

Opening Statement by UNSD

Ms. Carrette,
Dear Colleagues,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to this regional workshop on travel and tourism statistics. This workshop is part of the programme of support to developing countries by UNSD and others for the implementation of the revised international recommendations for statistics of international trade in services contained in MSITS 2010 and on tourism statistics contained in IRTS 2008 and TSA: RMF 2008.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to the Government of the Commonwealth of Dominica and especially to Ms. Carrette and her staff at the Central Statistical Office for their support to make this workshop a success. This workshop is a follow up of the workshop organized for the CARICOM countries a year ago focusing on international trade in services and the creative industries hosted by the Central Statistical Office of Barbados which was organized by WTO; and our experience has been very positive and decided that we should return to now organize a workshop on travel and tourism statistics.

In this opening statement, I would like to start by painting the broader picture of how trade statistics need to change due to economic globalisation and to the international operations of businesses; and thereafter I will come back to the theme of the workshop this week.

Rapid technological advances in the past few decades in transport, computing and telecommunications, including the development of the internet and electronic commerce, have resulted in enterprises availing themselves of resources for production at more distant locations and have enabled them to serve ever wider markets. This trend towards globalization, reinforced by liberalization policies and the removal of regulatory obstacles to economic activities, has fuelled the steady growth of multinational enterprises, international investment and trade in goods and services. Better communication and transport have also facilitated the movement of people for the purposes of tourism, migration, employment and trade.

This paragraph which highlights globalization and trade in services comes straight out of the manual of statistics of international trade in

services and of the manuals on tourism statistics; it very well words how complex trade in services has become.

People's desire to visit places beyond their usual environment, be it in their own country or in foreign lands, results in travel and in the increased demand for goods and services thus generating additional employment and income. The fast growth in the domestic and international travel in the last decades made tourism industries the key contributors to the national income and employment in many countries. Nowadays, more than 700 million tourists visit foreign destinations and it is predicted that their number will reach 1.6 billion by 2020. For many countries, tourism is one of the key components of their GDP – which was achieved after a lot of investment in the tourism industry: building infrastructures and providing services for foreign tourists as well as domestic tourists. It is understandable, therefore, that countries have a keen interest in better measuring tourism related activities. At the same time, tourism may have some adverse environmental and social consequences. Also, a heavy reliance on tourism may make a country's economy more vulnerable during the difficult economic times as we are experiencing it now. In this context the availability of high quality tourism statistics is vital for an effective fact based policy making. The task of providing the policy makers and society at large with the necessary and reliable information squarely falls on the compilers of tourism statistics both in national statistical offices and in national tourism administrations. This makes the strengthening of a strategic alliance between these institutions as well as between them and the central banks a crucial precondition for the success of national tourism statistics programmes. I sincerely hope that this workshop will contribute to the sense of the importance and urgency of making more progress in this direction.

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.

At the recent meeting of the United Nations Statistical Commission in February 2013, a report on international trade statistics was discussed. This report will describe the growing economic interdependencies among countries be it through international trade, multi-national enterprises, global value chains or the outsourcing of business functions. The report proposes to start work on a new umbrella framework which will bring together these mentioned areas of international trade in goods and services, foreign affiliates statistics, foreign direct investment, outsourcing of business functions, manufacturing services, global production, and trade in value-added. Such framework should more tightly show the connections between the accounting frameworks (SNA/BOP) and the basic trade and economic statistics involving businesses which operate across borders.

The trade in services section at UNSD leads the international effort to develop a Compilers Guide for MSITS 2010, which should give practical compilation guidance to all those statisticians working in national statistical offices, central banks or ministries who have responsibilities in collecting, compiling or disseminating trade in service statistics. The first full draft of the Compilers Guide will be ready towards the end of 2013. Also UNSD cooperates with UNWTO to finalize the Compilation Guide for IRTS 2008, providing practical guide to statisticians working in the field of tourism statistics which is expected to be finalized at the end of this year.

This brings us to the main goals of this workshop, which are to explain the updated recommendations of MSITS 2010, IRTS 2008 and TSA: RMF 2008 to discuss the specific compilation issues, and for countries to share their experiences in the compilation of travel and tourism statistics. We are very happy to have with us this week three very experienced resource persons, namely Marion Libreros Pinot for UNWTO, Barbara D'Andrea of WTO and Demi Kotsovos of Statistics Canada. Marion Libreros has been working for UNWTO for a long period of time but she happens to work also at DANE and lives in Bogota and was actively involved in a few projects on tourism statistics in the CARICOM region. Marion has an incredible rich working experience in national accounts and in travel and tourism statistics and she will lead the programme on Wednesday. Barbara D'Andrea is a senior statistician at WTO and was involved in activities related to trade in services statistics. She will help us reviewing the workshop that was organized by her office in the region in May 2012 and also to introduce the evolvement of trade in services statistics, FDI and FATS who will contribute to selected agenda

points. Demi Kotsovos, Chief of Section producing macroeconomic statistics on tourism at the National Accounts Integration and Development Division, Statistics Canada. She is responsible for producing TSA, quarterly national tourism indicators and the annual Human Resource Module of the TSA (providing details on labour market information, jobs/occupations in the tourism industries and a module on government revenue attributable to tourism but she was also supporting technical assistance in regions, including the Bahamas to support their work on developing the TSA and she is representing Canada at the UNWTO at several occasions. Finally, I would also like to single out the representatives of the CARICOM Secretariat, the ECCB and the Caribbean Tourism Organization, who will bring in the regional perspective to the workshop. I am very happy to have them here.

In conclusion, I would like to thank again Ms. Carrette and her staff at the Central Statistical Office of Dominica for the valuable efforts to make this event a success, I would also like to thank all participants for making the effort to be here this week and I wish you all very fruitful deliberations and hope that this will be an enriching experience for everyone.

Thank you.