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**Items for decision: Business and trade statistics**

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**Amended mandate and governance of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Business  
and Trade Statistics**

Prepared by the United Nations Committee of Experts on Business and Trade Statistics

# Amended mandate and governance of the Committee of Experts on Business and Trade Statistics

## A. Mandate

1. The Committee of Experts on Business and Trade Statistics was established by the United Nations Statistical Commission at its fiftieth session in March 2019, to provide coordination and guidance for the development of business and trade statistics and foster their integration and harmonization.
2. Business statistics provide information on the structure, economic activity, dynamism) and performance of businesses taking into account the increasing complexity of business models and fast changing and uncertain economic environment. Digitalization, environmental and social responsibility activities of businesses are considered as a part of the business statistics framework.
3. Trade statistics refer to the international flows of actors that engage in exchange of goods and services across borders or between residents and non-residents. This domain is also extended to include MNEs and GVCs. Patterns of trade and product detail can be enriched with the integration of business characteristics, such as the industry, size of enterprise, and multinational status. The measurement of digital trade, trade by mode of supply, well-being and sustainability are also included.
4. In order to achieve these goals, the Committee has adopted an integrated economic statistics approach based upon an enterprise-centred perspective to foster integration across domains covering both a production and an output framework.
5. The production framework corresponds to an integrated statistical production process based on common registers, the use of common definitions and classifications and the integration of survey and administrative and other data sources.<sup>1</sup> While the System of National Accounts (SNA) and the Balance of Payments (BOP) will be the central organizing framework used to define business units, it is important to note that other frameworks, notably the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) will be used as well. The establishment of a statistical business register and its evolution according to a maturity model are considered as key elements to support integration between business and trade, to be expanded to other statistical domains.
6. The output framework aims at exploiting relevant information from data integration. An integrated approach to business and trade statistics means that their compilation is, to the largest extent possible, integrated and harmonized with economic, socio- demographic, environment and multi-domain statistics.<sup>2</sup> The Committee shall also highlight the feasibility and relevance of identifying and developing new business and trade indicators based on data integration and promote their adoption and international comparability by countries.
7. In this respect both a vertical and horizontal integration is pursued by the Committee. The vertical integration refers to the integration from input data sources of the statistical business register up to the business surveys and administrative and other data sources finalized to the production of business and trade data and indicators. It is also linked upward to more general framework such as national accounts and other economic statistics. On the other hand, the horizontal dimension focuses on the integration between business and trade statistics and extends to the integration of business and trade statistics with other statistical domains, such as environmental and social statistics through the linkage to their registers.

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<sup>1</sup> See Guidelines on Integrated Economic Statistics, United Nations publication, 2013, Sales No. E.12.XVII.7.

<sup>2</sup> Economic Commission for Europe, "Classification of Statistical Activities, Rev 1", 2009.

8. Within this broader context of an integrated business and trade statistics framework, the programme of work of the Committee will focus on the following five strategic areas:

(a) Coordination: promote coordination, integration and complementarity of programmes in business and trade statistics undertaken by international organizations and countries and provide a strategic vision in this area;

(b) Methodology and concepts: advance the methodological and conceptual work in business and trade statistics, including statistical business registers, by identifying and prioritizing issues that need to be addressed, develop guidelines, handbooks and manuals to harmonize standards at the international level for approval by the United Nations Statistical Commission;

(c) Capacity-building: promote the implementation of latest international statistical standards and best practices in business and trade statistics in countries through the formulation, when possible, of system-wide and integrated implementation strategies;

(d) Data integration and new data sources: to promote the development and improvement of data sources, statistical frameworks and indicators for business and trade statistics at the national, regional and international level, in line with international statistical standards and international recommendations and advise on new areas of development, as needed, such as big data alternative data sources, and new methodologies to exploit them;

(e) Communication/promotion and statistical response on emerging issues: engage with users of business and trade statistics (for example, in the academic, business and government sector with a view to promote the use of the statistics and identify emerging areas; and engage prominently at the level of the international agenda by articulating a coordinated statistical response from an examination of business and trade statistics, in particular in high-priority areas, such as globalization, digitalization, well-being and sustainability and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

9. In elaborating its work programme, the Committee shall identify the most promising avenues to foster the expansion and integration of business and trade statistics, in order to increase the quality and relevance of official statistics with respect to the needs of users.

10. The Committee has an umbrella function in providing overall vision, coordination, prioritization and direction in the field of business and trade statistics and their integration. The Committee will ensure that it works in a complementary manner with existing or new groups covering business and trade statistics and it will also coordinate its activities and findings with related groups and bodies, such as those working in the areas of national accounts and other economic statistics, labour and other social and demographic statistics and environment and multi-domain statistics.

11. The Committee will prepare an annual report for presentation to the United Nations Statistical Commission. It will report progress made in its activities, priorities and work plans, including progress made by the various city groups, inter-secretariat working groups and other groups working with the Committee within its mandate, but do not report to the Committee, notably those that have the interaction with the Committee.

## B. Governance

1. The major elements of the governance arrangements are shown in the diagram below. The description of the governance follows the diagram and covers the managerial functions, roles and responsibilities of the various groups and organizations involved. The boxes within the shaded large box represent the bodies of the Committee or projects under the Committee's responsibility. Technical expert groups and city groups are shown outside the shaded box, when they were established by bodies other than

the Committee and have their own governance and reporting structure. Nevertheless, when their programmes of work overlap with that of the Committee, the Committee may coordinate with these external bodies as mandated by the United Nations Statistical Commission.

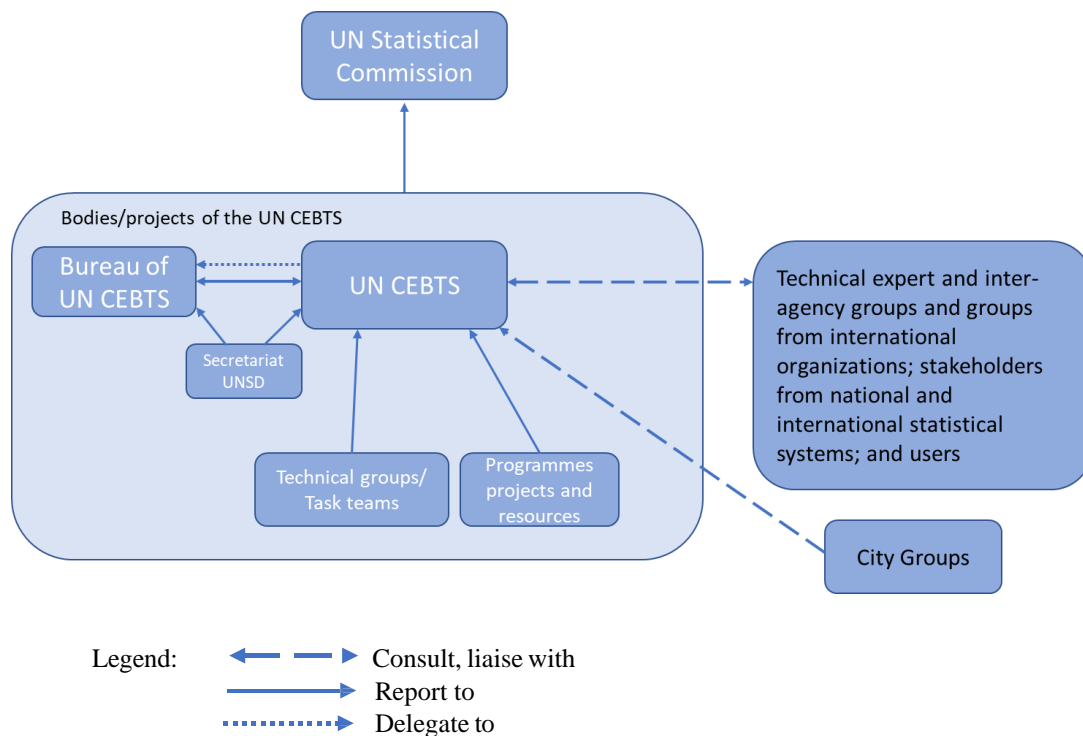
### United Nations Statistical Commission

8. The United Nations Statistical Commission is the entity that establishes the Committee, approves its mandate and work programme and monitors its progress of work. The mandate of the Committee will be periodically reviewed by the Committee. The proposed amendments will be submitted to the United Nations Statistical Commission for endorsement.

### Committee of Experts on Business and Trade Statistics

9. The Committee of Experts is a country-led intergovernmental body, comprising members from Member States and international organizations, which is responsible for carrying out the mandate outlined in section A above. The Committee is also responsible for proposing new activities consistent with its mandate and reporting the progress of its programme of work to the United Nations Statistical Commission.

### Governance structure of the Committee of Experts on Business and Trade Statistics



10. Within each area of its work programme, the Committee will undertake specific activities, informing existing city groups and/or other expert groups and establishing new technical groups, as needed, to carry out its activities. For large projects, such as the development, updating or implementation of international standards, it may be necessary to develop project management frameworks for adoption by the United Nations Statistical Commission.

11. Broadly speaking, the Committee will undertake the following tasks in respect of the programmes under its responsibility:

- (a) Strategic planning, programming and monitoring: develop and monitor a strategic multi-

year framework and annual work programme of the Committee that reflect its ongoing priorities and objectives, including: providing strategic direction for its activities; ensuring the complementarity and proper coordination of its activities; agreeing on governance arrangements; formulating the workplans of technical groups and projects, including communication strategies and budgets; assigning or negotiating the tasks of the technical expert groups and groups from other intergovernmental organizations; tracking progress; and ensuring adequate and effective review of technical matters;

(b) Reporting: reporting to the United Nations Statistical Commission on the workplans and projects within its mandate; receiving regular reports from the technical groups under its responsibility; and liaising with stakeholders, including managing their expectations and gaining their support;

(c) Resource mobilization: ensuring that workplans and projects are adequately resourced; raising funds from external sources, as needed, for example in the case of special projects; recommending staffing for the projects; and monitoring cash and in-kind budgets.

12. High-level representation will be necessary to ensure the strategic role of the Committee in setting priorities, bringing forward a research agenda, taking decisions on standards and developing a strategic vision.

13. Members of the Committee will comprise high-level representatives from national Governments and international organizations with expertise in business and trade statistics. In addition, members will be selected so as to ensure equitable regional representation.

14. Given the wide range of topics covered by the Committee, as well as the need to keep the size of the Committee manageable in order to ensure in-depth discussion, the members of the Committee will comprise about 30 representatives from Member States and organizations. Depending on the topics on its agenda, additional subject matter experts from Member States and international organizations may be invited to participate in technical groups and projects of the Committee.

15. Members are appointed to the Committee for an initial period of three (3) years, which may be renewed.

16. The Committee will have a face-to-face meeting once a year. In special circumstances, ad hoc face-to-face meetings may be organized. In between meetings, electronic discussions will be the preferred method of carrying on consultations.

### **Chair**

17. The Committee will elect, from among its members, the Chair for a period of three years, renewable for one term. The role of the Chair is to develop, in close cooperation with the Bureau and the secretariat, a multi-year strategic framework and an annual programme of work for the Committee, monitor progress of the various components of the programme and set the agenda for the meetings.

18. The Chair and the members of the Bureau will represent the Committee at international meetings and will play a key role in promoting and communicating the work of the statistical community with other communities, namely the scientific, academic, business and policymaking community. The Chair will engage the various stakeholders and seek supports for Committee projects.

### **Bureau**

19. The Bureau, which will work under delegated authority from the Committee, is established to assist the Committee with the day-to-day management of its programme of work and the projects under its responsibility.

. Decisions taken by the Bureau, under the delegated authority from the Committee, will be reported back to the Committee.

20. The Bureau, under the delegated authority from the Committee, will carry out the activities and tasks in relation to coordination, methodological development, data integration and data management, statistical capacity-building, promotion and statistical response on emerging issues, in line with the workplans and projects within its mandate.

21. The Bureau of the Committee will consist of members of the Committee at the senior level in national statistical offices, central banks, related national agencies and international and regional organizations. The Bureau will include the Chair, the secretariat and senior officials from Member States and international organizations endorsed by the Committee from among its members. The members from international organizations are considered permanent, whereas from Member States are for a period of three (3) years. Former Chairs of the Committee will be an emeritus members of the Bureau in recognition of their contribution to advance the agenda of the Committee, to continue to provide advice to the Bureau. Members of the Committee who lead the Committee's task teams will become members of the Bureau. The Chair may also invite other experts, chairs of the city and expert groups to participate in the meetings of the Bureau.

### **Secretariat**

22. The secretariat of the Committee and its Bureau will be the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat. The secretariat, which will be the main source of logistical and administrative support for the Committee, will receive guidance regarding such support from the Committee and its Bureau. Among the substantive and administrative tasks that the secretariat will undertake are the following:

- (a) Consultation with countries and/or regional and other expert meetings on major substantive aspects of its programme of work, such as methodological standards;
- (b) Management of the Committee's website;
- (c) Preparation of the correspondence with the members of the United Nations Statistical Commission and national statistical offices;
- (d) Preparation of reports to the United Nations Statistical Commission on behalf of the Committee and its Bureau;
- (e) Provision of other substantive and administrative support to the Committee and its Bureau, as appropriate.

### **Technical groups/task teams**

23. The Committee of Experts will convene technical groups/task teams to carry out its work programme and/or in support of specific projects, for example for normative and methodological matters. Such groups will be part of the Committee and, as such, will fall under its overall management and coordination. Task teams, which will be created within the Committee to address specific topics with a limited lifetime (generally, 2-3 years), will be composed of members of the Committee who express interest in being part of the task teams. The Task team leaders are appointed by the Bureau.

24. The technical groups may include experts in business and trade statistics who are not members of the Committee. These experts will be appointed by the Bureau of the Committee. Appropriate balanced regional representation must be considered in the composition among the members of these technical

groups. New technical groups will only be created where existing groups cannot provide the necessary technical support. The chair will become a member of the Bureau. The technical groups will have limited life spans (in line with their work programme) and focus on selected issues.

### **City groups**

25. Existing city groups may be engaged to work on specific programmes and projects under the responsibility of the Committee (e.g. the Wiesbaden group is dealing with statistical business registers). The Committee, while respecting the character and mandate of these groups, will coordinate, within its mandate, its programme of work with those groups, as mandated by the United Nations Statistical Commission.

26. Specific tasks and responsibilities of these groups will be agreed upon between these groups and the Committee. The terms of reference for the tasks related to the programmes and projects will be formulated in coordination with every expert group. They will include specifications on deliverables, timelines and work arrangements for monitoring the technical discussions and for reporting recommendations to the Committee. The city groups will report to the Committee on the tasks and responsibilities agreed with the Committee.

### **Technical expert and inter-agency groups and groups from intergovernmental organizations**

27. The Committee will liaise with other relevant technical expert groups and groups from other intergovernmental organizations that are already in existence and have their own mandate, governance and reporting structure. These groups include, but are not limited to, the Inter-Secretariat Working Group on National Accounts and its Advisory Expert Group on National Accounts, the Inter-Agency Task Force on International Trade Statistics, the Committee on Balance of Payments Statistics of the International Monetary Fund, the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management, the Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting, the Inter-Agency Expert Group on Gender Statistics, the Technical Advisory Group on Economic Statistics of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia and the Steering Group for the Regional Programme on Economic Statistics of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. For areas in the programmes of work of the aforementioned groups that fall within its scope of work, the Committee will initiate liaison with such groups in order to ensure complementarity between the programmes and to advance an integrated economic statistics approach in the area of business and trade statistics.

### **Cooperation with other statistical domains**

28. The Committee, will also enhance methodological cooperation and promote integration of outputs with other statistical domains, including environmental and social statistics and national accounts and other economic statistics in order to identify common priorities and to develop new integrated outputs. It is also committed to support data stewardship in the area of business and trade statistics.