



UNITED NATIONS  
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS  
STATISTICS DIVISION

**Expert Group on International Merchandise Trade Statistics  
Second Virtual Meeting  
New York, 25 March – 21 April 2009**

## **Report of the Second Virtual Meeting**

**United Nations, New York**

**2009**

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## **I. Purpose and organization**

1. The United Nations Statistical Commission at its 39<sup>th</sup> session (26-29 February 2008) endorsed the initiative and strategy of the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) to revise the existing recommendations for international merchandise trade statistics contained in *International Merchandise Trade Statistics, Concepts and Definitions, Revision 2* (IMTS, Rev.2) and requested that the draft revised recommendations be submitted to the Commission for adoption at its 41<sup>st</sup> session in 2010.
2. UNSD is assisted in the revision process by an Expert Group on International Merchandise Trade Statistics (EG-IMTS) which met for the first time from 3 to 6 December 2007.
3. At its first meeting the EG-IMTS agreed to meet again for a virtual meeting in November 2008. At this meeting which was conducted electronically from 5 November to 5 December 2008 through an ‘expert forum’ the EG-IMTS agreed to hold two additional virtual meetings in 2009 – a second one in March to review the full draft text of Chapter I “Coverage and time of recording” and Chapter II “Trade System” and a third to review the full draft texts of the remaining chapters (probably in May/ June 2009).
4. On 17 March 2009 the members of the EG-IMTS were informed that the second virtual meeting would start on 25 March with the posting of the first drafts for the introduction, chapter 1 and chapter 2. The experts were requested to provide their comments by 3 April. On 9 April UNSD provided its draft conclusions and requested the experts to provide their comments on the draft conclusion by 17 April. The last comment was received on 20 April and the expert forum was physically closed (made read-only) on 21 April. All comments were considered in the below conclusions and are part of the documentation of this meeting.

## **II. Participation**

5. The EG-IMTS members of 23 national offices and international/ regional organizations which participated in the first meeting from 3-6 December 2007 were invited to this virtual meeting. In order to broaden the participation, in particular in light of the fact that not all members of the EG-IMTS actively participated in the first virtual meeting, the following additional countries and regional organizations were invited to take part in the two virtual meetings in 2009: Kenya - National Bureau of Statistics, Philippines - National Statistics Office, Ethiopia - Central Statistical Agency, India - Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics (DGCI&S), ALADI and COMESA. Also WCO was approached regarding its participation in this meeting. Out of these 15 participated in the virtual meeting providing a total of 86 postings – 69 during the first round of comment and 17 as reaction to the draft conclusions provided by UNSD.

### III. Conclusions

6. At its virtual meeting from 25 March to 21 April 2009, the Expert Group on International Merchandise Trade Statistics:

#### A Introduction

7. Welcomed the revised and restructured introduction and endorsed the proposed list of chapters provided in it;
8. para.2(a), (b): proposed to amend as suggested;
9. para.6: proposed to change the order of items and to add one new item as suggested;
10. para.15: proposed to amend (i) to better reflect the relationships between IMTS2010 and SNA2008/BPM5/SITS and (ii) to use “transaction value” instead of “gross”;
11. para.16: proposed to include a reference to the *Manual on Statistics of International Trade in Services*;
12. suggested that Annex F (bridge table between IMTS2010 and BPM6) should contain an introduction on users/uses and comparative strength/weaknesses of IMTS and BOP data.

#### B Chapter 1

13. Concluded that the chapter should be titled “Scope and time of recording”, the footnote 1 should be kept to explain the change in the chapter title but should be rephrased;
14. para.2: proposed to remove the existing last sentence; to clarify that in general trade below the statistical (or administrative) threshold is to be included and that countries are encouraged to make estimates and include this trade at the detailed level if economically (or environmentally) significant;
15. para.3: proposed to review this para and (i) to clearly explain the role of the criteria of change of ownership in the case of goods crossing the border (conceptually and practically) while stressing the supplementary character of this criteria and (ii) to add that change of ownership may not determine a partner country (refer the reader to appropriate paras);
16. para.5: proposed not to use the term “non-financial assets”;
17. para.6: confirmed that the text should follow BPM6;
18. paras 9 and 41: proposed to add a box providing details on the distinction between monetary and non monetary gold;
19. para.10: proposed to insert “Unissued” and to refer to the HS EN as appropriate; to indicate that this also includes banknotes not in circulation anymore;
20. para.12: proposed to add reference to other paras of chapter 1 for clarification;

21. para.13: proposed to use language as in para 24 (Goods dispatched or received through postal or courier services) regarding details of recording;
22. para.14: proposed to amend as suggested;
23. para.16: suggested to explain further why to retain the wording “or to be used otherwise in the country of importation” as some consider that the term “intended for sale” is sufficient; and to say that if reliable information exist when such goods cross the border the revaluation (after sale) is not needed;
24. para.17: confirmed the recommendation of the first virtual meeting, including use of the HS terminology, but advised that after “software customized or written for a specific client(s)” appropriate reference may be given to BPM6 and other sources for clarification;
25. para.18: suggested to consider adding a box with an example of several countries involved; to replace “for a specific purpose [...]” with “for specific operations as defined by the statistical authorities of a country”;
26. paras.19 and 20: disagreed on whether to use the term “transaction value” instead of “gross value” as there is no transaction value in the case of goods for processing without change of ownership, to refer to coding as a preferred option, to edit and refer the reader to Annex B (Definition of selected customs terms);
27. para.20: recommended defining “related” as in the WTO Valuation Agreement as a preferred option, recommended to add that partner attribution will be discussed in chapter 6;
28. para.23: suggested to amend that countries are encouraged to collect or estimate the relevant data to the extent possible;
29. para.26: suggested to delete the sentence on partner attribution in this case and to say that it will be treated in chapter 6;
30. para.28: suggested to review this para to clarify its meaning and scope (mobile equipment); suggested to replace the first two sentences with “International transactions in these goods are to be included in international merchandise trade statistics whenever there is a change of ownership.”;
31. para.30: suggested to amend to say that *fish catch, minerals from the seabed and salvage* landed from vessels of one country in ports of another country or acquired by vessels of one country on the high seas from vessels of another country are included in the scope of IMTS and that countries where this trade is economically (or environmentally) significant are encouraged to collect or estimate the relevant data and include it in export and import statistics;
32. para.31: suggested to amend to say that transactions in *bunkers, stores, ballast and dunnage* are included in the scope of IMTS and that countries where this trade is economically (or environmentally) significant are encouraged to collect or estimate the relevant data and include it in export and import statistics;
33. para.32: suggested to add a box with a three country example;

34. para.33: suggested to review this para and to amend to reflect the data sources limitations;
35. para.36: suggested to add to be recorded if value/quantity are above the statistical threshold; to use “transaction value” instead of “commercial”;
36. para.37: proposed to amend as suggested and add examples; however, another look will be needed to make sure that the amended text is acceptable;
37. para.39: proposed to remove reference to one year or less from the first sentence, but in para 40 to say that countries may wish to consider one year or less as an approximation of temporarily admitted/dispatched goods in the absence of other relevant information or legal requirement;
38. para.41: suggested to add that such exclusions should be done in cooperation with BOP and SITS compilers;
39. para.46(d) suggested to insert “where identifiable” and “clients” (not for general use);
40. para.49 and 58: proposed to align texts as suggested;
41. para.52: proposed to move this para to section (iii) of the chapter and amend para.54 as suggested;
42. para.55: regarding the proposal to move “*Mobile equipment that changes ownership while outside the country of residence of its original owner*” to section (i) “Goods recommended for inclusion” not all participants could agree, citing in particular practical considerations in data collection;
43. para.56: suggested to review and to make sure that the text is aligned with BPM6;

## **C Chapter 2**

44. Welcomed the definition of basic terms at the beginning of the chapter and overall considers this chapter as comprehensive and sufficiently clear and detailed;
45. para.3: suggested to make reference to the UN Publication *Statistical Territories of the World for Use in International Merchandise Trade Statistics*;
46. para. 10: disagreed on whether to define the trade system exclusively by the statistical territory and concluded that further examination of this issue is required;
47. paras. 13 and 15: agreed with the definition of ‘general imports’ and ‘general exports’;
48. para.18: suggested to review the statement in paragraph 18 that the general trade system provides a good approximation of the change of ownership criterion used in the 2008SNA and BPM6;
49. para.19: welcomed in general this paragraph on the time of recording as part of the explanation of the general trade system but at the same time asked to more fully consider the relationship between the time of recording and the trade system;
50. paras. 13-16, 19, 20: after discussion concluded not to make additional comments;

51. paras. 20 and 21: suggested not to combine paragraphs 20 and 21 but to consider giving para 20 the title “Statistical territory under the special trade system” (in concordance with the paragraph related to the general trade system);
52. Welcomes the inclusion of graphs.

**ANNEX I**  
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