, profit remittances of foreign owned companies, other than oil companies and banks, might be estimated based on information available at the DGES on the net operating revenues of private sector companies operating in these industries and the degree of foreign equity participation.

3.3.2 *Other statistical procedures (e.g., data adjustments and transformations, and statistical analysis) employ sound statistical techniques*

In general, other statistical procedures are not employed to make source data consistent with balance of payments requirements. There are however two adjustments made to imports of

goods. One adjustment involves the c.i.f/f.o.b factor. The factor has been 10.5 percent (9.5 percent for freight and 1 percent for insurance) for a considerable period and needs to be reviewed. The customs authorities plan to revise the import declarations form in the near future and make provision to update this factor. A second adjustment is made to coverage to include imports of the Ministry of Defense.

3.4 *Assessment and validation of intermediate data and statistical outputs*

3.4.1 *Intermediate results are validated against other information where applicable*

Intermediate results are validated against other independent data sources when possible. Since most of the data are collected through single-source administrative data, there is little scope for two-step validation. In the event that data are available for validation of an administrative source, the CBO carries it out. For example, in order to assess the plausibility of the estimates of workers' remittances, the CBO collects, on a quarterly basis, information from banks and moneychangers to cross-check cash transfers effected by expatriates. The results confirm the general order of magnitude obtained under the current methodology. Also see verification of oil exports 3.2.1.

In addition, the CBO verifies estimates of foreign direct investment with records of the General Secretariat of Taxation and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. It also uses information in the financial press is used to verify high-value direct investment and other transactions when appropriate.

3.4.2 *Statistical discrepancies in intermediate data are assessed and investigated*

The CBO cross-checks the behavior of series with related series/indicators when possible. Since the primary administrative data are single-source, there is not much scope for cross-checking, although the CBO will seek clarification from the primary source agency if it comes across any inconsistencies or aberrations in the data. The CBO uses available stock data to verify transactions data when possible—for example, average yield and average stock are used to cross-check investment income receipts; data on external debt are used to cross-check financial flows; stocks for the banking sector are used; in reserve assets, the balance of payments data are derived from the stock data (allowing for valuations changes).

3.4.3 *Statistical discrepancies and other potential indicators of problems in statistical outputs are investigated*

Staff involved in producing balance of payments data monitor developments in the errors and omissions item and seek to understand them, e.g., by cross-checking between entries in the current, capital, and financial account when possible although this is not a “closed” compilation system. A direction of trade matrix for GCC countries is used to cross-check the trade data with this region. At the present time external public debt transactions are received from the MOF, and there is no estimate for external private debt. No cross-check is currently done with Joint Bank for International Settlements (BIS)–IMF–Organisation for Economic

Co-operation and Development (OECD)–World Bank statistics on external debt or the BIS locational international banking statistics.

3.5 Revision studies

3.5.1 Studies and analyses of revisions are carried out routinely and used internally to inform statistical processes (see also 4.3.3)

The scope for revision to balance of payments data in Oman is limited because of the overall reliance on single-point data administrative sources, which rarely get revised. There are few, if any, revisions from the government sector or the monetary authorities sector. Minor revisions to annual trade data are taken into account and noted in some published tables.

Revisions can take place when a new data source, such as a survey, is introduced. Revisions to services data appeared in the 2000 and 2001 *annual reports* of the CBO, and the new sources were noted. CBO maintains documentation on revisions.

As more varied sources of data are introduced, more formal studies and analyses of revisions will be needed. With the recent introduction of surveys, respondents are asked to explain on their questionnaire any significant revisions to data previously reported incorrectly. This information will be most useful for analyzing the source of revisions.

4. Serviceability

4.1 Periodicity and timeliness

4.1.1 Periodicity follows dissemination standards

Balance of payments statistics are disseminated annually, which adheres to the GDDS recommendations. The GDDS also encourages the compilation and dissemination of quarterly balance of payments aggregates. The CBO currently compiles quarterly balance of payments estimates for internal purposes (an input to GDP). Some components, such as estimates for services from annual surveys, are not available on a quarterly basis at this time.

4.1.2 Timeliness follows dissemination standards

Annual balance of payments statistics are disseminated within seven months after the reference period, which adheres to the GDDS recommendations.

4.2 Consistency

4.2.1 Statistics are consistent within the dataset

The balance of payments statistics are internally consistent. Quarterly balance of payments estimates—produced only for internal use—are cross-checked with the annual data. The

errors and omissions have been stable over the past three years averaging 2.2 percent of GDP. This rate is significantly lower than some other GCC countries. The errors and omissions are expected to improve when the coverage of balance of payments transactions is more complete (in the current account and in the financial account).

4.2.2 Statistics are consistent or reconcilable over a reasonable period of time

The balance of payments are consistent over time. A consistent time series is available on the *BPM5* basis for seven years (1996–2002). When changes in source data are introduced, staff reconstruct historical series as far back as reasonably possible. When insurance and communications surveys were introduced in 2000, historical data were made available for the five year period. Similarly, when transportation surveys were incorporated in 2001, the historical series was revised. In the same vein, the new surveys for the private sector are collecting data for six years (1998–2003).

These changes are explained in the commentary included in the CBO's *Annual Report* when the data are released.

4.2.3 Statistics are consistent or reconcilable with those obtained through other data sources and/or statistical frameworks

The balance of payments data on trade in goods are reconciled with international merchandise trade data. A coverage adjustment is made to imports in respect of defense goods on the basis of data obtained from the Ministry of Defense. Imports in the balance of payments are converted from a c.i.f. basis to an f.o.b. basis. These differences are clearly noted in the analytical tables in the CBO's *Annual Report*.

The balance of payments statistics are largely consistent with national accounts statistics produced by the DGES, which uses the CBO balance of payments data in compiling data on GDP on the expenditure side. There is a small discrepancy in the GDP data on net income flows. The DGES treats employee compensation as part of current transfer receipts (i.e., workers' remittances from abroad) rather than as part of net primary income from abroad. Consequently, the measure of gross national income is understated slightly, but the measure of gross national disposable income is unaffected. At the present time this is a relatively small value (15 million rials Omani), it has remained stable over time owing to lack of revision to the formula, and it is reconcilable.

The banking sector transactions in the balance of payments statistics are largely consistent with monetary statistics. Balance of payments coverage includes 17 banks (five domestic, nine branches of foreign banks, and three specialized banks). The balance of payments components comprising external debt data are largely consistent with the corresponding debt stocks. Debt servicing is consistent with debt stock.

4.3 *Revision policy and practice*

4.3.1 Revisions follow a regular and transparent schedule

As discussed in 3.5.1, the scope for revision to balance of payments data in Oman is limited because of the reliance on single-point data administrative sources, which rarely get revised. Therefore, there has not been a need for a predetermined revision cycle.

When there is a major change in methodology (such as the change from *BPM4* to *BPM5*) or source data (the introduction of surveys), an explanation is included in the CBO's *Annual Report* that includes the revised data for the first time (see 3.5.1 for more detail). If administrative source data are revised (such as revisions to the annual trade data), the revised data are incorporated in the estimates but these revisions are minimal. If a reclassification takes place, the data are revised and included in the estimates. This does not happen often.

4.3.2 Preliminary and/or revised data are clearly identified

No preliminary balance of payments data are published. The annual published data have generally been considered final. However, with the introduction of new sources and more to come, this will change. At the present time revised data are not identified in the main balance of payments table.

4.3.3 Studies and analyses of revisions are made public (see also 3.5.1)

For the above reasons, formal studies and analyses have not been carried out routinely on revisions to balance of payments data. Implicitly, discussions on the reasons for any revision are done internally. Reasons for major revisions resulting from a change in methodology or source data are discussed in the commentary that accompanies the release of the data. Any inquiries on data that may have been revised, are handled individually.

5. Accessibility

5.1 *Data accessibility*

5.1.1 Statistics are presented in a way that facilitates proper interpretation and meaningful comparisons (layout and clarity of text, tables, and charts)

Statistics are presented in a way that facilitates proper interpretation and meaningful comparison. The balance of payments statistics are generally disseminated according to the standard components of the *BPM5* and with time series. The statistics are disseminated clearly in the CBO's *Annual Report*, with charts, tables, and analysis on current-period developments included.

5.1.2 Dissemination media and format are adequate

Balance of payments statistics are disseminated in a main table, and selected data, such as trade, are shown in separate tables. No separate information release is prepared for the media specifically regarding balance of payments data. More comprehensive historical time series are available back to 1980 (data prior to 1996 are on a *BPM4* basis) and are made available on request. The user is informed that data prior to 1996 are on a *BPM4* basis. At present, no electronic database is maintained for users.

5.1.3 Statistics are released on a preannounced schedule

A schedule announces in advance the approximate date the statistics are to be released, although there is no precise date. The CBO website has a “Release Calendar” which gives the “normal date of release within 6 months of the end of the reference year.” Since the balance of payments data are part of a comprehensive publication, which includes other data series of the CBO, the release date may be delayed if other data are not ready or if there are delays with the printing process.

5.1.4 Statistics are made available to all users at the same time

The annual balance of payments statistics are made available to all users of statistics at the same time. The public is informed of the statistics being released—most often through radio announcements. Statistics are made available to all interested users simultaneously. According to authorities, there is no prior release to any ministry or other party.

With reference to official external debt liabilities, it was noted that data on the government external debt position are not disseminated in local publications, although data are included in IMF publications.

5.1.5 Statistics not routinely disseminated are made available upon request

To the extent possible, statistics not routinely disseminated are made available to users upon request without violating the confidentiality requirements. This includes time series and some bilateral trade with GCC countries. No custom tabulations are provided.

5.2 Metadata accessibility

5.2.1 Documentation on concepts, scope, classifications, basis of recording, data sources, and statistical techniques is available, and differences from internationally accepted standards, guidelines, or good practices are annotated

Currently, the vehicles for accessing balance of payments metadata are the IMF’s DSBB website and the country notes section in the *Balance of Payments Statistics Yearbook, Part 3*. These metadata (particularly the GDDS) provide adequate information about the meaning of the data and about the methodology used to collect and process the data and are updated

regularly (annually). These sources of metadata are not cross-referenced in data releases or otherwise publicized. No other comprehensive sources and methods document is published and updated regularly by the CBO.

5.2.2 Levels of detail are adapted to the needs of the intended audience

Currently, the above-mentioned metadata are the sources available to users.

5.3 Assistance to users

5.3.1 Contact points for each subject field are publicized

According to the authorities, prompt and knowledgeable service and support are available to users of statistics. In Oman, personal contact is the preferred way to inform and assist users. The CBO's *Annual Report*, which includes the official release of annual balance of payments statistics, includes the name of the Department of Economic and Research Statistics, which is responsible for collecting, compiling, and disseminating balance of payments statistics. The report also includes the department's address, telephone number, fax number, telex number, cables number, email address, and an Internet address. A "Feedback" box is also posted on the CBO website for comments/questions of users. There is, however, no specific reference to a contact in the balance of payments section. Contact information is also provided on the IMF's DSBB website.

5.3.2 Catalogs of publications, documents, and other services, including information on any changes, are widely available

The publications available through the CBO and other documents, such as the *Banking Law*, are available through the CBO website. The publications include the CBO's *Annual Report*, the *Quarterly Statistical Bulletin*, the *Monthly Statistical Bulletin*, and the *Al Markazi*, (a bimonthly publication of research and analysis of the CBO). There is no charge for any of these products or services.

Table 5. Oman: Data Quality Assessment Framework (July 2003): Summary of Results for Balance of Payments Statistics
(Compiling Agency: Central Bank of Oman)

Key to symbols: NA = Not Applicable; O = Practice Observed; LO = Practice Largely Observed; LNO = Practice Largely Not Observed; NO = Practice Not Observed						
Element	Assessment			Comments on Assessment	Plans for Improvement and Target Dates*	
	O	LO	LNO			NO
0. Prerequisites of quality						
0.1 Legal and institutional environment	X					
0.2 Resources		X				
0.3 Relevance		X		The introduction of surveys requires an increase in staff. No formal, regularly-scheduled consultations or user survey for nongovernmental users.		
0.4 Other quality management	X					
1. Assurances of integrity						
1.1 Professionalism	X					
1.2 Transparency		X		No advance notice given to the public when major changes are planned to take place in methodology.		Give advance notice to the public when major changes are planned to take place in methodology.
1.3 Ethical standards	X					
2. Methodological soundness						
2.1 Concepts and definitions	X					
2.2 Scope		X		Gaps in coverage—example, nonbank private sector, pension funds.		Improve coverage of balance of payments transactions.
2.3 Classification/sectorization		X		Some functional classification issues for banks (direct/portfolio/other investment); SGRF in reserve assets.		Breakdown of export/imports of goods.
2.4 Basis for recording		X		Government and public sector not on accrual basis.		

Table 5. Oman: Data Quality Assessment Framework (July 2003): Summary of Results for Balance of Payments Statistics
(Compiling Agency: Central Bank of Oman)

Key to symbols: NA = Not Applicable; O = Practice Observed; LO = Practice Largely Observed; LNO = Practice Largely Not Observed; NO = Practice Not Observed						
Element	Assessment			Comments on Assessment	Plans for Improvement and Target Dates*	
	O	LO	LNO			NO
3. Accuracy and reliability						
3.1 Source data		X			Need for more surveys—nonfinancial private sector underway	Introduce ITRS and compile IIP.
3.2 Assessment of source data	X				Update benchmark for compensation of employees, and travel expenditures. Update estimator to adjust c.i.f to f.o.b. Revise adjustment for coverage of Other Services, and Profits.	Improve estimates of compensation of employees.
3.3 Statistical techniques		X				
3.4 Assessment and validation of intermediate data and statistical outputs	X					
3.5 Revision studies		X			With the introduction of surveys, formal revision studies and analyses are needed.	
4. Serviceability						
4.1 Periodicity and timeliness	X					
4.2 Consistency	X					
4.3 Revision policy and practice		X			More formalized revision procedure and documentation. Clearly identify revisions in all tables. Formal studies and analyses need to be introduced.	
5. Accessibility						
5.1 Data accessibility		X				
5.2 Metadata accessibility			X		There is no separate information release for balance of payments. Exact release date not posted. Preannounced “period” of release not met; No methodological publication other than GDDS metadata on the DSBB. No link to GDDS in publication or on website. Only one level of metadata available—GDDS.	
5.3 Assistance to users		X			No specific contact point for balance of payments in publications or on website.	

* Authorities' plans as of February 23, 2004

Summary of the General Data Dissemination System (GDDS)

Data coverage, Periodicity, and Timeliness

Dissemination of reliable, comprehensive, and timely economic, financial, and socio-demographic data is essential to the transparency of macroeconomic performance and policy. The GDDS contains specific recommendations concerning coverage, periodicity, and timeliness for both comprehensive frameworks as well as data categories and indicators.

Quality

Data quality must have a high priority. Data users must be provided with information to assess quality and quality improvements. The GDDS recommends:

- Dissemination of documentation on methodology and sources used in preparing statistics.
- Dissemination of component detail, reconciliations with related data, and statistical frameworks that support statistical cross-checks and provide assurance of reasonableness.

Integrity

To fulfill the purpose of providing the public with information, official statistics must have the confidence of their users. In turn, confidence in the statistics ultimately becomes a matter of confidence in the objectivity and professionalism of the agency producing the statistics. Transparency of practices and procedures is a key factor in creating this confidence. The GDDS, therefore, recommends:

- Dissemination of the terms and conditions under which official statistics are produced, including those relating to the confidentiality of individually identifiable information.
- Identification of internal government access to data before release.
- Identification of ministerial commentary on the occasion of statistical releases.
- Provision of information about revision and advance notice of major changes in methodology.

Access to the public

Dissemination of official statistics is an essential feature of statistics as a public good. Ready and equal access by the public are principal requirements. The GDDS recommends:

- Dissemination of advance release calendars.
- Simultaneous release to all interested parties.

Plans for improvement

The GDDS recommends that plans for improvement be developed for all areas in which shortcomings exist and that these plans be disseminated.

The GDDS also recommends that any needs for assistance be identified in the metadata. This may also be helpful for donors and technical assistance providers to prioritize their activities.

For each participating member country, the GDDS metadata provide descriptions of the dimensions listed above, together with plans for improvement and needs for assistance. This information is posted on the IMF's DSBB website; participating countries are encouraged to also post the metadata on their national websites.

Source: Guide to the GDDS, March 2002: <http://dsbb.imf.org>.

**DATA QUALITY ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK—GENERIC FRAMEWORK
(JULY 2003 FRAMEWORK)**

Quality Dimensions	Elements	Indicators
<p>0. Prerequisites of quality</p>	<p>0.1 Legal and institutional environment—<i>The environment is supportive of statistics</i></p> <p>0.2 Resources—<i>Resources are commensurate with needs of statistical programs.</i></p> <p>0.3 Relevance—<i>Statistics cover relevant information on the subject field.</i></p> <p>0.4 Other quality management—<i>Quality is a cornerstone of statistical work.</i></p>	<p>0.1.1 The responsibility for collecting, processing, and disseminating the statistics is clearly specified.</p> <p>0.1.2 Data sharing and coordination among data-producing agencies are adequate.</p> <p>0.1.3 Individual reporters' data are to be kept confidential and used for statistical purposes only.</p> <p>0.1.4 Statistical reporting is ensured through legal mandate and/or measures to encourage response.</p> <p>0.2.1 Staff, facilities, computing resources, and financing are commensurate with statistical programs.</p> <p>0.2.2 Measures to ensure efficient use of resources are implemented.</p> <p>0.3.1 The relevance and practical utility of existing statistics in meeting users' needs are monitored.</p> <p>0.4.1 Processes are in place to focus on quality.</p> <p>0.4.2 Processes are in place to monitor the quality of the statistical program.</p> <p>0.4.3 Processes are in place to deal with quality considerations in planning the statistical program.</p>
<p>1. Assurances of integrity</p> <p><i>The principle of objectivity in the collection, processing, and dissemination of statistics is firmly adhered to.</i></p>	<p>1.1 Professionalism—<i>Statistical policies and practices are guided by professional principles.</i></p> <p>1.2 Transparency—<i>Statistical policies and practices are transparent.</i></p> <p>1.3 Ethical standards—<i>Policies and practices are guided by ethical standards.</i></p>	<p>1.1.1 Statistics are produced on an impartial basis.</p> <p>1.1.2 Choices of sources and statistical techniques as well as decisions about dissemination are informed solely by statistical considerations.</p> <p>1.1.3 The appropriate statistical entity is entitled to comment on erroneous interpretation and misuse of statistics.</p> <p>1.2.1 The terms and conditions under which statistics are collected, processed, and disseminated are available to the public.</p> <p>1.2.2 Internal governmental access to statistics prior to their release is publicly identified.</p> <p>1.2.3 Products of statistical agencies/units are clearly identified as such.</p> <p>1.2.4 Advance notice is given of major changes in methodology, source data, and statistical techniques.</p> <p>1.3.1 Guidelines for staff behavior are in place and are well known to the staff.</p>

Quality Dimensions	Elements	Indicators
<p>2. Methodological soundness</p> <p><i>The methodological basis for the statistics follows internationally accepted standards, guidelines, or good practices.</i></p>	<p>2.1 Concepts and definitions—<i>Concepts and definitions used are in accord with internationally accepted statistical frameworks.</i></p> <p>2.2 Scope—<i>The scope is in accord with internationally accepted standards, guidelines, or good practices.</i></p> <p>2.3 Classification/sectorization—<i>Classification and sectorization systems are in accord with internationally accepted standards, guidelines, or good practices.</i></p> <p>2.4 Basis for recording—<i>Flows and stocks are valued and recorded according to internationally accepted standards, guidelines, or good practices</i></p>	<p>2.1.1 The overall structure in terms of concepts and definitions follows internationally accepted standards, guidelines, or good practices.</p> <p>2.2.1 The scope is broadly consistent with internationally accepted standards, guidelines, or good practices.</p> <p>2.3.1 Classification/sectorization systems used are broadly consistent with internationally accepted standards, guidelines, or good practices.</p> <p>2.4.1 Market prices are used to value flows and stocks.</p> <p>2.4.2 Recording is done on an accrual basis.</p> <p>2.4.3 Grossing/netting procedures are broadly consistent with internationally accepted standards, guidelines, or good practices.</p>
<p>3. Accuracy and reliability</p> <p><i>Source data and statistical techniques are sound and statistical outputs sufficiently portray reality</i></p>	<p>3.1 Source data – <i>Source data available provide an adequate basis to compile statistics.</i></p> <p>3.2 Assessment of source data—<i>Source data are regularly assessed.</i></p> <p>3.3 Statistical techniques—<i>Statistical techniques employed conform to sound statistical procedures</i></p> <p>3.4 Assessment and validation of intermediate data and statistical outputs—<i>Intermediate results and statistical outputs are regularly assessed and validated.</i></p> <p>3.5 Revision studies—<i>Revisions, as a gauge of reliability, are tracked and mined for the information they may provide.</i></p>	<p>3.1.1 Source data are obtained from comprehensive data collection programs that take into account country-specific conditions.</p> <p>3.1.2 Source data reasonably approximate the definitions, scope, classifications, valuation, and time of recording required.</p> <p>3.1.3 Source data are timely.</p> <p>3.2.1 Source data—including censuses, sample surveys, and administrative records—are routinely assessed, e.g., for coverage, sample error, response error, and nonsampling error; the results of the assessments are monitored and made available to guide statistical processes.</p> <p>3.3.1 Data compilation employs sound statistical techniques to deal with data sources.</p> <p>3.3.2 Other statistical procedures (e.g., data adjustments and transformations, and statistical analysis) employ sound statistical techniques.</p> <p>3.4.1 Intermediate results are validated against other information where applicable.</p> <p>3.4.2 Statistical discrepancies in intermediate data are assessed and investigated.</p> <p>3.4.3 Statistical discrepancies and other potential indicators or problems in statistical outputs are investigated.</p> <p>3.5.1 Studies and analyses of revisions are carried out routinely and used internally to inform statistical processes (see also 4.3.3).</p>

Quality Dimensions	Elements	Indicators
<p>4. Serviceability <i>Statistics, with adequate periodicity and timeliness, are consistent and follow a predictable revisions policy.</i></p>	<p>4.1 Periodicity and timeliness— <i>Periodicity and timeliness follow internationally accepted dissemination standards.</i></p> <p>4.2 Consistency— <i>Statistics are consistent within the dataset, over time, and with major datasets.</i></p> <p>4.3 Revision policy and practice—<i>Data revisions follow a regular and publicized procedure.</i></p>	<p>4.1.1 Periodicity follows dissemination standards. 4.1.2 Timeliness follows dissemination standards.</p> <p>4.2.1 Statistics are consistent within the dataset. 4.2.2 Statistics are consistent or reconcilable over a reasonable period of time. 4.2.3 Statistics are consistent or reconcilable with those obtained through other data sources and/or statistical frameworks.</p> <p>4.3.1 Revisions follow a regular and transparent schedule. 4.3.2 Preliminary and/or revised data are clearly identified. 4.3.3 Studies and analyses of revisions are made public (see also 3.5.1).</p>
<p>5. Accessibility <i>Data and metadata are easily available and assistance to users is adequate.</i></p>	<p>5.1 Data accessibility— <i>Statistics are presented in a clear and understandable manner, forms of dissemination are adequate, and statistics are made available on an impartial basis.</i></p> <p>5.2 Metadata accessibility— <i>Up-to-date and pertinent metadata are made available.</i></p> <p>5.3 Assistance to users— <i>Prompt and knowledgeable support service is available.</i></p>	<p>5.1.1 Statistics are presented in a way that facilitates proper interpretation and meaningful comparisons (layout and clarity of text, tables, and charts). 5.1.2 Dissemination media and format are adequate. 5.1.3 Statistics are released on a preannounced schedule. 5.1.4 Statistics are made available to all users at the same time. 5.1.5 Statistics not routinely disseminated are made available upon request.</p> <p>5.2.1 Documentation on concepts, scope, classifications, basis of recording, data sources, and statistical techniques is available, and differences from internationally accepted standards, guidelines, or good practices are annotated. 5.2.2 Levels of detail are adapted to the needs of the intended audience.</p> <p>5.3.1 Contact points for each subject field are publicized. 5.3.2 Catalogs of publications, documents, and other services, including information on any changes, are widely available.</p>

Users' Survey

Summary of results of survey of data users

With the assistance of the Omani authorities, the mission conducted a survey of users of the macroeconomic statistics disseminated by the MONE, the CBO, and the MOF. It was designed to complement the mission's assessment of the statistics. The survey questionnaires were delivered before the arrival of the mission in Oman to users in the public sector, the media, representative offices and embassies, commercial and specialized banks, and other private commercial enterprises. It covered the five major datasets of national accounts, consumer price, government finance, monetary, and balance of payments statistics. The goal of this exercise was to determine the extent to which the data were being used and get users' views regarding the quality of the data.

The response to the survey was satisfactory. Questionnaires were sent to 67 users and 39 responses were received. The number of responses is considered fair, when compared to similar surveys conducted by data ROSC missions to other countries. Users expressed broad satisfaction with the quality of the statistics and an overwhelming majority noted that the statistics disseminated in Oman were at least as good as those from the other countries in the region.

Hardcopy publications and press releases were the primary sources for the statistics for 95 percent of users. All the agencies maintained websites that are used to disseminate official statistics; however, this medium is not yet being used intensively.

The coverage, level of detail, and frequency were considered satisfactory for most datasets. However, a number of users expressed dissatisfaction with the timeliness of the national accounts statistics.

Users expressed some difficulty in accessing information on methodology for all the datasets, with the information for price statistics considered the least accessible. In addition, there was a relatively high level of dissatisfaction with the level of information on revisions, especially for the national accounts.

As a follow-up to the survey, the mission organized bilateral meetings with some users, particularly from the private sector, to solicit in-depth feedback on some of the comments included in the survey. The primary themes emerging from these meetings are as follows:

- The availability of data on the agency websites was not widely known. The users who were familiar with the website mentioned that there were significant delays in disseminating data on the website.
- The release dates for the data were not known.
- The revision cycle was not identified and users were not aware of whether or when the data had been revised.

The comments from the survey are summarized below under the dimensions of quality.

Table 1. Comments by Users of Macroeconomic Statistics

Assurances of integrity	
•	Statistics could be trusted as official references.
Methodological soundness	
•	There is no information about the private sector in any category.
•	Prices for some items are not available in some cases.
•	In general, the official statistics are good and appropriate.
•	Method of calculating oil revenues may be confusing at times and provides an unclear picture.
Serviceability	
•	The timeliness between disseminating information and the period to which it refers is another matter of concern.
•	Statistics by the CBO are very good and timely most of the time. Other Omani government statistics sometimes lag behind.
•	Improve timing for national accounts statistics, consistency for prices, and access for all datasets.
•	No information about when national accounts statistics are updated or revised.
•	Data on websites should be updated on time.
Accessibility	
•	Level of detail is not as good as reported in other countries (national accounts statistics and monetary statistics).
•	Intensive use of electronic means/forms will be a real advantage to any institution.
•	More details are needed.
•	Statistics must be made widely available.
•	Setting up an information center would help professionals, students, and journalists.
•	The reluctance of officials concerned with official statistics in providing information is a matter of concern.
•	Further information concerning quality aspects of the national official macroeconomic statistics is needed.
•	Absence of time series in some statistics.
•	It is not easy to access the CBO library.
•	Access to statistics needs permission from the concerned government entities.
•	Official statistics need to have an accurate description and explanations.
•	Sometimes official statistics are confusing and it is not clear how some numbers are derived.

Table 2. Questionnaire Results Analyzed by Type of User

Type of Respondent	Total Sent	Total Received	In % Received
Ministries and state agencies	17	11	31
Banks	17	12	33
Information and other agencies	6	1	3
Enterprises	13	10	28
Universities and institutes	3	1	3
Representative offices	3	1	3
Embassies	8	3	8
Total	67	39	58

Table 3. Results of Oman's User Survey

	Ministries and State Agencies	Banks	Information and other agencies	Enterprises	Universities and institutes	Representative offices	Embassies	Total	Percentage
Questionnaires sent out	17	17	6	13	3	3	8	67	100
Responses (excl. not applicable)	11	12	1	10	1	1	3	39	58
General Information on Uses of Official Macroeconomic Statistics									
1. Which macroeconomic statistics are you using regularly?									
▪ National accounts	9	7	1	9	1	1	3	31	79
▪ Prices	8	8	0	6	1	1	2	26	67
▪ Government finance statistics	10	9	0	8	1	1	3	32	82
▪ Monetary statistics	9	10	1	8	1	1	2	32	82
▪ Balance of payments	8	6	0	4	1	1	2	22	56
Other:									
▪ Production indices	2	2	1	2	0	0	2	9	23
▪ Labor market	8	3	0	4	0	0	3	18	46
▪ Merchandise trade	7	5	0	3	0	0	3	18	46
▪ International reserves and foreign liquidity	2	4	0	1	1	1	1	10	26
▪ External debt	4	3	0	1	1	1	1	11	28
▪ International investment position	5	5	1	1	0	1	1	14	36
▪ Other	1	1	0	2	0	0	0	4	10
2. Where do you obtain the official statistics?									
▪ Official press releases and publications	11	11	1	9	1	1	3	37	95
▪ Private sector summaries and analyses	3	5	1	4	0	0	2	15	38
▪ Official policy papers	8	5	0	2	0	0	3	18	46
▪ Publications from international organizations about the country	9	4	0	3	1	0	2	19	49
▪ Other sources	2	2	0	2	0	1	2	9	23
3. Do you refer to official descriptions of the sources and methods that were used to compile the official statistics?									
▪ Yes	9	9	0	5	1	0	2	26	67
▪ No	2	2	1	5	0	1	1	12	31
▪ No opinion	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	3
4. For what purposes do you use the official statistics?									
▪ Analysis of current developments for short-term decision making?	8	10	1	6	1	0	1	27	69
▪ Analysis of trends for longer-term policy formulation?	5	10	0	8	0	0	1	24	62
▪ Econometric model building and forecasting	3	3	0	3	0	0	2	11	28
▪ Economic research	11	4	0	3	1	0	2	21	54
▪ Comparison with economic developments in other countries	8	3	0	5	1	1	2	20	51
▪ General economic background	10	11	1	8	0	0	2	32	82
▪ Other sources	4	1	0	2	0	0	0	7	18

	Ministries and State Agencies			Banks			Information ad other agencies			Enterprises			Universities and institutions			Representative Offices			Embassies			Total			Percentage			
	Yes	No	No opinion	Yes	No	No opinion	Yes	No	No opinion	Yes	No	No opinion	Yes	No	No opinion	Yes	No	No opinion	Yes	No	No opinion	Yes	No	No opinion	Yes	No	No opinion	
Quality Aspects of the Official Macroeconomic Statistics																												
5.1 Is the coverage of these statistics satisfactory?																												
▪ National Accounts	6	3	0	6	1	0	1	0	0	7	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	24	5	0	83	17	0
▪ Prices	5	4	0	7	2	0	0	1	0	8	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	25	7	0	78	22	0	
▪ Government finance statistics	10	0	0	8	1	0	1	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	30	1	0	97	3	0	
▪ Monetary statistics	7	2	0	9	1	0	0	1	0	7	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	28	4	0	88	13	0	
▪ Balance of payments	6	1	0	4	2	0	0	1	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	21	4	0	84	16	0	
5.2 Is the detail provided by these statistics satisfactory?																												
▪ National Accounts	6	3	0	5	2	0	1	0	0	5	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	21	6	0	78	22	0	
▪ Prices	5	4	0	5	4	0	1	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	20	8	0	71	29	0	
▪ Government finance statistics	9	1	0	8	2	0	1	0	0	7	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	29	4	0	88	12	0	
▪ Monetary statistics	6	3	0	9	2	0	1	0	0	6	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	26	7	0	79	21	0	
▪ Balance of payments	6	2	0	5	2	0	1	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	22	4	0	85	15	0	
6.1 Is the frequency (e.g. weekly, monthly, quarterly, annual compilation) of these statistics satisfactory?																												
▪ National Accounts	5	4	0	5	2	0	0	1	0	6	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	20	9	0	69	31	0	
▪ Prices	6	3	0	8	1	0	0	1	0	5	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	23	7	0	77	23	0	
▪ Government finance statistics	8	2	0	8	2	0	0	1	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	28	5	0	85	15	0	
▪ Monetary statistics	9	0	0	10	1	0	1	0	0	8	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	33	1	0	97	3	0	
▪ Balance of payments	4	3	0	6	1	0	0	1	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	21	5	0	81	19	0	
6.2 Is the timeliness (the delay of publication) of these statistics satisfactory?																												
▪ National Accounts	3	6	0	3	4	0	0	1	0	5	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	1	0	14	14	0	50	50	0	
▪ Prices	6	3	0	6	2	0	0	1	0	5	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	21	8	0	72	28	0	
▪ Government finance statistics	7	3	0	6	4	0	0	1	0	6	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	23	10	0	70	30	0	
▪ Monetary statistics	7	2	0	9	2	0	0	1	0	6	2	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	27	7	0	79	21	0	
▪ Balance of payments	3	5	0	5	2	0	0	0	0	5	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	1	0	16	10	0	62	38	0	
7.1 Do you know if there is a publicly disseminated calendar that announces the dissemination of the various official statistics?																												
▪ National Accounts	1	7	0	2	6	0	0	1	0	2	5	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	5	22	0	19	81	0	
▪ Prices	2	7	0	1	7	0	0	1	0	1	5	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	4	23	0	15	85	0	
▪ Government finance statistics	3	7	0	4	5	0	0	0	0	1	5	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	8	20	0	29	71	0	
▪ Monetary statistics	1	7	0	3	6	0	0	1	0	2	5	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	6	22	0	21	79	0	
▪ Balance of payments	1	7	0	2	4	0	0	1	0	1	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	4	19	0	17	83	0	
7.2 If there is a calendar of release dates, are the official statistics released on the dates announced?																												
▪ National Accounts	3	4	0	2	1	0	0	1	0	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	9	11	0	45	55	0	
▪ Prices	4	3	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	7	7	0	50	50	0	
▪ Government finance statistics	4	5	0	4	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	10	9	0	53	47	0	
▪ Monetary statistics	3	4	0	4	0	0	1	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	11	7	0	61	39	0	
▪ Balance of payments	2	4	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	6	8	0	43	57	0	

	Ministries and State Agencies			Banks			Information ad other agencies			Enterprises			Universities and institutions			Representative Offices			Embassies			Total			Percentage		
	Yes	No	No opinion	Yes	No	No opinion	Yes	No	No opinion	Yes	No	No opinion	Yes	No	No opinion	Yes	No	No opinion	Yes	No	No opinion	Yes	No	No opinion	Yes	No	No opinion
7.3 Is there enough information about revisions to official statistics to satisfy your needs?																											
▪ National Accounts	2	6	0	1	4	0	0	1	0	5	3	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	11	14	0	44	56	0
▪ Prices	3	5	0	3	2	0	0	1	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	12	9	0	57	43	0
▪ Government finance statistics	5	5	0	3	3	0	0	1	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	13	11	0	54	46	0
▪ Monetary statistics	3	4	0	5	2	0	0	1	0	3	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	14	9	0	61	39	0
▪ Balance of payments	3	4	0	2	2	0	0	1	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	11	8	0	58	42	0
8.1 Are the official statistics easily accessible to you?																											
▪ National Accounts	8	1	0	4	3	0	0	1	0	7	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	23	7	0	77	23	0
▪ Prices	6	2	0	7	2	0	0	1	0	5	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	22	7	0	76	24	0
▪ Government finance statistics	7	3	0	8	2	0	0	1	0	6	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	25	7	0	78	22	0
▪ Monetary statistics	8	1	0	10	1	0	1	0	0	6	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	30	2	0	94	6	0
▪ Balance of payments	6	1	0	6	1	0	0	1	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	22	3	0	88	12	0
8.2 Can you get easy access to information pertaining to official statistics you use (explanatory notes, methodological descriptions)?																											
▪ National Accounts	3	5	0	6	2	0	0	1	0	4	4	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	2	1	0	16	14	0	53	47	0
▪ Prices	2	6	0	5	3	0	0	1	0	2	3	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	12	14	0	46	54	0
▪ Government finance statistics	4	5	0	7	2	0	0	1	0	2	4	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	1	0	16	13	0	55	45	0
▪ Monetary statistics	3	5	0	8	2	0	1	0	0	3	3	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	2	1	0	18	12	0	60	40	0
▪ Balance of payments	1	5	0	5	2	0	0	1	0	2	3	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	1	0	11	12	0	48	52	0
8.3 Is the above information on methodology clear and adequate?	2	6	3	6	0	6	0	1	0	4	2	4	0	0	1	1	0	0	2	0	1	15	9	15	38	23	38
8.4 How do you get access to official statistics?																											
▪ Hard copy	11	0	0	12	0	0	1	0	0	10	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	39	0	0	##	0	0
▪ Electronic form	10	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	26	0	0	81	0	0
9.1 Is the underlying methodology of official statistics sound and appropriate?																											
▪ National Accounts	4	3	0	3	2	0	1	0	0	5	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	17	5	0	77	23	0
▪ Prices	5	3	0	5	1	0	1	0	0	4	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	19	4	0	83	17	0
▪ Government finance statistics	7	2	0	7	1	0	1	0	0	5	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	23	4	0	85	15	0
▪ Monetary statistics	5	2	0	8	1	0	1	0	0	5	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	23	4	0	85	15	0
▪ Balance of payments	3	3	0	5	1	0	1	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	16	4	0	80	20	0
9.2 Do you consider the official statistics to be unbiased and accurate?																											
▪ National Accounts	5	3	0	6	0	0	1	0	0	6	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	23	3	0	88	12	0
▪ Prices	5	3	0	7	0	0	1	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	22	3	0	88	12	0
▪ Government finance statistics	10	0	0	9	0	0	1	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	30	0	0	##	0	0
▪ Monetary statistics	8	0	0	10	0	0	1	0	0	6	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	30	0	0	##	0	0
▪ Balance of payments	4	2	0	5	0	0	1	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	19	2	0	90	10	0

