



**SPECIAL FEATURE:**

### **INTER-AGENCY CONSULTATION ON THE FUTURE OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE STATISTICS (SIDE EVENT OF 40TH SESSION OF UNITED NATIONS STATISTICAL COMMISSION)**

The inter-agency consultation on international trade statistics was organized by UNSD as one of the side events of the 40<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations Statistical Commission. The main purpose of the consultation was to exchange views on several issues relevant to the future of international trade statistics in connection with the preparations for the 41<sup>st</sup> session of the Commission (February 2010) where international trade statistics will be one of the major items for discussion. The agenda of the consultation meeting included the following items:

1. Status of preparation of the revised recommendations for international merchandise and services trade statistics;
2. Towards an integrated approach to international trade statistics: challenges and the ways to deal with them effectively;
3. Trade data dissemination by the international organizations in cooperation with third parties.

International, supranational and regional organizations as well as the United Nations Regional Commissions were invited to attend this meeting. As this was an open meeting, country representatives attending the 40<sup>th</sup> session of the Statistical Commission were welcome as well. The following organizations participated in the consultation: EUROSTAT, FAO, OECD, UNCTAD, UNESCAP, UNIDO, UN-WTO, WCO, the World Bank, WTO and UNSD. The consultation was attended by a number of country delegates to the Commission as well.

By way of introduction UNSD indicated significant achievements in the methodo-

logical development of both international merchandise trade statistics and statistics on international trade in services and outlined a number of challenges ahead for these statistics. The need for further steps in harmonization between the two areas of trade statistics was highlighted in order to meet more effectively the requirements of the user community and to ensure better integration into the system of economics statistics.

UNSD presented the status of preparation of the revised recommendations for International Merchandise Trade Statistics (IMTS) and the revised Manual on Statistics of International Trade in Services (SITS) focusing on the revision timeline, core issues and future work, in particular the development of compilation guidance and the further research agenda. The participants were informed about the timeline for the publication of the *International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics 2008 (IRTS 2008)* and *Tourism Satellite Account: Recommended Methodological Framework 2008 (TSA: RMF 2008)*.

The issue of trade data dissemination by international organizations in cooperation with third parties was addressed as well. The UNSD introduction on these three issues was followed by a general discussion on a number of issues. The conclusions of the meeting are summarized below.

The meeting:

- (a) Agreed that the preparation of the revised recommendations for both international merchandise trade statistics and statistics on international trade in services in accordance with the existing

*(Continued on page 2)*

**IN THIS ISSUE:**

**Special feature:**

- *Inter-agency Consultation on the future of International Trade Statistics* 1

**Databases and Publications:**

- *UN Comtrade: data reported in HS2007 now also converted to HS1996 and HS1992* 3
- *UN Comtrade: New classification selection option in data extraction* 3

**Cooperation with countries and agencies:**

- *Mission to UN/ESCWA on trade data exchange, Beirut, 14-16 January 2009* 3
- *SDMX Global Conference, Paris, 19-21 January 2009* 4
- *Annual Meetings of the Inter-agency Task Force on IMTS and SITS, Bangkok, 10-12 March 2009* 4
- *Workshop on the IMTS revision, Bogotá, 31 March - 3 April, 2009* 4

**You have asked us:**

- *Use and Re-dissemination of UN Comtrade Data* 5

**Upcoming events:**

- *Second and Third virtual meeting of the Expert Group on IMTS on the revision of current recommendations for IMTS* 5

**Editorial note**

5

### ***The UN Statistical Commission:***

- \* ***Advancement of the global statistical system...***
- \* ***Over 60 years of statistical development...***
- \* ***Coordination of international statistical activities...***
- \* ***Statistical capacity building...***
- \* ***Coordination and integration of statistical programmes...***
- \* ***Development of national statistical systems...***

Find out about all special events during the 40th Session of the UN Statistical Commission at:

[http://  
unstats.un.org/  
unsd/statcom/  
commis-  
sion\\_40th\\_session.  
htm](http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/commis-sion_40th_session.htm)

schedules should be considered as a matter of high priority and supported by extensive consultations with countries and relevant international and regional fora;

(b) Welcomed the UNSD plans to prepare and submit to the 41<sup>st</sup> session of the Statistical Commission an implementation plan for the revised recommendations for international merchandise trade statistics which includes the preparation of the revised International Merchandise Trade Statistics Compilers Manual;

(c) Agreed that an implementation plan for the revised Manual on International Trade in Services should be developed by the Task Force on Statistics of International Trade in Services and presented to the Commission; suggested that the Compiler Manuals (and the revised recommendations) in both areas need to address the relationship (growing dissonance) between trade statistics and the new 2008 SNA and BPM6 in order to bridge the gap between these statistics; also the issue of the boundary between goods and services should be addressed.

(d) Concluded that many of the important issues of the IMTS revision are directly linked to the international agreements on customs related matters and the ongoing work at the World Customs Organization (WCO) on such issues as transfer pricing and rules of origin and welcomed, in this context, the offer by the WCO to actively support the revision process;

(e) Concluded that a number of issues require special attention during the revision process and indicated for example, that (i) the development and implementation of trade data quality assurance programmes in countries should be promoted, (ii) the asymmetries in partner data should be more fully and systematically examined and explained including in metadata (it was acknowledged that such asymmetries are to a certain degree inherent due to the existing recommendations for the compilation of partner data), (iii) guidance on data compilation with respect to customs free zones (export processing zones) should be more detailed as information is not always properly compiled and disseminated although custom records about trade flows in/out

these zones are often available and (iv) the use and limitations of non-customs sources and private sources should be further examined;

(f) Agreed that the current work on linking business statistics and trade statistics is a good example of the integration of economics statistics compilations and analysis and took note that this issue is also of interest for customs when customs are exploring ways to identify illegitimate trade;

(g) Raised the issue of data quality at the international level which should be systematically recorded, flagged and further addressed, i.e. by providing well documented corrections or estimations or by such efforts as the common dataset (CDS) for merchandise trade statistics;

(h) Pointed out that the analytical needs cannot wait until fully integrated systems for economic statistics are developed and implemented and that the use of estimates/modeling should be explored and possibly recommended; in this context agencies were invited to cooperate more closely in the harmonization of the estimation procedures to minimize discrepancies in the disseminated data;

(i) Discussed briefly the dissemination of international trade statistics and indicators by international organizations in cooperation with third parties, agreed that this is an important issue and that further work on the identification of good practices in this area will be useful; in general, there is some gap between the user needs and availability of the trade related information such as tariffs etc.; also the role of and relationship to the private sector as data provider was briefly discussed;

(j) Welcomed the opportunity to hold regular consultations on international trade statistics at the time of the Commission's sessions and suggested that the reports of such meetings be posted on the UNSD website.

The full meeting report as well as contributions by FAO, WCO, WTO and the World Bank are available on the event website at: [http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/statcom\\_09/seminars/trade/trade\\_2009.html](http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/statcom_09/seminars/trade/trade_2009.html)

## DATABASES AND PUBLICATIONS:

### UN COMTRADE: DATA REPORTED IN HS 2007 NOW ALSO CONVERTED TO HS 1996 AND HS 1992

As of end of February 2009, data reported in the latest version of the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System, Forth Edition (HS 2007) is made available converted to the 1996 and 1992 versions of the Harmonized System (HS). Before only the data converted to the previous version of the Harmonized System (HS 2002), the current and previous version of the Standard International Trade Classification (SITC, Rev.4 and SITC, Rev.3) and the Classification by Broad Economic Categories (BEC) were available. During the development of these additional data conversions the previously implemented conversion from HS2007 to HS2002 was reviewed and 20 code assignments were corrected.

Background: HS 2007 came into effect on 1st January 2007 and many countries pro-

vided their detailed trade data for the reporting year 2007 according to the HS 2007. For the convenience of users UN Comtrade provides not only the data in the original classification in which it is submitted but also converted to earlier HS versions and other trade classifications. It should be noted that the very nature of a revision of a classification does not allow establishing a clear 1 to 1 correspondence for all codes of a new to the codes of previous versions of a classification and users should bear in mind the potential shortcomings when using converted instead of original data. A detailed note on the methodology used for developing the HS data conversions together with correlation and conversion tables is available at: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/conversions/HS%20Correlation%20and%20Conversion%20tables.htm>

### UN COMTRADE: NEW CLASSIFICATION SELECTION OPTION IN DATA EXTRACTION

In general, countries report their detailed merchandise trade data in the latest version of the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System (HS). Yet, some countries report their data in earlier HS versions. As a consequence, when querying the data for the latest version of the HS, UN Comtrade is not showing data for all available reporters; and when querying the data for an earlier version of the HS users will obtain data reported in this HS version together with data converted to this HS version.

Now, in addition to data extraction in different commodity classifications, it is possible for user to extract at once data for all reporters in the original classification in which the data was reported. In both, *Basic* and *Express Selection*, users can select HS "as reported" or SITC "as reported" to extract data in the original classification (essentially all countries report now in the HS but in earlier years SITC was used). For additional metadata, such as version of the original classification or original currency, consult the Explanatory Notes.

## COOPERATION WITH COUNTRIES AND AGENCIES: UNSD MISSION TO UN/ESCWA ON AUTOMATED TRADE DATA EXCHANGE ON IMTS, BEIRUT, 14-16 JANUARY 2009

As part of its participation in the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UN/ESCWA) project "Strengthening the Development of International Merchandise Trade Statistics in the ESCWA region" the International Merchandise Trade Statistics Section of UNSD sup-

ported UN/ESCWA in establishing an automated link between UN Comtrade and the trade database at UN/ESCWA. As a result of this project UN/ESCWA does not have to run its own trade database and its data collection will be better integrated with the data collection for UN Comtrade.

Go to

**UN comtrade**

Visit us at:

[http://  
unstats.un.org/  
unsd/trade/imts/  
imts\\_default.htm](http://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/imts/imts_default.htm)

Go to



Find out more on the website of the Task Forces:

Task Force on IMTS:

[http://imts.wto.org/task\\_e.htm](http://imts.wto.org/task_e.htm)

Task Force on SITS:

<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/tradeserv/TFSITS/msits.htm>

For further details on this workshop see

[http://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/workshops\\_imts.htm](http://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/workshops_imts.htm)

## **SDMX (STATISTICAL DATA AND METADATA EXCHANGE) GLOBAL CONFERENCE, PARIS, 19-21 JANUARY 2009**

Despite of two SDMX versions, the conference focuses solely on version 2.0. There were few known SDMX version 1.0 implementations: UN Comtrade, Federal Reserve Bank of New York and the National Accounts World Wide Exchange (NAWWE). Besides of UN Comtrade, the other two had been upgraded to SDMX version 2.0.

The most important feature of SDMX version 2.0 is Content Oriented Guidelines

which consists of Cross Domain Concepts, Cross Domain Code lists and Common Metadata Vocabulary. Those guidelines will re-use similar concepts and vocabulary across statistical domains and promote interoperability between data structure definitions. From technical point of view, version 2.0 offers better data modeling and important features, such as data structure definition extension, codes mapping, hierarchy code lists, etc.

## **ANNUAL MEETINGS OF THE INTER-AGENCY TASK FORCE ON IMTS AND SITS, BANGKOK, 10-11 MARCH 2009, JOINT SESSION OF BOTH TASK FORCES ON 12 MARCH 2009**

On 10-11 March 2009 the annual meetings of the Inter-agency Task Forces on International Merchandise Trade Statistics (TF-IMTS) and Statistics on International Trade in Services (TF-SITS) took place in parallel at UN-ESCAP Headquarters in Bangkok and were followed by a joint session of both Task Forces on 12 March.

The focus of the meetings was on the preparation of the revised and updated recommendations for those statistical domains which are scheduled for submission to the next session of the UN Statistical Commission (UNSC) in February 2010. The Task Force on International Merchandise Trade Statistics (TF-IMTS) stressed the need for the development of compilation guidance once IMTS, Rev.3 is adopted and

the importance of properly explaining the treatment of goods for processing and the relationship between IMTS and the 2008SNA/BPM6 in general. The Task Force on Statistics of International Trade in Services (TFSITS) agreed on the timeline for the finalization of the Manual on Statistics of International Trade in Services 2010 (MSITS 2010) and identified the development of compilation guidance and data quality issues as high priorities. The joint session noted that the Inter-agency consultation on trade statistics which took place during the 40th session of the SC is an important high level forum for trade issues and concluded that there is an increased demand for integrating detailed statistics of trade in goods and trade in services.

## **UNSD / ECLAC WORKSHOP ON THE REVISION OF THE INTERNATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMTS, BOGOTÁ, 31 MARCH -3 APRIL, 2009**

The workshop on the revision of the recommendations on International Merchandise Trade Statistics in Bogotá in which 19 countries from Latin America and the Caribbean participated was very useful for receiving direct feedback from countries of the region on (i) the revision process, (2) the important issues of the IMTS revision and (3) where further amendments and clarifications of the existing recommenda-

tions are most needed. Numerous clarifications regarding the existing and future recommendations could be provided. The workshop was organized by the International Merchandise Trade Statistics Section of UNSD, in cooperation with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UN/ECLAC) and the Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística (DANE) of Colombia.

## YOU HAVE ASKED US:

**USE AND RE-DISSEMINATION OF UN COMTRADE DATA**

**Q:** I wish to use UN Comtrade information in a book on economics to be published in the US. Do I need permission and if so who do I contact?

**A:** Data from the UN Comtrade database are copyrighted by the United Nations. UN Comtrade data are provided for internal use only and may not be re-disseminated in any form without the written permission of the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD). Yet, it is not necessary to request permission for publication of UN Comtrade data in a few tables or graphs in newspaper articles, journals, other magazines or books. However, when doing so, we request that you please refer to the source of the data as United Nations Comtrade database.

If UN Comtrade data are used within the boundaries of the definition of internal use, then a written permission is not necessary. UNSD allows the sharing of UN Comtrade data beyond the definition of internal use only if it is shared with another institution within the framework of a joint project. In all other cases written permission from UNSD for sharing of UN Comtrade data is necessary and a royalty fee may apply.

Permission for re-dissemination of a significant amount of UN Comtrade data needs to be requested in writing. In general, permission will be granted without application of a royalty fee if the amount of data used does not exceed 1,000 records.

Please contact us at [subscriptions@un.org](mailto:subscriptions@un.org) for more information and applicable fees.

Find out more on our Knowledge Base at:

<http://comtrade.un.org/kb/>

Find out more on the website of the Expert Group on IMTS at:

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

## UPCOMING EVENTS:

**SECOND AND THIRD VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE EXPERT GROUP ON IMTS (EG-IMTS) ON THE REVISION OF CURRENT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMTS**

The second virtual meeting of the Expert Group on International Merchandise Trade Statistics (EG-MTS) on the revision of current recommendations for IMTS started on 25 March on the electronic expert forum for IMTS. This meeting will discuss the first drafts for the introduction, chapter 1 and chapter 2 of the revised international recommendations on IMTS (IMTS, Rev.3). The final conclusions and the report of the meeting are scheduled to be available by 24 April.

The third virtual meeting is scheduled for the time of 27 May to 26 June 2009. The meeting will discuss the first drafts of chapters 3 to 11 of the revised recommendations for IMTS.

The EG-IMTS is composed of national experts from developed and developing countries of different regions and experts of international/ supranational organizations and is assisting UNSD in the revision of the current recommendations for IMTS.

**EDITORIAL NOTE**

The Trade Statistics Newsletter is a quarterly publication prepared by the International Merchandise Trade Statistics Section of the United Nations Statistics Division – Department of Economic and Social Affairs. This Newsletter is not an official document of the United Nations nor does it express the official position of the United Nations. Editorial team: Nelnan Koumtingué, Matthias Reister, Markie Muryawan and Vladimir Markhonko.

Contact: United Nations Statistics Division, International Merchandise Trade Statistics Section, New York, NY 10017, USA, Email address: [comtrade@un.org](mailto: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_default.htm).