



SPECIAL FEATURE:

TOWARDS, IMTS, REV.3 - REPORT OF THE FIRST VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE EXPERT GROUP ON IMTS

The United Nations Statistical Commission at its 39th session (26-29 February 2008) endorsed the initiative and strategy of the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) to revise the existing recommendations for international merchandise trade statistics contained in *International Merchandise Trade Statistics: Concepts and Definitions, Revision 2* (IMTS, Rev.2) and requested that the draft revised recommendations be submitted to the Commission for adoption at its 41st session in 2010.

Purpose and organization of the meeting

UNSD is assisted in the revision process by an Expert Group on International Merchandise Trade Statistics (EG-IMTS) which met for the first time from 3 to 6 December 2007 in New York and agreed to meet again for a virtual meeting in November 2008. This meeting was conducted electronically from 5 November to 5 December 2008 through an 'expert forum'.

The objectives of this meeting were (i) to discuss the results of the first round of worldwide consultation on the 17 issues most relevant for setting the scope of the future recommendations as identified by the EG-IMTS and (ii) to agree on how to incorporate them into the future revised recommendations.

On 5 November UNSD provided its initial proposals for IMTS, Rev.3 on all 17 issues which were submitted for worldwide consultation. 15 EG-IMTS members of national offices and international/regional organizations participated in the virtual meeting providing a total of 186 comments. The last comment was received on 5 December.

Results - Some highlights

The EG-IMTS agreed to hold two additional virtual meetings in 2009 - to review the full draft text of Chapter I "Coverage and time of recording" and Chapter II "Trade System" (probably in March 2009) and to review the full draft texts of the remaining chapters (probably in June 2009). Also, UNSD will keep the expert forum open for ongoing discussions.

Coverage: The EG-IMTS endorsed, with some modifications, a more elaborated definition of IMTS coverage which aims at clarifying in particular the terms "simply transported" and "temporarily admitted or dispatched". The EG-IMTS proposed to provide recommendations on the inclusion/exclusion of a number of goods categories identified by EG members.

Change of ownership: The EG-IMTS agreed that the criteria of change of ownership for inclusion in IMTS is to be applied only when goods do not cross country's border and recommended that examples of cases be provided in IMTS, Rev.3 (e.g., ships, aircraft, satellites, etc).

Packaged software: The EG-IMTS agreed to include media, whether or not recorded, in international merchandise trade statistics at its transaction value; but to clarify further the term "transaction value" in the context of this category of goods and to allow for exclusion of "media with customized software" which could for example be defined as software written for a specific client.

Goods for processing: The EG-IMTS (i) agreed that an explanation of a broad meaning of "processing" should be provided by listing and discussing certain operations, (ii) asked to include in IMTS,

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Editorial note

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DATABASES AND PUBLICATIONS: 2008 UN COMTRADE: FURTHER INCREASE OF DATA AVAILABILITY

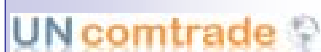
A total of 142 countries or areas with data for 2007 have been published on UN Comtrade by end of 2008, setting a new record in timeliness. In 2007 a total of 133 countries or areas with data for the previous year had been published and the year before, 120 countries.

Not only the timeliness but also the overall data availability on UN Comtrade further increased during 2008 as a total of 209 new datasets were published (compared to 202 in the previous year), filling up gaps for earlier years. The maintenance of the existing data availability would only require the publication of about 170 countries or areas per year (assuming that no additional re-

porting countries or areas emerge).

Revisions are an important part of data quality. For UN Comtrade the existing data is replaced as soon as an updated dataset is provided. Excluding the revisions of newly (first time) published data and multiple revisions during the year a total of 237 revised datasets have been published during 2008.

The United Nations Statistics Division is grateful to all countries which made their data available and replied to our inquiries. Thanks go also to the international and regional organizations with which we collaborate in data collection and which supported our efforts.



UN Comtrade Publication Statistics*

reporting year	Data availability				Newly (first time) published			Total published**		
	by end 2008	by end 2007	by end 2006	by end 2005	in 2008	in 2007	in 2006	in 2008	in 2007	in 2006
2000	171	169	164	163	2	5	1	27	23	12
2001	172	168	162	161	4	6	1	39	28	14
2002	170	165	159	153	5	6	6	41	32	19
2003	169	163	157	148	6	6	9	39	40	28
2004	168	160	144	122	8	16	22	55	50	50
2005	163	150	120		13	30	120	44	61	120
2006	162	133			29	133		59	133	
2007	142				142			142		
Total	1,317	1,108	906	747	209	202	159	446	367	243

* In terms of number of countries or areas.

** Newly published datasets plus revisions (excluding revisions within the year).

2007 YEARBOOK TABLES ARE NOW AVAILABLE

These analytical tables which will be published in the forthcoming 2007 International Merchandise Trade Statistics Yearbook are now available on the website of the International Merchandise Trade Statistics Section at: <http://comtrade.un.org/pb/>.

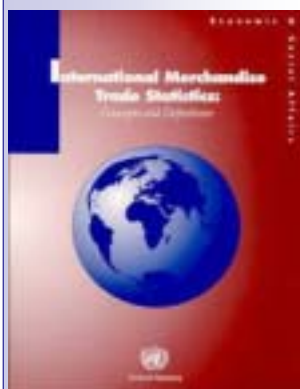
Country Tables contain detailed data for individual countries or areas. *Commodity*

Tables show the world trade of certain commodities analyzed by regions and countries. The so called *Special Tables* present, inter alia, (a) the contribution of the trade of each country to the trade of its region and of the world, (b) the flow of trade between countries and regions and (c) the development of the prices at which goods are traded internationally.

Find out more analytical tables at:
<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/imts/anntotpubs.htm>

The full report is available at:
<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/EG-IMTS/EG-IMTS%20web%20announcement.htm>

DOWNLOAD IMTS, REV 2.



AT
<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/pubs/gesgrid.asp?id=111>

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Rev.3 details on the treatment of the goods resulting from the processing and their movements and (iii) agreed that countries should be encouraged to explicitly identify (separately record) cross border movement of goods for processing as well as goods resulting from such processing in their trade statistics.

Transactions between parent and affiliated branches: The EG-IMTS (i) confirmed that transactions between related parties (whatever the definition of "related") should be included in international merchandise trade statistics the same way as if these transactions would take place between unrelated parties, (ii) agreed that countries should be encouraged to identify and record this kind of trade separately and (iii) agreed that more clarity is needed whether a preferred definition for related parties should be recommended and whether a more narrow definition should be adopted.

Downloadable or otherwise electronically delivered products: The EG-IMTS agreed that by convention the electronic delivery from one country to another of any content is explicitly excluded from the coverage of international merchandise trade statistics.

Asymmetric inclusions and exclusions: The EG-IMTS (i) recognized the user needs in symmetrical recording of imports and exports and, in general, supported symmetrical recording, (ii) took also into account the potential increase in the reporting burden and difficulties in obtaining the required data and (iii) advised that all cases where goods transactions are asymmetrically recorded be re-examined and options for their statistical treatment be included in the provisional draft of Chapter I for further discussion.

Adding mode of transport: The EG-IMTS (i) strongly supported the general recommendation to collect and disseminate mode of transport as additional data dimension of trade data, (ii) agreed that when the general trade system is in use the mode of transport should be recorded as the means

of transport when crossing the border/when entering and leaving the country and (iii) advised that the recommendation concerning a classification of mode of transport requires further consideration.

Adding Imports on FOB-type basis: The EG-IMTS (i) recognized the importance of imports FOB valuation for various purposes including for use in the SNA, BOP and SITS compilations, reconciliation studies and examination of bilateral trade balances, (ii) recognized as well the significant additional burden on respondents and merchandise trade compilers which such compilation might entail and (iii) advised that IMTS, Rev.3 should encourage countries to set up appropriate interagency arrangements to systematically produce CIF/FOB adjustments (with active participation of merchandise trade compilers).

Strengthening the reporting of country of consignment for imports: The EG-IMTS endorsed, in general, the recommendation that in the case of imports, the country of consignment be collected as the second partner attribution (alongside the country of origin) for analytical purposes and trade reconciliation studies and advised to clarify how the additional partner data for imports (by country of consignment) should/ should not be disseminated.

Optional or recommended country of consignment for export: The EG-IMTS agreed that the issue needs further examination and asked UNSD to propose an updated draft text for further discussion.

Use of non-customs sources and data compilation strategies: The EG-IMTS (i) stressed that IMTS, Rev.3 should confirm that customs records remain the main and preferred data source for international merchandise trade statistics, (ii) agreed that non-customs data sources should be recommended for use only if customs records are not available or clearly not adequate and that in such cases other administrative sources should be used as much as possible, in particular in order to avoid costly surveys and (iii) proposed that IMTS, Rev.3

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describes advantages and disadvantages of non-customs data sources briefly and that a more detailed discussion be provided in the Compilers Manual.

Regarding the issues of maintaining institutional arrangements, recommendations on quality of international merchandise trade statistics, providing additional recommendations on the compilation and dissemination of metadata of international merchan-

dise trade statistics, the compilation of external trade indices and the compilation of seasonally adjusted data the EG-IMTS agreed in general with the UNSD recommendations to cover them in IMTS, Rev. 3 and in more detail in the updated Compilers Manual.

The full report is available on the website of the EG-IMTS at: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/EG-IMTS/EG-IMTS%20web%20announcement.htm>

DOWNLOAD THE MANUAL ON
SITS



AT

<http://unstats.un.org/UNSD/tradeserv/TFSITS/manual.htm>

COOPERATION WITH COUNTRIES AND AGENCIES: WORKSHOP ON STATISTICS OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN SERVICES CHALLENGES

The United Nations Statistics Division organized in collaboration with the State Statistics Committee of Ukraine and the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States a Regional Workshop on Statistics of Trade in Services: Challenges and Good Practices. The Workshop was held from 7 to 9 October 2008 in Kiev, Ukraine. The venue of the Workshop was Vadym Hetman Kyiv National Economic University (KNEU).

The Workshop objective was to facilitate exchange of country experiences and to train representatives from national statisti-

cal offices and central banks from the CIS countries in methodological development and good practices in compiling statistics of international trade in services. The Workshop focused on both the interpretation of conceptual issues and options for the implementation of the international recommendations in country specific circumstances. The meeting facilitated the establishment of a network of statisticians in the CIS countries working on service trade statistics.



YOU HAVE ASKED US:

TREATMENT OF CURRENCY BANKNOTES IN TRADE STATISTICS

Q: According to UN International merchandise trade statistics should we exclude currency banknotes from exports and imports of product?

A: It depends on whether the banknotes are in circulation or not. According to *IMTS: Concepts and Definitions, Revision 2*, para 20 and 43, unissued banknotes and securities, and coins not in circulation (HS: part of heading 4907.00 and heading 7118.90) are regarded as commodities rather than financial items and should be included in imports or exports of products of the printing industry. Issued banknotes and securities and coins in circulation (HS: part of subheading 4907.00, and heading

7118) represent evidence of financial claims, and are excluded from international merchandise trade statistics.

Q: How to register national currency banknotes newly printed abroad and imported?

A: According to *IMTS: Concepts and Definitions, Revision 2*, para 123 (a), it is recommended that unissued banknotes and securities and coins not in circulation be valued at the transaction value of the printed paper or stamped metal rather than at their face value.



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40th Session

United Nations

Statistical Commission

24-27 February 2009

UPCOMING EVENTS:

FORTIETH SESSION OF THE STATISTICAL COMMISSION 24 - 27 FEBRUARY 2009, NEW YORK

The 40th session of the Statistical Commission (SC) will take place from 24 - 27 February 2009 in New York. Side events will start already on 20 February. For detailed information please go to http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/commission_40th_session.htm.

International Merchandise Trade Statistics (IMTS) is not on the agenda of this upcoming SC but will be on the agenda of the 2010 meeting. Two items on the agenda of the 2009 SC are of particular interest for

trade statisticians. Under item 3(e) "National Accounts" of the provisional agenda the SC will have before it for adoption the text of volume 2 of the *System of National Accounts, 2008 (2008 SNA)*: the chapter 26 of this volume covers the rest of the world accounts and the links to the balance of payments. Under item 4(g) "Common open standards for the exchange and sharing of data and metadata" of the provisional agenda the report of the Task Force to Establish Standards on Data and Metadata Exchange will be provided.

The United Nations Statistical Commission:

- *Advancement of the global statistical system...*
- *Over 60 years of statistical development...*
- *Coordination of international statistical activities...*
- *Statistical capacity building...*
- *Coordination and integration of statistical programmes...*
- *Development of national statistical systems...*

MEETING OF THE TASK FORCE ON INTERNATIONAL MERCHANDISE TRADE STATISTICS, 10-11 MARCH 2009, BANGKOK

This meeting will review decisions of other international meetings with regard to merchandise trade, discuss technical assistance activities and database developments at task force members. Under the agenda item "Concepts, definitions and methodology" the currently ongoing revision of the recommendations for IMTS will be discussed. Trade analysis will be an-

other topic on the agenda. On March 12 the meeting will be followed by a joint session with the Task Force on Statistics of International Trade in Services (TFSITS) which is meeting in parallel. Reports of previous meetings are available on the task force website at: http://imts.wto.org/task_e.htm.

Info on our technical assistance activities can be found at:

http://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/workshops_imts.htm

EDITORIAL NOTE

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