

The Response of the Task Force on Statistics of International Trade in Services to WTO/OMT Note to UNSC on MSITS

1. The Task Force welcomes the interest shown by the WTO/OMT in the Manual and recognises its concerns. It looks forward to working with the WTO/OMT to address the issues raised.
2. The Task Force would like to make the following comments on the specific proposals on EBOPS and the memorandum items:
3. The EBOPS classification as it stands represents a compromise between the detailed needs of data users and the practicalities of data collection, the latter including resources and considerations of respondent burden and data quality. It is already a substantial expansion of the detail suggested in BPM5. There has been great pressure from countries to restrict the level of detail of the classification because of data collection limitations. It has been difficult to get agreement from data suppliers for the extensions to the existing balance of payments classification that are proposed in the draft Manual and these are considered by many countries as the very maximum (or even beyond the maximum) that could be provided by them in the short to medium-term.
4. Any proposals to further extend EBOPS classification at this stage would require further consultations with countries, because of the need to reassess priorities regarding those components which would be classified in greater detail. In our view reopening such consultations may not be well received at the present time. Additional consultations would delay publication of the Manual and subsequent implementation. The UN Expert Group emphasised that the publication of the Manual should proceed as quickly as possible, given the urgent need for statistical information to support trade negotiations.
5. The Task Force proposes not to amend the main text of the Manual or the EBOPS classification but, after the UNSC meeting, to see if some means can be found, in cooperation

with WTO/OMT, to add a footnote in chapter 3 on the discussion of the travel breakdowns to indicate the extra data needed for the TSA, and to amend Annex 8 of the Manual. This Annex, which explains the relationship between the TSA and the Manual, is an appropriate place to add a short discussion on the points and additional data requirements from breakdowns of the classification raised by the WTO/OMT.

6. Further, the Task Force hopes that WTO/OMT will work with the Task Force to identify the best way of better reflecting their needs in the first revision of the Manual.
7. Regarding CPC revisions proposed: this issue is not within the Task Force's area of competence and they suggest that it is referred to the UN/Technical Sub-Group.
8. Regarding EBOPS/CPC/TCP correspondences: the Task Force is interested in future post-publication cooperation with WTO/OMT.