



UNITED NATIONS  
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS  
STATISTICS DIVISION

**Expert Group on International Merchandise Trade Statistics**  
**First meeting**  
**New York, 3-6 December 2007**

*Presentation*  
**Eurostat**

*Item 5: Need for revision*

## **Why *International Merchandise Trade Statistics: Concepts and Definitions* need a new revision?**

Expert Group on International Merchandise Trade  
Statistics

First meeting

New York, 3-6 December 2007

## **Background**

- The current version of IMTS (Rev.2) dates back to mid-1990s
- Since then, various aspects relating to the framework of international trade statistics have changed or will change:
  - Intensification of globalisation
  - Changes in related economic statistics
  - Changes in legal environment
  - Developments in data dissemination

## Globalisation

- Volume of international trade grows faster than production
- Structure of international trade has changed; “new economies” have become important players in world economy
- Changes in the international production and supply chains
- Role of multinational enterprise groups and intra-firm trade
- => Consequences
  - Countries specialise on production of certain goods or part of the production process => what is the linkage between production and international trade?
  - Do we measure trade of goods or transfer of goods?



## Changes in related economic statistics

- System of National Accounts
- Balance of Payments Manual
- Manual on Statistics of International Trade in Services
- => Consequences: re-consideration of recommendations and borderline cases such as
  - Change of ownership
  - Distinction between goods and services
  - Processing
  - Merchanting
  - Repairs
  - Valuation of goods



## Changes in legal environment

- Reduction of barriers to trade
- Revised Kyoto Convention
- Reduction of burden on traders
  - Simplification of Customs formalities
  - Abolishing of Customs formalities
- => Consequences:
  - Customs data may sometimes be insufficient to fulfil all statistical needs
  - Recommendations needed on how to take these changes onboard



## Developments in data dissemination

- Dissemination practices and tools
  - Electronic data dissemination has taken over traditional dissemination tools
- New statistics on international trade
  - Linkage of trade and business statistics
  - Trade by mode of transport, trade by invoiced currency,...
- Metadata and Quality
  - Key concepts for transparency of statistics: users need to understand and assess the statistics
- => Consequences
  - Recommendations for dissemination, metadata and quality



## Revision of IMTS: Concepts and Definitions

- International trade statistics, in their current format, are well-established statistics which have a specific and significant role in the framework of economic statistics
- Changes and developments in the environment of international trade enforce to review the current recommendations and adapt them, where necessary
- However, it may not be desirable or feasible to adapt recommendations in such a way that all emerging issues can be taken onboard
- It is, nevertheless, important to acknowledge them and understand their consequences and impact

