



**Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)
Statistics Division (UNSD)**

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Dear Mr. xx,

Re: Request for 2011 Annual and 2012 Monthly Trade Data

The United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) maintains a detailed merchandise trade statistics database as mandated by the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC). This database (called UN Comtrade) contains annual trade data (imports and exports) by reporting country or area, commodity and partner country, for most countries of the world. These data are regularly used by the UN member states, various UN organizations, and other international agencies for economic and policy analysis including identification of market access opportunities.

UN Comtrade is available on the UNSD Web site (<http://comtrade.un.org>). Basic access to UN Comtrade is free. Offices of data providers are given premium access free-of-charge¹. The annual editions of the *International Trade Statistics Yearbook* prepared on the basis of UN Comtrade are also regularly sent free-of-charge to each national statistical office or other national office providing the trade data.

Users of trade data are urging UNSD to systematically update UN Comtrade and to improve its coverage and timeliness. In this connection we are requesting your office to forward to us the 2011 annual and the 2012 monthly data for imports and exports of your country by commodity and partner countries, including any revisions, as soon as it becomes available². The data should be at the most detailed level of the national commodity and partner country classifications compiled following the recommendations of the UNSC to the largest extent possible. The UNSC recommendations are published in *International Merchandise Trade Statistics: Concepts and Definitions 2010* (IMTS 2010), which is freely available on the UNSD Website³. Please find the details of this data request in the Annexes 2 and 3 to this letter.

Mr. xxxxx
XXXXXXXXXX,
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

¹ Please contact us for your User ID and Password (comtrade@un.org).

² For further details on the collection of detailed monthly data please see Annex 1.

³ See <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/EG-IMTS/EG-IMTS%20web%20announcement.htm> (pre-edited version).

We would like to receive the provisional 2011 annual and 2012 monthly data as soon as they are available, as well as any subsequent revisions and final data when these are ready. We prefer to receive the data electronically, either as e-mail attachment (please send to comtrade@un.org), per FTP (please contact comtrade@un.org for details) or on CD-ROM. You may use the facilities of the UNDP office in your country to send the data to our office in New York.

Moreover, in order to improve the accuracy of our database, we kindly ask you to send us:

- (i) a table with the **official annual totals** of imports (CIF) and exports (FOB) of your country for the years 2000 to 2011, and the respective monthly totals for 2012,
- (ii) **confirmation of the following metadata** on file for your country:⁴
 - a. trade system: General
 - b. statistical value of imports: CIF
 - c. statistical value of exports: FOB
 - d. partner country for imports: Origin
 - e. partner country for exports: Last Known Destination
- (iii) the reference to **your country's publication and website**, where such totals and metadata are normally made available.

If your office is not responsible for publication of the official country totals of the external trade, please let us know whom to contact on this matter.

The received data will be processed at the most detailed level available. The processing includes, whenever necessary and possible, the following conversions: (a) commodity codes to codes used in the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System (HS) and in the Standard International Trade Classification (SITC), (b) country codes to UN 3-digit standard codes, (c) values expressed in terms of national currency to values in US dollars, (d) reported quantities to quantities in terms of net weight and standard quantity units recommended by the World Customs Organization. The processing may include certain adjustments to achieve a better compliance with UNSC recommendations. The processed annual 6-digit HS data are aggregated to all higher levels of HS, converted to SITC and added to UN Comtrade⁵. The processed data at all levels of the provided commodity/partner breakdown are made available to all UN agencies and other international organizations working in the field of international trade statistics, if so requested for specific purposes, unless a country disagrees.

Your cooperation in providing the requested data is greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Ronald Jansen
Chief, Trade Statistics Branch
United Nations Statistics Division

⁴ Available at: <http://comtrade.un.org/db/mr/daExpNotebyRepYear.aspx>.

⁵ The monthly data will be made available, for the time being, in a simplified format in only the original classification and only including net weight.

Annex 1: Collection of detailed monthly data

In May 2010 UNSD requested countries to (i) make available to UNSD for testing purposes the detailed (6-digit level of HS) monthly and quarterly trade statistics for the first three months of 2010 and (ii) supply such statistics on a regular basis beginning with data for January 2011. A very large number of countries responded positively to this request and provided their data for testing purposes.

Based on the data received, UNSD has completed the development of a processing and dissemination system (beta version) for monthly international merchandise trade statistics which will be released to the public for further testing shortly.

Numerous countries are providing their monthly data already on a regular basis and other countries are requested to submit their monthly data on regular basis as well.

Annex 2: Requirements for data transmission:

Supply of detailed Commodity by Partner trade data

Part I. Required data fields plus associated metadata information to accompany the data files

Field Name	Recommended Field Content
Reference Year	Gregorian calendar (January through December) – in YYYY format (e.g., 2010, 2011)
Period	Annual or monthly period identification (e.g., M01, M02, ..., A00)
Trade Flow Commodity Code	“Imports”, “Re-imports”, “Exports” and “Re-exports” According to the Harmonized System (HS) at the most detailed commodity level available (6-digit HS)
Partner country or area	In national nomenclature; country of origin (for imports) and country of last known destination (for exports)
Value	Monetary value (in national currency or US dollars); CIF for imports and FOB for exports
Net weight	Physical quantity (in kilograms)
Supplementary Quantity	Physical quantity (in the WCO recommended standard units of quantity)
Supplementary Quantity Unit	Description of units of quantity employed for supplementary quantity data (e.g., “Number of items”)
New data fields following the adoption of IMTS 2010 (include if already available)^a	
Second partner country or area	In national nomenclature; country of consignment for imports and country of consignment (destination) for exports
Second value for imports	Monetary value (in national currency or US dollars); FOB for imports
Mode of transport	The means of transport used when goods enter or leave the economic territory (in the encouraged nomenclature provided in IMTS 2010, para. 7.2 or national nomenclature)
Custom procedure code (or applicable transaction code)	Code of the customs procedure applied to individual transactions by customs; any applied procedure or transaction code if customs procedure codes are not available or if additional codes are used

If any of the recommendations cannot be met, please submit that information as well as any other metadata with the data files. Specifically:

- (i) Coverage: Except for the inclusions and exclusions as listed in *International Merchandise Trade Statistics: Concepts and Definitions 2010^b* (IMTS 2010), do you include or exclude other categories of goods? If yes, please list.
- (ii) Trade system: The General trade system is recommended for all flows; if you apply the Special trade system, please indicate which trade flows are excluded.
- (iii) Commodity Classification: Please indicate the edition of the HS commodity classification used to report the data (e.g., “HS2007” or “HS2012”). Please provide descriptions of codes, which are not based on the HS system.
- (iv) Valuation: If valuation is other than CIF (imports) and FOB (exports and imports), please specify.
- (v) Quantity Measurement: Use of the WCO standard units of quantity is recommended. If these units are not used, please describe used national units, indicate them in the Supplementary Quantity Unit field and provide conversion factors to the recommended WCO standard units of quantity.

- (vi) Partner Country: Country of origin (for imports) and country of last known destination (for exports) are recommended. In addition, countries are recommended/encouraged to provide the country of consignment for imports and for exports as second partner country. If other definitions of partner country are used, please describe. Please provide the name of the international nomenclature for country and area codes (e.g., “3-alpha-ISO”) used or provide the full list of the national nomenclature used.
- (vii) Mode of transport: Countries are recommended to clearly indicate the definition and contents of the categories used.
- (viii) Customs procedure code: Countries should provide in their metadata the nomenclature and description of the procedure codes applied by customs and the nomenclature and description of any additional procedure or transaction codes.
- (ix) Confidentiality: If confidentiality is used, please provide information about the special commodity and partner country codes used for that purpose. It is recommended that any information deemed confidential (suppressed) be reported in full detail at the next higher level of commodity aggregation that adequately protects confidentiality.
- (x) Currency unit: Description of currency unit (e.g., “National currency”, “US dollars”, or the corresponding ISO 4217 currency code)

Part II. Required metadata

All data transmissions should be accompanied with the following metadata elements and information:

- (i) Official or preliminary import and export totals for each period where data are provided;
- (ii) Sufficiently clear field names in the data file;
- (iii) For each abbreviation used, a full description of its meaning;
- (iv) Sufficient indication of quantity units and weight (in particular if not provided in kilograms of net weight), currencies, and scaling factors (thousands, millions, etc.) used.
- (v) Type of file format chosen, as well as the total number of records included in the data set.

Part III. Requested data structure and format

Our preferred file formats are flat files, for instance comma-separated value (CSV) files, or database files such as Access, dBase, or Stata. We request to send complete trade records (see Part I. above) and to avoid splitting them across several lines/ rows. Please do not send data structured in many tables or sub-tables. Also, please avoid the use of Word files or PDF files.

Countries are encouraged to contact us (at comtrade@un.org) regarding the structure, format and mode of transmission of the monthly data so that arrangements for regular transmission can be established.

^a The UNSC approved the new recommendations in 2010 (see *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2010, Supplement No. 4* (E/2010/24), chap. I, sect. B, decision 41/103).

^b An electronic copy of this UN publication (pre-edited version) is available at: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/EG-IMTS/EG-IMTS%20web%20announcement.htm>.

Annex 3: Changes in country nomenclature

Please see below the following changes regarding partner country coding.

1) Netherlands Antilles: The federation of the Netherlands Antilles was formally dissolved on 10 October 2010. The former Dutch Caribbean dependency ceased to exist with a change of the five islands' constitutional status. Under the new political structure, Curaçao and Sint Maarten (Dutch part) have become autonomous countries within the Kingdom of the Netherlands, joining Aruba, which gained the status in 1986 (see <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/m49/m49chang.htm>).

For purposes of Comtrade data processing and dissemination, both with annual and monthly frequency, the use of code 530 (Netherlands Antilles) will end in 2010. Starting with the 2011 data, the following codes will be used instead:

- 531 - Curaçao
- 534 - Sint Maarten (Dutch part)
- 535 - Bonaire, Saint Eustatius and Saba

2) Sudan: On 9 July 2011 South Sudan became an independent State and a Member of the United Nations on 14 July 2011 (see <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/m49/m49alpha.htm>).

For purposes of Comtrade data processing and dissemination, both with annual and monthly frequency, the use of code 736 (Sudan, now 729) will end in 2011. Starting with the 2012 data, the following codes will be used instead:

- 728 - South Sudan
- 729 - Sudan

Countries are requested to incorporate those changes in their recording of partner information in due time, preferably maintaining consistency of recording on calendar year basis.