



SPECIAL FEATURE:

ENDORSEMENT OF THE IMTS REVISION BY THE STATISTICAL COMMISSION IN FEBRUARY 2008

Introduction

At its thirty-ninth session (26 - 29 February 2008) the Statistical Commission endorsed the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) initiative and strategy to revise the existing recommendations for international merchandise trade statistics contained in the *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 forty-first session in 2010. Enclosed we reproduce the decision 39/109 in detail:

Decision 39/109

The Statistical Commission:

(a) Welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on international merchandise trade statistics, endorsed the United Nations Statistics Division initiative and strategy to revise the existing recommendations for international merchandise trade statistics, and requested that the draft revised recommendations be submitted to the Commission for adoption at its forty-first session, in 2010;

(b) Took note of the terms of reference for the Expert Group on International Merchandise Trade Statistics;

(c) Requested that the revised recommendations provide an updated conceptual framework, as well as guidance on data compilation and dissemination, in the context of an integrated approach to economic statistics;

(d) Requested that the revised recommendations be harmonized to the extent possible with the updated recommendations for statistics of international trade in services, the system of national accounts and the balance of payments statistics;

(e) Requested that, in respect of revising the recommendations, due consideration be given to the concern of minimizing the cost of data collection and compilation;

(f) Took note of the commitment expressed by the Statistical Office of the European Community, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the World Trade Organization and the World Customs Organization to actively participate in the revision process.

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DATABASES AND PUBLICATIONS:

INTERNATIONAL MERCHANDISE TRADE STATISTICS: SUPPLEMENT TO THE COMPILERS MANUAL, BY UNSD

The primary purpose of the *Supplement* is to assist United Nations Member States in the implementation of the guidelines adopted by the United Nations Statistical Commission and laid out in *International Merchandise Trade Statistics: Concepts and Definitions, Revision 2* (IMTS, Rev.2) and *International Merchandise Trade Statistics: Compilers Manual*. The *Supplement* may also serve as a guide to users who wish to understand better the nature of trade data. The Supplement to the Compilers Manual has been prepared by the Trade Statistics Branch of the

United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) with the support of the inter-agency Task Force on International Merchandise Trade Statistics (TFIMTS) as agreed at its 2003 meeting in Geneva, Switzerland.

The electronic version of the draft of the Supplement submitted for editing can be downloaded at: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/imtssupplcompilersmanual.htm>.

COOPERATION WITH COUNTRIES AND AGENCIES: TASK FORCE ON INTERNATIONAL MERCHANDISE TRADE STATISTICS, 26-28 MARCH 2008, VIENNA, AUSTRIA

More information about the IMTS, Rev. 2 revision process can be found at the website of the Expert Group on IMTS at: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/EG-IMTS/EG-IMTS%20web%20announcement.htm>

The meeting of the Task Force on International Merchandise Trade Statistics in Vienna was very important for sharing information and coordinating the work on various issues. The most important topic was the discussion of a draft document for the first round of worldwide consultations on the revision of IMTS, Rev.2. UNSD provided a comprehensive introduction of the revision process and guided the discussions of the 17 topics of the draft consultation document.

Other important discussions concerned the latest developments in IMTS data compilation, dissemination and analysis at the different international organizations such as the changes in the EU Intra- and Extrastat legislation, the development of analytical

tools at ITC and OECD and the merging of trade and business statistics.

Additional important topics were the Statistical Data and Metadata eXchange (SDMX) initiative, the Harmonized System (edition 2007) and the forthcoming IMF manual on external trade price indices.

On the last day a joint session with the Task Force on Statistics of International Trade in Services (TFSITS), whose meeting took place in parallel, discussed issues of common interest, actions to be taken and the possibility of joint meetings in the future.

The report of the Task Force meeting is available on the website of the World Trade Organization at: http://imts.wto.org/task_e.htm.

DOWNLOAD IMTS, REV 2.



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

[Inter-Agency Task Force on International Merchandise Trade Statistics](#)



COOPERATION WITH COUNTRIES AND AGENCIES: TASK FORCE ON STATISTICS OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN SERVICES, 26-28 MARCH 2008, VIENNA, AUSTRIA

The meeting discussed the revision of the *Manual on Statistics of International Trade in Services (SITS)* and drafts for the individual chapters of the revised *Manual*. It was decided to postpone the submission of the revised *Manual* to the Statistical Commission from 2009 to 2010 in order to allow better coordination with the revision process of the recommendations for interna-

tional merchandise trade statistics (*IMTS, Rev.2*). Nevertheless, it was suggested to stay on the same time schedule and to deliver a full draft version of the revised manual early in 2009. At the joint meeting with the Task Force on IMTS (28 March), cross-cutting issues on statistics on international trade in services and merchandise trade statistics were discussed.

[Interagency Task Force on Statistics of International Trade in Services](#)



YOU HAVE ASKED US: COUNTRY OF LAST KNOWN DESTINATION

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Q: When a country lists "last known destination" as the recipient-country of exports, does that mean that the destination is the country which purchased the goods, or the country where the exporter delivered the goods? For example, if China is shipping an order of computer parts to Germany, but the goods are delivered to Spain and then taken by land to Germany, would China report Germany or Spain as the destination of the computer parts?

A: Extract from *International Merchandise Trade Statistics, Concepts and Definitions, Rev.2* (IMTS, Rev.2), paragraph 137: "The country of last known destination is the last country—as far as it is known at the time of exportation—to which goods are to be delivered, irrespective of where they have been initially dispatched to and whether or not, on their way to that last country, they are subject to any commercial transactions or other operations which change their legal status. For instance, if it is known at the time of exportation that

goods are to be delivered to country A but have been initially dispatched to a third country (country B) where they are subject to commercial transactions or other operations which change their legal status, that third country (country B) is the country of destination and country A is the country of last known destination."

In the example provided Germany should be reported as the country of last known destination while Spain would be the country of destination. The question of who purchased or owns the goods is as such in most cases not relevant for the attribution of the partner country as international merchandise trade statistics is based on the concept of physical movement of goods and not change of ownership.

Further information on the practical aspects of the identification of the country of last known destination can be found in the IMTS Compilers Manual, paragraph 225-228: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/pubs/gesgrid.asp?mysearch=compilers+manual&=GO>



UPCOMING EVENTS:

UNSD/ESCWA WORKSHOP ON DATA QUALITY AND PRODUCTION OF EXTERNAL TRADE INDICES

UNSD/ESCWA Workshop on "Data quality and production of external trade indices", 12-15 June 2008, Cairo, Egypt:

This workshop is part of the Development Account Project: Strengthening the Development of International Merchandise Trade Statistics (IMTS) and the com-

pilation of e-commerce in Member Countries of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). For more information please go to:

http://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/ESCWA0608/ESCWA_Project_Introduction.htm

EDITORIAL NOTE

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