The second meeting of the Expert Group on International Merchandise Trade Statistics (EG-IMTS) on the revision of the current recommendations for IMTS took place from 3 to 6 November 2009 in New York. A total of 21 participants from countries and international organizations (not counting UNSD) participated in this meeting.

The meeting reviewed the full draft of International Merchandise Trade Statistics: Concepts and Definitions 2010 (IMTS2010) and discussed all chapters and annexes. The most important chapters were reviewed paragraph by paragraph. As input to and part of the discussion, the EG-IMTS reviewed the results from a worldwide consultation during which countries reviewed the full draft of the revised recommendations. In addition, the meeting discussed the implementation plan for the IMTS2010 and the work program of the EG-IMTS.

Results of the meeting:

Endorsement of the revised recommendations for IMTS2010

The EG-IMTS endorsed the draft revised recommendations subject to several amendments and clarifications. Inter alia, the Expert Group:

- Pointed out the importance of the IMTS Compilers Manual which will provide supplementary explanations and advice to assist countries in the correct interpretation of the revised recommendations and in their effective implementation under various circumstances;
- Made several suggestions for important amendments in the introduction of IMTS2010 such as clarifying the terms “recommended” and “encouraged”;
- Suggested numerous amendments and clarifications concerning the scope of IMTS and the individual inclusions and exclusions; for example, the EG-IMTS suggested to point out that some countries make a distinction between customs and statistical threshold and to provide reference to the goods categories where the criterion of change of ownership could apply;
- Agreed that the recommendation to apply the general trade system should be further explained and that the difficulties for its application should be recognized;
- Endorsed the updated recommendations on the compilation of mode of transport;
- Endorsed the new recommendations on data compilation strate-

(Continued on page 2)
Endorsement of the plan for implementation of IMTS2010 and the EG-IMTS work programme

The EG-IMTS endorsed the suggested draft action plan for the implementation of IMTS2010 and the suggested work programme for the EG-IMTS for 2010-2012. In addition, it:

- Welcomed UNSD’s intention to collaborate closely with the EG-IMTS and the Task Force on International Merchandise Trade Statistics on the implementation of IMTS2010 and the related research agenda;
- Pointed out that the IMTS Compilers Manual should become available as soon as possible and took note of the plan to create a separate website in order to make its contents and possible further amendments available as soon as possible;
- Took note of UNSD’s request to assist in technical assistance activities;
- Concluded that it is very important to work closely with National Account/Balance of Payments compilers in data compilation for certain categories of goods and to coordinate the presentation of the results which are affected by the increased conceptual differences in the recording of certain transactions;
- Appreciated UNSD’s efforts to maintain the global UN Comtrade database and agreed that the presentation of the new data items in UN Comtrade should be discussed by the EG-IMTS and took note of the planned virtual meeting on UN Comtrade in 2011. Took note of UNSD’s plan to be able to accommodate the new data items starting in 2011 although it is expected that most countries will require more time to be able to deliver the new data items.

Finalization of IMTS2010 and national implementation

UNSD will finalize the draft IMTS2010 based on the conclusions of this meeting of the EG-IMTS and submit it to the UN Statistical Commission at its 41st Session on 23–26 February 2010. The final text of IMTS2010 will be prepared taking into account decisions of the Commission and will be made available on the UNSD website immediately after its preparation (March 2010).

UNSD will inform countries about the Commission’s actions and will encourage them to begin planning the IMTS2010 implementation as soon as possible. Countries will be encouraged to develop their implementation plans based on their national circumstances and priorities. UNSD will review the status of the implementation several years later and report its findings to the Commission.
**Databases and Publications:**

**The 2009 Edition of the Annual Totals Table (ATT) now available online**

The 2009 edition of the Annual Totals Table (ATT) is now available online. It provides time series of trade values for over 200 countries (or areas) covering the period 2000-2008 in a user-friendly Excel format.

The ATT is prepared by the International Merchandise Trade Statistics Section (IMTSS) of UNSD and is motivated by the fact that data users are often confronted with different trade values for the same country provided by different international data sources.

A major reason for the existence of different values for imports and exports of one country is that different figures and data-sets are produced by the same or different national institutions for different purposes or at different times and with different revision schedules. The ATT addresses this issue by identifying the data which is considered as the most reliable through a systematic comparison of the figures from two different sources, namely UN Comtrade and UN Totaltrade which contains data from *International Financial Statistics* (IFS) of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The ATT does not only report the value for import and export considered as most reliable but also shows the trade values from the two data sources and their differences.

The ATT is produced at least once a year. It is a snapshot at a certain point in time, although the different data sources that provide input for the production of the ATT are updated on a continuous basis. The current edition has been produced with information available as of 17 November 2009.

The ATT dataset can be freely downloaded at: [http://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/imts/annual%20totals.htm](http://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/imts/annual%20totals.htm)

**Analytical trade tables in the Monthly Bulletin of Statistics**

The following analytical tables on international merchandise trade statistics have been updated since the last issue of this newsletter and are available online at: [http://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/imts/analyticaltradetables.htm](http://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/imts/analyticaltradetables.htm):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Latest data</th>
<th>Published</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T 18</td>
<td>Fuel imports, developed economies: unit values, volume indices and value</td>
<td>3rd quarter, 2009</td>
<td>Dec. 09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 19</td>
<td>Indicators on fuel imports, developed economies</td>
<td>3rd quarter, 2009</td>
<td>Dec. 09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 35</td>
<td>Total imports and exports by regions and countries or areas</td>
<td>September 2009</td>
<td>Dec. 09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 36</td>
<td>Total imports and exports: value, volume and unit value/price</td>
<td>September 2009</td>
<td>Dec. 09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 37</td>
<td>Trade indices for countries in U.S. dollars</td>
<td>2nd quarter, 2009</td>
<td>Oct. 09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 38</td>
<td>External trade conversion factors by countries</td>
<td>3rd quarter, 2009</td>
<td>Dec. 09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 39</td>
<td>Trade indices for regions in U.S. dollars</td>
<td>2nd quarter, 2009</td>
<td>Nov. 09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 40</td>
<td>Manufactured goods exports: unit values, volume indices and value</td>
<td>3rd quarter, 2009</td>
<td>Dec. 09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T 43</td>
<td>World exports by commodity classes and regions in U.S. dollars</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Nov. 09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The International Trade Center (ITC) is an important user of UN Comtrade data. The use of UN Comtrade data is based on a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between UNSD and ITC’s Market Analysis and Research section.

This mission allowed to mostly resolve the remaining questions concerning the update of the MOU which expires by end of 2009. This MOU needs to be updated in order to reflect (a) the further development of ITC’s Market Access Tools (MATs) which source, to different degrees, data from UN Comtrade and which have a high and growing number of users and (b) the development of a major new application which integrates one of ITC’s tools (Market Access Map) with the World Bank’s Integrated Trade Solutions (WITS) which is widely used to retrieve UN Comtrade data.

UNSD and ITC discussed the integration of UN Comtrade data in the new application and the user management. One additional important topic was the identification and treatment of outliers in quantity data on which UNSD and ITC agreed to work together.

MISSION TO THE WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION (WTO) AND UNCTAD
GENEVA, SWITZERLAND, 7 DECEMBER 2009

The main purpose of this visit was to discuss with the World Trade Organization the upcoming meeting of the Statistical Commission (23-26 February 2010) during which trade statistics will be one of the main topics, as well as the upcoming meeting of the Task Force on International Merchandise Trade Statistics (23-24 March 2010). A major issue at both meetings will be the implementation of the revised recommendations on International Merchandise Trade Statistics (IMTS2010).

The meeting with the Statistics Unit at UNCTAD mostly discussed issues related to the availability and use of international merchandise trade data.

ITC’s Market Access Tools are available at: http://www.intracen.org/marketanalysis/

BACI: http://www.cepii.fr/anglaisgraph/bdd/baci.htm

GTIS: http://www.gtis.com/english/


SIGCI: http://www.eclac.org/comercio/SIGCI/

WISERTrade: http://www.wisertrade.org/home/index.jsp

WITS: http://wits.worldbank.org/witsweb/

UN Data (UNSD)

SIGCI (UN-ECLAC)

PROGNOZ

UN Comtrade

BACI (CEPII)

Global Trade Information Services (GTIS)

MISSION TO THE INTERNATIONAL TRADE CENTER (ITC)
GENEVA, SWITZERLAND 8-9 DECEMBER 2009

Some databases sourcing data from UN Comtrade

Market Access Tools (ITC)
UNSD in cooperation with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN/ESCAP) and the National Institute of Statistics of Cambodia will organize a workshop for five Southeast Asian countries (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Timor-Leste and Vietnam) on the Methodology and Data Compilation of International Merchandise Trade Statistics (IMTS) in Phnom Penh from 2 to 5 February 2010. The focus of the workshop will be on data compilation and the concepts and definitions for IMTS (existing and new/revised recommendations) and their application in countries. During the workshop, participants, with UNSD facilitation, are expected to develop country specific action plans, in regards to the possible improvement of IMTS compilation and dissemination. This action plan will serve as guidance for IMTS data compilers.

YOU HAVE ASKED US:

UN COMTRADE: SNAPSHOT ON TOP IMPORTING AND EXPORTING COUNTRIES

How do I get the snapshot which provides charts that show top importing and exporting countries?

UN Comtrade provides a tool that allows users to obtain a snapshot of top exporting and importing countries for a particular commodity, for any year for which data is available. To use the tool, please follow these steps:

- Go to Comtrade Explorer W/Map at http://comtrade.un.org/db/ce/ceDefault.aspx (or Data Query / Comtrade Explorer W/Map);

- Type a keyword describing the commodity that you are looking for and click Search ... then some results will appear with according to their relevance and a choice of classifications. To refine the results, you can filter by the desired classification;

- Finally, click on the commodity description or the year to obtain the snapshot.

UN COMTRADE: CONVERSION OF TRADE DATA REPORTED IN NATIONAL CURRENCY

Which exchange rate do you use to convert trade data reported in national currency into US Dollars?

If the country reports data in national currency, UN Comtrade will use an annual conversion factor calculated from monthly exchange rates obtained from IMF’s International Financial Statistics for the conversion into US dollar. The annual conversion factor is calculated as the average of the monthly exchange rates weighted by the monthly trade values. It is calculated separately for imports and exports.

The conversion factor applied to an individual country and year is available in UN Comtrade under Metadata & Reference / Explanatory Notes. The conversion factor can be used to convert the trade values back to the original reported currency. A time series of conversion factors is published quarterly in the Monthly Bulletin of Statistics under table 37 and also online at: http://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/imts/analyticaltradetables.htm.
The 41st session of the Statistical Commission (SC) will take place from 23 to 26 February 2010 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York.

International merchandise trade statistics (IMTS) will be one of the main items on this year’s agenda. Under item 3 (c) of the provisional agenda the Commission will have before it for review and adoption the draft revised recommendations for IMTS (International Merchandise Trade Statistics: Concepts and Definitions 2010). The recommendations were revised in compliance with the request made by the Commission at its 39th session and were prepared by UNSD in consultation with the national statistical offices and international organizations concerned. They were endorsed by the United Nations Expert Group on International Merchandise Trade Statistics (EG-IMTS).

In addition, under item 3 (d) of the provisional agenda the Commission will have before it for review and adoption the draft revised Manual on Statistics of International Trade in Services. The manual was revised in compliance with the decision of the Commission at its 32nd session.

During the Commission, there will be two side events on trade statistics: the Interagency Consultation on International Trade Statistics which will focus on issues concerning the implementation of the revised recommendations, and a seminar on International Trade statistics: Finding answers for a changing world, new challenges and opportunities.

For detailed information please go to the website of the Commission at http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/commission_41st_session.htm

The United Nations Statistical Commission:

- Advancement of the global statistical system...
- Over 60 years of statistical development...
- Coordination of international statistical activities...
- Statistical capacity building...
- Coordination and integration of statistical programmes...
- Development of national statistical systems...

MEETING OF THE TASK FORCE ON IMTS
BEIRUT, 23-24 MARCH 2010

The Task Force on International Merchandise Trade Statistics (TFIMTS) in which the international organizations that are active in the area of IMTS are represented will hold its annual meeting on 23 and 24 March 2010 in Beirut. Major issues will be the updated recommendations on IMTS and their implementation as well as various analytical topics. In parallel, a meeting of the Interagency Task Force on Statistics of International Trade in Services (TFSITS) will take place. On 25 March 2010 there will be a joint session of both task forces to discuss issues of common interest.

EDITORIAL NOTE

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