



UNITED NATIONS
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
STATISTICS DIVISION

**Statistics of International Trade in Services:
Challenges and Good Practices**
Workshop for the South East Asian countries
Hanoi, Vietnam, 30 November - 3 December 2010

Opening Statement

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Dear colleagues,

It is my pleasure to welcome you all to the workshop on Statistics of International Trade in Services for the South East Asian countries. The workshop is organized by the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) in collaboration with the General Statistical Office of Vietnam, the World Trade Organization and I would like to express my sincere gratitude to these organizations for their efforts to make this workshop a success.

With about three trillion of US dollars worth of services in annual international trading, we can appreciate the importance of statistics of international trade in services for measuring dynamics of the ever globalizing world economy, monitoring trade policy and market research. It is not surprising, therefore, that statistics on international trade in services are always in a high demand and a growing number of countries compile them to the best of their capability. Internationally, these statistics become more easily available to users. In addition to the trade in services data available from the IMF balance of payments statistics, I am glad to inform you the United Nations Statistics Division's trade in services database (UN ServiceTrade) is maturing and is playing an instrumental role in making the data readily available to users worldwide.

However, it should be noted that in some countries these statistics are not sufficiently developed and do not satisfy fully the needs of the policy makers, business community and general public. In a number of countries, even with well established statistical systems, there are concerns regarding the quality and cross-country comparability of trade in services statistics necessitating various reconciliation exercises.

These concerns, combined with new developments such as changes in commercial practices and legal environment as well as the adoption of revised methodological guidelines for balance of payments statistics and national accounts, warrant revisiting and updating the Manual on Statistics of International Trade in Services. The United

Nations Statistical Commission adopted the revised manual, “Manual of Statistics of International Trade in Services 2010” during its forthcoming 41st session on 23-26 February 2010 as well as supported the implementation plan provided by the Task Force on Statistics of International Trade in Services.

It is also important for all countries to achieve the best possible harmonisation of trade in services statistics with other statistical domains in the context of an integrated approach to economic statistics and on the basis of effective institutional arrangement between all involved governmental agencies. The benefits of such an integrated approach will include improving a country’s capability to produce data in the most cost effective way and, at the same time, ensure their coherence with other economic statistics and enhance policy relevance.

Following its policy of strengthening basic economic statistics, UNSD has decided to make a special effort to assist countries in their efforts to modernize the methodological and operational foundations of their trade in services statistics. This workshop is one in a series of the regional workshops which we are organizing in this context. Another important objective of the workshop is to give countries an additional opportunity to elaborate the international recommendations for these statistics and to contribute to the preparation of improved compilation guidance by focusing on both challenges and good practices in this area of statistical work.

I am pleased that you accepted our invitation and came here to Hanoi for four days of discussions and I would like to wish you fruitful deliberations and to express my appreciation of your professional contribution to this important meeting.

Thank you.