



UNITED NATIONS
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
STATISTICS DIVISION

Regional Workshop on International Merchandise Trade Statistics
Malé, Maldives, 3-6 April 2017

Opening Statement

Workshop on International Merchandise Trade Statistics

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On behalf of

Stefan Schweinfest,
Director
United Nations Statistics Division

Dear colleagues,

It is my pleasure to welcome you all to this Regional Workshop on International Merchandise Trade Statistics (IMTS). With tens of trillion US dollars in annual global trading, we can appreciate the importance of IMTS for giving us a feel for the pulse of the world economy, for monitoring trade policy and for market research. It is not surprising therefore that IMTS are always in a high demand and consequently all countries compile them to the best of their capability.

Within this context, I am very grateful that many countries provide us regularly with their monthly and annual data which my office uses to compile the UN Comtrade. This database is used extensively by government agencies, academia, private sector and the public at large. UN Comtrade is regularly cited in news articles, research papers and other publications. Through UN Comtrade we are able to disseminate your trade data in a comparable way together with trade data of most other countries.

The international recommendations for IMTS were revised in 2010 to bring them in line with in trading practices, customs policies, information technology and the changing needs of policy makers and business community. IMTS 2010 provides clarifications regarding the key concepts and new recommendations on institutional arrangements, data sources and data quality but also on linking trade and business statistics. For the compilation of high quality trade statistics we also recommend that countries engage in bilateral and multilateral reconciliation exercises to address and reduce bilateral trade asymmetries.

This workshop is a continuation of ongoing capacity development project to strengthen statistical capacity in the trade data compilation and analysis in Maldives, including implementation of IMTS 2010. The recent activity was the participation of Maldives in training workshop organized jointly by UNSD and the South Africa Customs Union, followed by a study visit to the South Africa Revenue Services in October 2016. The main goals of the workshop are to improve the capacity in data compilation and analysis, and to share hands-on experiences among trade statistics compilers and users.

This workshop is jointly organized by Maldives Customs and UNSD. I sincerely thank Maldives Customs for hosting this workshop and for organizing it together with us. I also like to thank the Government of Maldives for providing their support to this event as the host country. Further, I would like to express my high appreciation to our colleague from University of Sussex who will share his knowledge and experiences in the use of trade analytical application.

Last but not least, I am of course very pleased that all of you accepted our invitation and came here to Malé for four days of discussions.

In conclusion, I would like to wish you fruitful deliberations and to express my appreciation of your professional contribution to this important meeting.

Thank you.