



SPECIAL FEATURE:

RESULTS OF THE 2ND MEETING OF THE EXPERT GROUP ON INTERNATIONAL MERCHANDISE TRADE STATISTICS (EG-IMTS) CONCERNING THE REVISION OF THE INTERNATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS ON IMTS (IMTS2010)

The second meeting of the Expert Group on International Merchandise Trade Statistics (EG-IMTS) on the revision of the current recommendations for IMTS took place from 3 to 6 November 2009 in New York. A total of 21 participants from countries and international organizations (not counting UNSD) participated in this meeting.

The meeting reviewed the full draft of *International Merchandise Trade Statistics: Concepts and Definitions 2010 (IMTS2010)* and discussed all chapters and annexes. The most important chapters were reviewed paragraph by paragraph. As input to and part of the discussion, the EG-IMTS reviewed the results from a worldwide consultation during which countries reviewed the full draft of the revised recommendations. In addition, the meeting discussed the implementation plan for the IMTS2010 and the work program of the EG-IMTS.

Results of the meeting:

Endorsement of the revised recommendations for IMTS2010

The EG-IMTS endorsed the draft revised recommendations subject to several amendments and clarifications. Inter alia, the Expert Group:

- Pointed out the importance of the IMTS Compilers Manual which will

provide supplementary explanations and advice to assist countries in the correct interpretation of the revised recommendations and in their effective implementation under various circumstances;

- Made several suggestions for important amendments in the introduction of IMTS2010 such as clarifying the terms “recommended” and “encouraged”;
- Suggested numerous amendments and clarifications concerning the scope of IMTS and the individual inclusions and exclusions; for example, the EG-IMTS suggested to point out that some countries make a distinction between customs and statistical threshold and to provide reference to the goods categories where the criterion of change

of ownership could apply;

- Agreed that the recommendation to apply the general trade system should be further explained and that the difficulties for its application should be recognized;
- Endorsed the updated recommendations on the compilation of mode of transport;
- Endorsed the new recommendations on data compilation strate-

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http://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/imts/imts_default.htm



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<http://data.un.org/>

The final report of the EG-IMTS meeting is available at:

<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/EG-IMTS/EG-IMTS%20web%20announcement.htm>

gies, quality and metadata, and dissemination while making several suggestions for amendments and clarifications.

The detailed conclusions of the EG-IMTS meeting are available in the final report of the EG-IMTS meeting.

Endorsement of the plan for implementation of IMTS2010 and the EG-IMTS work programme

The EG-IMTS endorsed the suggested draft action plan for the implementation of IMTS2010 and the suggested work programme for the EG-IMTS for 2010-2012. In addition, it:

- Welcomed UNSD's intention to collaborate closely with the EG-IMTS and the Task Force on International Merchandise Trade Statistics on the implementation of IMTS2010 and the related research agenda;

- Pointed out that the IMTS Compilers Manual should become available as soon as possible and took note of the plan to create a separate website in order to make its contents and possible further amendments available as soon as possible;
- Took note of UNSD's request to assist in technical assistance activities;
- Concluded that it is very important to work closely with National Account/Balance of Payments compilers in data compilation for certain categories of goods and to coordinate the presentation of the results which are affected by the increased conceptual differences in the recording of certain transactions;
- Appreciated UNSD's efforts to maintain the global UN Comtrade database and agreed that the presentation of the new data items in UN Comtrade should be discussed by the EG-IMTS and took note of the planned virtual meeting on UN Comtrade in 2011. Took note of UNSD's plan to be able to accommodate the new data items starting in 2011 although it is expected that most countries will require more time to be able to deliver the new data items.

Finalization of IMTS2010 and national implementation

UNSD will finalize the draft IMTS2010 based on the conclusions of this meeting of the EG-IMTS and submit it to the UN Statistical Commission at its 41st Session on 23–26 February 2010. The final text of IMTS2010 will be prepared taking into account decisions of the Commission and will be made available on the UNSD website immediately after its preparation (March 2010).

UNSD will inform countries about the Commission's actions and will encourage them to begin planning the IMTS2010 implementation as soon as possible. Countries will be encouraged to develop their implementation plans based on their national circumstances and priorities. UNSD will review the status of the implementation several years later and report its findings to the Commission.

Towards IMTS, Rev. 3 (IMTS2010): A 2 years long journey...

3-6 Dec. 2007	First meeting of the Expert Group on IMTS (EG-IMTS): The EG-IMTS identified the critical issues for the IMTS revision;
26 - 29 Feb. 2008	39th Session of the Statistical Commission : The Commission endorsed UNSD's strategy to revise the existing recommendations for IMTS and requested that the draft revised recommendations be submitted at its 41 st session in 2010;
May-June 2008	Worldwide consultation: UNSD organized a worldwide consultation with national IMTS Compilers on issues relevant for setting the scope of the IMTS2010: 115 countries participated in the consultation;
5 Nov. - 5 Dec. 2008	First virtual meeting of the EG-IMTS: The EG-IMTS discussed the results of the first round of worldwide consultation and their incorporation into the IMTS2010;
25 Mar. - 21 Apr. 2009	Second virtual meeting of the EG-IMTS: The EG-IMTS reviewed the draft text of the chapters on "Coverage and time of recording" and "Trade System";
27 May - 30 June 2009	Third virtual meeting of the EG-IMTS: The EG-IMTS reviewed the draft text of the remaining chapters;
July-Sept. 2009	Worldwide consultation: UNSD organized a worldwide consultation on the full text of the provisional draft of the IMTS2010. More than 100 countries replied to the consultation paper;
3-6 Nov. 2009	Second meeting of the EG-IMTS: The EG-IMTS reviewed and endorsed the draft of IMTS2010;
23 - 26 Feb. 2010	41st Session of the Statistical Commission: The Commission will have before it for review and adoption the draft of <i>International Merchandise Trade Statistics: Concepts and Definitions 2010 (IMTS2010)</i> .

DATABASES AND PUBLICATIONS: THE 2009 EDITION OF THE ANNUAL TOTALS TABLE (ATT) NOW AVAILABLE ONLINE

The 2009 edition of the Annual Totals Table (ATT) is now available online. It provides time series of trade values for over 200 countries (or areas) covering the period 2000-2008 in a user-friendly Excel format.

The ATT is prepared by the International Merchandise Trade Statistics Section (IMTSS) of UNSD and is motivated by the fact that data users are often confronted with different international data sources.

The ATT addresses this issue by identifying the data which is considered as the most reliable through a systematic comparison of the figures from two different sources, namely UN Comtrade and UN Totaltrade which contains data from *International Financial Statistics* (IFS) of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The ATT does not only report the value for import and export considered as most reliable but also shows the trade values from the two data sources and their differences.

The ATT is produced at least once a year. It is a snapshot at a certain point in time, although the different data sources that provide input for the production of the ATT are updated on a continuous basis. The current edition has been produced with information available as of 17 November 2009.

The ATT dataset can be freely downloaded at: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/imts/annual%20totals.htm>

Line	Country (or Area)	Country Code	Trade Flow	Year	Annual Totals (in US dollars)	Source	Additional Explanation	UN Comtrade (in US dollars)	UN Totaltrade (in US dollars)	UN Total trade Status	Difference in %
1	Alghanistan	4	Imports	2000	1,176,000,000	CT	UN Comtrade data for 00-05 is directly received from a trusted national source	1,176,000,000	1,175,900,000	A	0.8
2	Alghanistan	4	Imports	2001	1,257,430,000	CT		1,257,430,000	1,696,000,000	A	34.9
3	Alghanistan	4	Imports	2002	1,935,170,000	CT		1,935,170,000	2,452,000,000	A	26.7
4	Alghanistan	4	Imports	2003	1,516,000,000	CT		1,516,000,000	2,193,000,000	A	38.6
5	Alghanistan	4	Imports	2004	1,899,000,000	CT		1,899,000,000	2,177,000,000	A	14.6
6	Alghanistan	4	Imports	2005	2,218,000,000	CT		2,218,000,000	2,300,000,000	E	3.7
7	Alghanistan	4	Imports	2006	2,429,949,472	TT			2,429,949,472	S	N/A
8	Alghanistan	4	Imports	2007	2,567,241,059	TT			2,567,241,059	X	N/A
9	Alghanistan	4	Imports	2008	2,513,811,000	CT		2,513,811,000	2,712,900,000	X	7.9
10	Alghanistan	4	Exports	2000	137,000,000	CT		137,000,000	137,310,000	A	0.2
11	Alghanistan	4	Exports	2001	66,410,000	CT		66,410,000	68,000,000	A	2.4
12	Alghanistan	4	Exports	2002	97,100,000	CT		97,100,000	100,000,000	A	3.0
13	Alghanistan	4	Exports	2003	140,000,000	CT		140,000,000	144,000,000	A	2.9
14	Alghanistan	4	Exports	2004	296,000,000	CT		296,000,000	314,000,000	A	6.4
15	Alghanistan	4	Exports	2005	365,000,000	CT		365,000,000	400,000,000	E	9.6
16	Alghanistan	4	Exports	2006	509,564,140	TT			509,564,140	X	N/A
17	Alghanistan	4	Exports	2007	648,113,554	TT			648,113,554	X	N/A
18	Alghanistan	4	Exports	2008	593,267,400	CT		593,267,400	626,096,000	X	46.2
19	Albania	8	Imports	2000	1,089,467,879	CT		1,089,467,879	1,090,053,383	A	0.1
20	Albania	8	Imports	2001	1,200,621,066	CT		1,200,621,066	1,200,503,656	A	-0.3
21	Albania	8	Imports	2002	1,503,695,206	CT		1,503,695,206	1,503,230,888	A	0.0
22	Albania	8	Imports	2003	1,461,970,000	CT		1,461,970,000	1,461,027,074	A	-0.6

A major reason for the existence of different values for imports and exports of one country is that different figures and datasets are produced by the same or different national institutions for different purposes or at different times and with different revisions.

ANALYTICAL TRADE TABLES IN THE MONTHLY BULLETIN OF STATISTICS

The following analytical tables on international merchandise trade statistics have been updated since the last issue of this newsletter and are available online at: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/imts/analyticaltradetables.htm>:

Table	Description	Latest data	Published
T 18	Fuel imports, developed economies: unit values, volume indices and value	3 rd quarter, 2009	Dec. 09
T 19	Indicators on fuel imports, developed economies	3 rd quarter, 2009	Dec. 09
T 35	Total imports and exports by regions and countries or areas	September 2009	Dec. 09
T 36	Total imports and exports: value, volume and unit value/price	September 2009	Dec. 09
T 37	Trade indices for countries in U.S. dollars	2 nd quarter, 2009	Oct. 09
T 38	External trade conversion factors by countries	3 rd quarter, 2009	Dec. 09
T 39	Trade indices for regions in U.S. dollars	2 nd quarter, 2009	Nov. 09
T 40	Manufactured goods exports: unit values, volume indices and value	3 rd quarter, 2009	Dec. 09
T 43	World exports by commodity classes and regions in U.S. dollars	2008	Nov. 09

The analytical trade tables are officially published in the

UN Monthly Bulletin of Statistics (MBS)



COOPERATION WITH COUNTRIES AND AGENCIES:

**MISSION TO THE INTERNATIONAL TRADE CENTER (ITC)
GENEVA, SWITZERLAND 8-9 DECEMBER 2009**

The International Trade Center (ITC) is an important user of UN Comtrade data. The use of UN Comtrade data is based on a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between UNSD and ITC's Market Analysis and Research section.

This mission allowed to mostly resolve the remaining questions concerning the update of the MOU which expires by end of 2009.

This MOU needs to be updated in order to reflect (a) the further development of ITC's Market Access Tools (MATs) which source, to different degrees, data from UN Comtrade and which have a high and growing number of users and (b) the development of a major new application which integrates one of ITC's tools (Market Access Map) with the World Bank's Integrated Trade Solutions

(WITS) which is widely used to retrieve UN Comtrade data.

UNSD and ITC discussed the integration of UN Comtrade data in the new application and the user management. One additional important topic was the identification and treatment of outliers in quantity data on which UNSD and ITC agreed to work together.



ITC is a joint agency created by the United Nations and the World Trade Organization.

Its mission is to enable small business export success in devel-

oping countries by providing, with partners, sustainable and inclusive trade development solutions to the private sector, trade support institutions and policymakers. For this purpose ITC provides several so called Market Access Tools which to different degrees source data directly from UN Comtrade.

ITC's Market Access Tools are available at:
<http://www.intracen.org/marketanalysis/>

BACI: <http://www.cepii.fr/anglaisgraph/bdd/baci.htm>

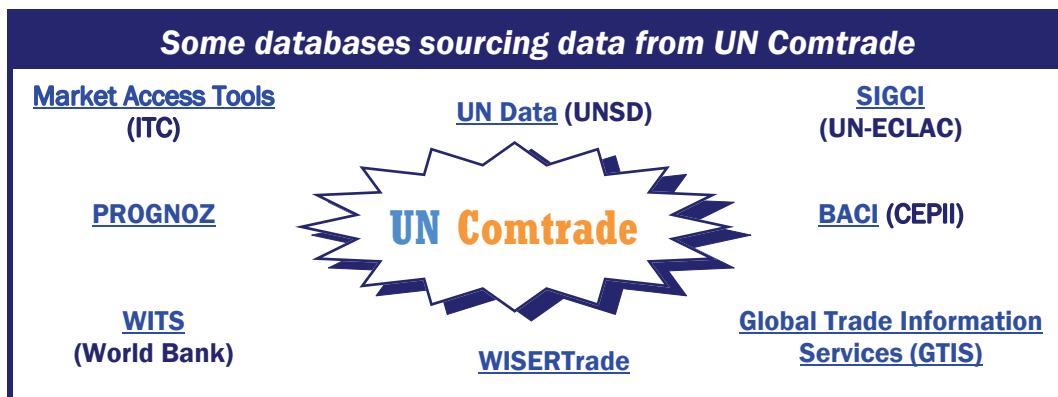
GTIS: <http://www.gtis.com/english/>

PROGNOZ: <http://www.prognoz.com/en/index.php>

SIGCI: <http://www.eclac.org/comercio/SIGCI/>

WISERTrade: <http://www.wisertrade.org/home/index.jsp>

WITS: <http://wits.worldbank.org/witsweb/>



**MISSION TO THE WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION (WTO)
AND UNCTAD
GENEVA, SWITZERLAND, 7 DECEMBER 2009**

The main purpose of this visit was to discuss with the World Trade Organization the upcoming meeting of the Statistical Commission (23-26 February 2010) during which trade statistics will be one of the main topics, as well as the upcoming meeting of the Task Force on International Merchandise Trade Statistics (23-24 March

2010). A major issue at both meetings will be the implementation of the revised recommendations on International Merchandise Trade Statistics (IMTS2010).

The meeting with the Statistics Unit at UNCTAD mostly discussed issues related to the availability and use of international merchandise trade data.



YOU HAVE ASKED US:

UN COMTRADE: SNAPSHOT ON TOP IMPORTING AND EXPORTING COUNTRIES

How do I get the snapshot which provides charts that show top importing and exporting countries?

UN Comtrade provides a tool that allows users to obtain a snapshot of top exporting and importing countries for a particular commodity, for any year for which data is available. To use the tool, please follow these steps:

- Go to Comtrade Explorer W/Map at <http://comtrade.un.org/db/ce/ceDefault.aspx> (or Data Query / Comtrade Explorer W/Map);
- Type a keyword describing the commodity that you are looking for and click Search ... then some results will appear with according to their relevance and a choice of classifications. To refine the results, you can filter by the desired classification;
- Finally, click on the commodity description or the year to obtain the snapshot.

Visit UN Comtrade at:
<http://comtrade.un.org/>

UN COMTRADE: CONVERSION OF TRADE DATA REPORTED IN NATIONAL CURRENCY

Which exchange rate do you use to convert trade data reported in national currency into US Dollars?

If the country reports data in national currency, UN Comtrade will use an annual conversion factor calculated from monthly exchange rates obtained from IMF's International Financial Statistics for the conversion into US dollar. The annual conversion factor is calculated as the average of the monthly exchange rates weighted by the monthly trade values. It is calculated separately for imports and exports.

The conversion factor applied to an individual country and year is available in UN

Comtrade under Metadata & Reference / Explanatory Notes. The conversion factor can be used to convert the trade values back to the original reported currency. A time series of conversion factors is published quarterly in the Monthly Bulletin of Statistics under table 37 and also online at: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/imts/analyticaltradetables.htm>.



UPCOMING EVENTS

**WORKSHOP ON THE METHODOLOGY AND DATA COMPILATION OF IMTS
PHNOM PENH, 2 -5 FEBRUARY, 2010**

UNSD in cooperation with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN/ESCAP) and the National Institute of Statistics of Cambodia will organize a workshop for five Southeast Asian countries (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Timor-Leste and Vietnam) on the Methodology and Data Compilation of International Merchandise Trade Statistics (IMTS) in Phnom Penh from 2 to 5 February 2010. The focus of the workshop will be on data

compilation and the concepts and definitions for IMTS (existing and new/revised recommendations) and their application in countries. During the workshop, participants, with UNSD facilitation, are expected to develop country specific action plans, in regards to the possible improvement of IMTS compilation and dissemination. This action plan will serve as guidance for IMTS data compilers.

Info on our technical assistance activities can be found at:
http://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/workshops_imts.htm

UPCOMING EVENTS

41ST SESSION OF THE STATISTICAL COMMISSION NEW YORK, 23 - 26 FEBRUARY 2010

The 41st session of the Statistical Commission (SC) will take place from 23 to 26 February 2010 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York.

International merchandise trade statistics (IMTS) will be one of the main items on this year's agenda. Under item 3 (c) of the provisional agenda the Commission will have before it for review and adoption the draft revised recommendations for IMTS (*International Merchandise Trade Statistics: Concepts and Definitions 2010*). The recommendations were revised in compliance with the request made by the Commission at its 39th session and were pre-

pared by UNSD in consultation with the national statistical offices and international organizations concerned. They were endorsed by the United Nations Expert Group on International Merchandise Trade Statistics (EG-IMTS).

In addition, under item 3 (d) of the provisional agenda the Commission will have before it for review and adoption the draft revised *Manual on Statistics of International Trade in Services*. The manual was revised in compliance with the decision of the Commission at its 32nd session.

During the Commission, there will be two side events on trade statistics: the *Inter-agency Consultation on International Trade Statistics* which will focus on issues concerning the implementation of the revised recommendations, and a seminar on *International Trade statistics: Finding answers for a changing world, new challenges and opportunities*.

For detailed information please go to the website of the Commission at [http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/commission 41st session.htm](http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/commission%2041st%20session.htm)

The United Nations Statistical Commission:

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- ✓ **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 IMTS BEIRUT, 23-24 MARCH 2010

The Task Force on International Merchandise Trade Statistics (TFIMTS) in which the international organizations that are active in the area of IMTS are represented will hold its annual meeting on 23 and 24 March 2010 in Beirut. Major issues will be the updated recommendations on IMTS

and their implementation as well as various analytical topics. In parallel, a meeting of the Interagency Task Force on Statistics of International Trade in Services (TFSITS) will take place. On 25 March 2010 there will be a joint session of both task forces to discuss issues of common interest.

EDITORIAL NOTE

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Contact: United Nations Statistics Division, International Merchandise Trade Statistics Section, New York, NY 10017, USA, Email address: comtrade@un.org or visit our website at [http://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/imts/imts default.htm](http://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/imts/imts%20default.htm).