



UNITED NATIONS
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
STATISTICS DIVISION

Regional Seminar on International Trade Statistics
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Opening Statement

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Deputy-Commissioner Xu,
Dear Participants from our Host Country,
Dear Colleagues from National Statistics Offices, other National Offices
and International Agencies

It is my pleasure to welcome you all to this regional seminar on International Trade Statistics. This seminar is one event in an already impressive series of training activities under the UN-China Trust Fund Agreement for building statistical capacity in China and developing countries of Asia. I would like to take this opportunity to express again my appreciation to the Government of the People's Republic of China and especially to the National Bureau of Statistics for its support to improve the global statistical system.

Without exaggeration I can state that international trade at this moment in time is more important in Asia than in any other part of the world. China has developed into a trading super power in the course of the last two decades. Japan and the Republic of Korea have maintained their important roles, while Singapore and Hong Kong, China, have become two of the most visited trading hubs and emerging markets like Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines and others are closely watched by trade analysts around the world. Moreover, India is increasingly taking up its piece of the world trading pie, especially in the area of international trade in services.

I am glad that in this morning session our colleagues from IDE-Jetro, the Japanese External Trade Organization, will give an overview of the trade patterns and global value chains in East Asia, which will highlight many relevant trade policy issues and will in that way emphasize where international trade statistics are needed to show trade patterns, trade networks and the growth in trade and trade-related economic indicators. It will further show how global trade has evolved and how new trade measures may become necessary.

Due to these changes in business and trading practices, customs policies, information technology and the corresponding changing needs of policy makers, business community and the general public, the international recommendations for both international merchandise trade statistics (IMTS) and for statistics of international trade in services (SITS) were revised and adopted by the UN Statistical Commission in 2010.

At that occasion, the Commission requested that more attention is given to strengthening institutional arrangements in countries to ensure that proper national coordination mechanisms exist for the compilation of high quality international trade statistics. In a number of countries, even with well-established trade statistics, there are still concerns regarding the quality and international comparability of data, necessitating bilateral and multilateral reconciliation exercises.

In February 2011, UNSD and the Statistical Office of the European Communities (Eurostat) organized a Global Forum on Trade Statistics with participation from policy makers, trade analysis and statisticians. This Forum made explicit demands to improve the relevance of international trade statistics by connecting and integrating it with other economic statistics and also urged closer cooperation among the national agencies involved in the compilation and dissemination of international trade statistics to realize those improvements. While countries are starting to adjust their systems to comply with the new international recommendations it is timely to give direction and emphasis of the data compilation issues for these statistics.

Responding to the request of the Commission and as a follow-up to the Global Forum UNSD will organize a number of seminars that will focus on the implementation of new recommendations and will highlight the linking of trade and other economic statistics in an effort to improve the quality and maintain the relevance of international trade statistics.

The main goals of this workshop are thus to explain the new and updated recommendations, to discuss the implementation plans of countries and for countries to share their experiences in the compilation of international trade statistics both for trade in goods and for trade in services.

In conclusion, I would like to thank our host, NBS China, for its valuable efforts to make this event a success, and I wish you fruitful deliberations and like to express my appreciation for your professional contribution to this important meeting.

Thank you.