Proposal for Integrated International Trade Statistics
Data and Capacity Building Programme

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1. Background

1.   The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes international trade as an engine for inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction and an important means to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Consequently, international trade data and statistics are crucial for evidence-based policymaking, monitoring, trade promotions, and trade negotiations. For the 2030 Agenda, international trade statistics monitor how trade contributes to the Sustainable Development Goals and particularly in tracking progress towards trade-related Goals1. Moreover, trade statistics are vital for international trade agreements like the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), and the Agreement on Trade related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS Agreement).

2.   This increased demand for more detailed, high-frequency, and high-quality data requires a further strengthening of national capabilities with the commensurate increase in demand for capacity building and technical assistance to produce relevant trade and business statistics. Furthermore, a robust work programme on capacity building and technical assistance would directly address the aims of Goal 17 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Thus, creating a Trade Task Team (TTT) and its work programme on data and capacity building is relevant, strategic, and highly important. This proposal statement outlines the possible roles and responsibilities of the Trade Task Team to take forward capacity building and data programme activities in a more efficient, coordinated, and comprehensive approach, and facilitate a new paradigm of integrated trade and business statistics in the global statistical system.

2. Data Programme

3.   The integration of trade and business statistics is very important in the context of integrating trade statistics with sustainable development data needs. For example, linking trade and business statistics provides important information on a) the characteristics of businesses behind trade flows of goods and services, b) the contribution of a particular economic activity sector to trade, c) the share of small and medium-sized enterprises to total trade; and d) the share of enterprises that trade with a certain partner country and the amount of trade value they account for. These and related are important for achieving the goals of the 2030 Agenda and leaving no one behind.

4.   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, environmental, and multi-domain statistics. Many countries have established programmes to collect Merchandise Trade by Enterprise Characteristics (TEC) and Services Trade by Enterprise Characteristics (STEC) which link trade and business statistics.

5.   It is proposed that the Trade Task Team (TTT) can provide strategic leadership and promote the global trade data programmes. Significant roles, responsibilities, and objectives include:

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[1] https://www.intracen.org/layouts/2coltemplate.aspx?pageid=47244640256&id=47244681598

a) improving the availability, quality, and comparability of integrated international trade statistics.
b) promoting the development of national statistical systems that enable the production and dissemination of trade data of high granularity and frequency based on IMTS, SITS, TEC, STEC, and trade-related business indicators.
c) promote joint international data collections, harmonization, exchanges and dissemination to reduce countries' response burden, improve data consistency and user confidence.

3. Capacity Building Progamme

6.   The UN Statistical Commission, in its Decision 52/107 (f) of the 52nd session, recommended the new Trade Task Team (TTT) to promote an e-learning training programme on international trade statistics. The existing e-learning training has been developed and being delivered jointly by the UN Statistics Division, UNCTAD, and the World Trade Organization with the close collaboration with other agencies and countries. These activities align with the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data (CTGAP); in particular, Strategic Area 6, which seeks to mobilize better resources and coordinate efforts for statistical capacity development to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

7.   To enhance capacity building in the area of integrated trade and business statistics, it is proposed that the Trade Task Team (TTT) provide strategic leadership and play an important advisory role in the development and implementation of capacity building and technical assistance activities in trade statistics. Specific goals include:

a) recommending emerging topics that need special focus in capacity building and technical assistance by international organizations and countries.
b) promoting coordination and collaboration in capacity building and technical assistance activities.
c) reviewing and endorsing e-learning training programmes on international trade statistics linked to business statistics and sustainable development.
d) reviewing and endorsing software and data tools that are specifically developed by the international community for international trade data processing and dissemination.

8.   The Data and Capacity Building Programme will add substantially to the involvement of the Trade Task Team (TTT). The final result will be to bring in the requirements of new competencies and new skill sets for the staff of national statistical systems and accelerate the formulation and implementation of effective policies on trade, inclusive socioeconomic development, environmentally related policies such as for climate change and environmental protection to achieve the 2030 Agenda.