

UNITED NATIONS



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**7TH MEETING OF THE UNITED NATIONS COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS
ON BUSINESS & TRADE STATISTICS**

24 September 2024

**Opening Statement
(video message)**

Stefan Schweinfest

Director, United Nations Statistics Division

Distinguished Colleagues,

Good morning, and welcome to the 7th meeting of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Business and Trade Statistics. Your presence here today is not just a formality but a crucial part of our collective effort to advance the global agenda on business and trade statistics, including their relationships with other domains such as social, gender, sustainability, and geospatial information.

I would like to warmly welcome each of you and express my gratitude for your commitment. I would also like to acknowledge the invaluable support of the World Trade Organization in hosting this important meeting. It underscores the deeper integration and intertwining between business and trade, as also recognized by the endorsement of the amendment of the Committee's mandates by the United Nations Statistical Commission earlier this year. In fact, the Committee's important strategic reflection work will be discussed on the first day.

I want to thank all task team leads and members and my colleagues in UNSD, who have all worked hard since the last Committee meeting. I also want to thank Stefano Menghinello, who has been leading the Committee since its inception and guiding its work program to the level that we are now. As you are aware, Stefano's term is ending. It is with mixed feelings that we say farewell to Stefano. However, I believe that Stefano will continue supporting the Committee as an emeritus member of the Bureau. The work of the Committee and its task teams depends on the countries' guidance and support – that is all of YOU; for this, I am eternally grateful for the time and effort that you all have put into pushing our agenda forward.

From the beginning, this Committee has played a crucial role in enhancing the quality and coherence of business and trade statistics, which are vital for accurately measuring economic activities and formulating effective policies. Our work has become increasingly significant as

we strive to respond to the evolving needs of our global community, particularly in the face of emerging challenges. The progress we have made is a testament to our adaptability and relevance, and it is key to our continued success.

Over the next three days, we will review the progress of our task teams, address the follow-up actions from the recent decisions of the United Nations Statistical Commission, and explore new developments and initiatives. I am eager to hear your insights and ideas as our discussions focus on the strategic direction of the Committee and its work programme, emphasizing further integration of business and trade statistics across statistical domains. The importance of this integration cannot be overstated. By breaking down silos and promoting a more holistic approach, we can ensure that our statistics are more comprehensive, relevant, and responsive to the needs of policymakers, businesses, and the public.

I also understand that you have made significant progress towards the development of various methodological standards on business and trade statistics, among others, the publication of the United Nations Guidelines on Statistical Business Registers, the finalization of the Handbook on the Integration of Business and Trade Statistics and the revision of the trade statistics manuals. It is an impressive feat to oversee the development process of various standards and I commend the Committee for this extensive amount of work. This also underscores the importance of the Committee's work on capacity development to strengthen the capabilities of the national statistical systems for the actual compilation of business and trade statistics.

I look forward to the fruitful discussions ahead and I am confident we will continue to make significant strides in our shared mission. Let us use this opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to excellence in statistical work and to collaborate closely as we navigate the complexities of the global economy.

Thank you once again for your dedication and participation. I wish you all a productive and engaging meeting and a great stay in Geneva.