

STAT 442/3(1)

23 April 2008

Dear Colleagues,

Re: Consultation on revision of the recommendations for international merchandise trade statistics

I am pleased to inform you that the United Nations Statistics Commission at its thirty-ninth session held on 26-29 February 2008 endorsed our initiative to revise the existing recommendations for international merchandise trade statistics. The Commission further requested that the draft revised recommendations be submitted to the Commission for adoption at its 41st session in 2010.

The key element of the UNSD revision strategy is a worldwide consultation with national trade statistics compilers. The consultation will be conducted in two stages: (i) initial consultation on issues most relevant for setting the scope of the future recommendations (April-June 2008) and (ii) consultation on the full text of the provisional draft of the revised recommendations (June-August 2009).

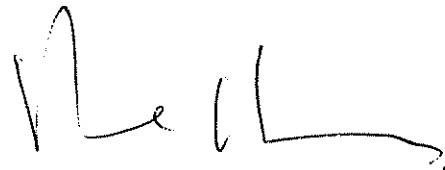
The purpose of this letter is to invite you to the first stage of the consultation process. Please find attached a paper containing 17 issues on which we would like to obtain your views. The issues were selected by the Expert Group on International Merchandise Trade Statistics and endorsed by the Interagency Task Force on International Merchandise Trade Statistics.

If certain information relevant to the issues identified in the paper is gathered under the responsibility of another agency in your country, we would be grateful if you could consult with that agency prior to submitting your responses. Specifically, we encourage you to consult with your customs administrations and also with your most important user groups.

I would like to underline that we very much welcome all comments that you may have on any of the issues. Those comments will guide us more precisely when formulating the revised recommendations on particular issues.

I would appreciate it very much if you send the completed questionnaire to Mr. Vladimir Markhonko, Chief of Trade Statistics Branch (e-mail: markhonko@un.org), by 4 July 2008.

Yours sincerely,



Paul Cheung
Director
Statistics Division/DESA