



SPECIAL FEATURE: UN21 AWARD IN KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT FOR UN COMTRADE

The Trade Statistics Branch of the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) received the prestigious United Nations UN21 Award for its work on UN Comtrade—a comprehensive Internet database with more than a billion commodity trade data. Mark Maloch Brown, UN's Deputy-Secretary General, congratulated the award winners Zoltan Nagy, Markie Muryawan, Robin Carrington and – in absence – Ronald Jansen at a ceremony on 14 December 2006.

The award is recognition for the work of the complete UN Comtrade team, which consists of many more staff members who contributed to the development of this unique source of trade data over a period of more than 30 years. It should also be added that UNSD management has always supported the work on UN Comtrade.

The specific reason, though, why the prize was awarded in the category of Knowledge Management, was the move of UN Comtrade from a closed mainframe computer platform to an open Internet website (see related article in issue Number 5 of this Newsletter). The major concerns in this migration process were performance and user-friendliness. As early as 1989, initiatives were discussed to make the database available on a PC platform, but its size was an insurmountable obstacle at that time. During the nineties, some software solutions were found by OECD (Oracle express), the World Bank and ITC (both Sybase), but performance and maintenance were key problems in all three cases.

In 2000, the decision was taken by UNSD (Zoltan Nagy and Ronald Jansen, in particular) to go with a Microsoft SQL-Server solution for the database back-end and a web browser as the front-end. Development really started when Markie Muryawan joined the team in February

2001. By mid-2002 the first pilot version of UN Comtrade was running. Not only was its performance more than adequate, but the web browser design was also very user friendly. While most of the trade database applications require the user to fully specify his or her request before data can be retrieved, UN Comtrade will return data with a minimum of specifications. For instance, if one is interested to know more about Malaysia's trade, just enter Malaysia and UN Comtrade will return what Malaysia's top partners and products have been over the most recent years. The most attractive part of UN Comtrade is the easy and quick access to trade data. To achieve the great performance in data retrieval, more than half the space of the database is occupied by a well-designed index.



Because UN Comtrade contains a massive amount of data, it took more than three years (period 2001-2005) to complete the migration of data from the mainframe to the server. Data were not just copied but were checked for consistency and re-aggregated in the transfer process. With more than 150 reporting countries over a period of 40 years and with (now) 7 different commodity classifications, the number of individual datasets is enormous (the most detailed classification, the Harmonized System, has more than 5000 different commodities.)

UN Comtrade is updated daily, and it currently receives more than 200,000 page visits each month. It has become a model trade system that is now being implemented by other international or

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Editorial note

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The UN Comtrade portal can be accessed at comtrade.un.org



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organizations like OECD and FAO for the production of their specialized commodity trade data.

The UN21 Awards were introduced by the Secretary-General in 1996 as part of the management reform effort to provide recognition to staff members for innovation, efficiency and excellence in the delivery of the Organization's program and services. For the 2005 UN21 Awards, many Projects from across the global Secretariat were submitted for consideration. The evaluation teams, made up of a wide cross section of staff members drawn from across the

global Secretariat, reviewed and evaluated projects in each of the designated categories, and made recommendations for "awards" or "commendations" in each project category. The project categories were: Knowledge Management, Process Reengineering, Improvements in Working Environment/Morale, Substantive Program, Field-based Projects, Team and Individual Productivity. As mentioned, the award for UN Comtrade was bestowed in recognition of its merits in the category of Knowledge Management. ■

DATABASES AND PUBLICATIONS:

UPDATE OF UN COMTRADE DURING 2006



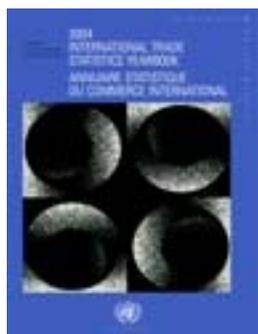
UN Comtrade is updated constantly whenever trade values are submitted directly by a country or obtained from other international organizations. Once new data becomes available, it is processed and thoroughly reviewed by staff members of UNSD. Finally, once it is ready for publica-

tion, it becomes available in the UN comtrade web-portal at <http://comtrade.un.org/>

During 2006 a total of 232 datasets were published using the new UN-OECD Joint System for processing. Of these 232 datasets 155 were published for the first time on UN Comtrade, 120 concerning data for 2005. ■

DATABASE AND PUBLICATIONS:

NEW PUBLICATIONS BY UNSD AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS



International Trade Statistics Yearbook 2004, Vol. I & II

The fifty-third edition of the *International Trade Statistics Yearbook* provides the basic information for individual countries external trade performances in terms

of value as well as in volume and price, the importance of trading partners and the significance of individual commodities imported and exported.

Volume I contains detailed data for 179 countries or areas, volume II contains commodity tables showing the total trade of certain commodities analyzed by regions and countries. This is a bilingual publica-

tion, in English and French.

For more information and paper copies please go to <http://unp.un.org/> (Sales No. 06.XVII.4 H).

WTO's International Trade Statistics 2006.

This 110-page report gives a detailed overview of trade developments by region and product in 2005. Information on current trade flows is complemented by a number of tables providing data on longer term trends in world trade (the entire publication can be downloaded free of charge from WTO's website at www.wto.org) ■



UN Publications are available on the Web: unp.un.org

COOPERATION WITH COUNTRIES AND AGENCIES: UNSD VISITED ALADI'S IX RECOMEXT

The Latin American Integration Association (ALADI) hosted in Montevideo, Uruguay, its *9th Technical Meeting of Government Agencies Responsible of Providing Statistical Information on External Trade (IX RECOMEXT)*.

The meeting, which took place from October 16 to 20, 2006, brought together delegations from Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Mexico, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Venezuela. In addition, representatives from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Andean Community, Eurostat, and UNSD participated as observers.

During the meeting, the ALADI Secretariat made presentations on the association's Foreign Trade Information System (SICOEX), and provided an assessment of data availability and individual countries' compliance with the 'Handbook of Instructions for the Uniform Supply of Foreign Trade Data by Members Countries'.

The Secretariat also submitted for discussion documents on their current data validation processes, information technology innovations, the use of virtual forums, and a pilot project on Digital Certificates of Origin.

Relating to the activities carried on by the International Trade Statistics Section, UNSD ratified its interest in exploring opportunities for cooperation with ALADI's Secretariat in three specific areas: Data

exchange, data validation methodology, and creation and moderation of virtual forums of experts.

There was an open discussion about the association's 'Regional Center of Trade Information' (CRIC), whose coverage is being extended to include macroeconomic indicators. ALADI's Department of Information and Statistics also expressed interest in exploring ways in which UNSD could support further extensions to CRIC's indicators of international trade flows.

It was brought to the attention of ALADI Secretariat and the country delegations that UNSD is currently carrying out a Questionnaire on "National Compilation and Dissemination Practices". Those countries that have not submitted their replies to the UNSD Questionnaire were encouraged to do so at their earliest convenience.

In addition, a representative of the Andean Community presented the methodology and the results of an Assessment Study on the National and Andean Situation Regarding Compliance with the Association's guidelines. Also, several country-specific issues were discussed in bilateral conversations during the 9th RECOMEXT meeting.

More details on the topics covered during the meetings are available at ALADI's official website (<http://www.aladi.org/nsfaladi/reunion.es.nsf/vnovenaweb>)



ALADI
Visit the ALADI
webpage under
www.aladi.org

Documents of the
Bangkok workshop
are available at
[unstats.un.org/
unsd/trade/
workshops_imts.htm](http://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/workshops_imts.htm)

COOPERATION WITH COUNTRIES AND AGENCIES: BANGKOK WORKSHOP, 12-15 DECEMBER 2006

UNSD organized a workshop on compilation issues in international merchandise trade statistics (IMTS) in Bangkok from 12 to 15 December 2006. Participants came from national offices of Bangladesh, Brunei, Cambodia, China, China-Hong Kong SAR, India, Indonesia, Lao, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, New

Zealand, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vietnam. The agenda of the workshop covered the first results of the 2006 National Compilation and Dissemination Practices (NCDP) and current issues of IMTS, especially Goods for Processing, Re-

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A subscription to **UN Comtrade** gives you instant access to 900 million records on trade from over 150 reporting countries or areas, covering 40 years of data and more than 5000 different products.

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exports, Valuation, Country of Origin, and Data Quality.

Responses of 91 countries were summarized and presented for sections 1 to 11 of the NCDP Questionnaire. As a subset of these, the results of 13 of the participating countries showed to be very similar with the exception that about all of the participating countries use the General Trade System, whereas globally there is a 50/50 split between use of General and Special Trade System.

The country presentations and subsequent discussions led to the following conclusions:

1. For the estimation of "Goods for processing without change of ownership" it was thought possible to distinguish and disseminate the flows for inward and outward processing separately.
2. It was seen as very difficult to indicate the level of processing of the goods coming out of the inward processing zone.
3. Discussion of re-exports showed that a majority of participants believes that only the minimal processing activities could be identified and be classified as re-exports of goods in the same state.
4. It may be useful to consider presenting together trade on trans-shipments and re-exports since they often have an administrative distinction, but are almost identical as a trade activity.
5. It seems feasible and useful to present the additional field of country of origin for re-exports.
6. More best practices could be made available on how to produce Imports FOB in addition to Imports CIF.
7. Rules of Origin were discussed from two points of view: (i) statisticians could produce criteria to determine if – for export – the country of origin is domestic or foreign; best practices should be collected for these; (ii) it will be a national authority (often Ministry of Trade) which will certify country of origin based on commodity, partner country and specific Trade Agreement; a world wide database on the granted Certificates of Origin would be helpful for trade statisticians.
8. It will be helpful for trade statisticians to have a repository of best practices on specific aspects of data quality control in one place; UNSD promised to organize this at its UN Comtrade Expert Forum.

The **ITDU**–
International Trade
Data Users, Inc.–
Is a non-for-profit
organization aimed
at promoting accu-
racy, understanding
and utilization of
trade and transpor-
tation information.
www.itdu.org

COOPERATION WITH COUNTRIES AND AGENCIES: ITDU CONFERENCE, WASHINGTON DC

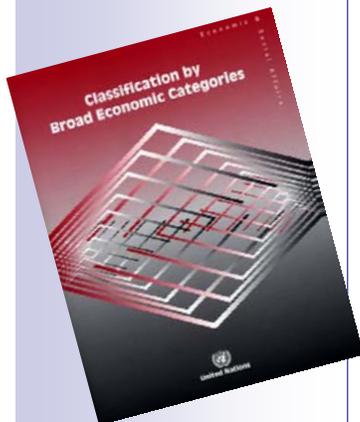
The title of this International Trade Data Users conference was: How Will the 2007 Harmonized Code Changes Affect You? To find answers to this question, Alvis Pauga – the driving force behind ITDU – had invited a number of experts, such as David Beck, Acting Director of the US International Trade Commission (USITC) and Chair of the HS Committee of WCO, William Bostic, Vanessa Ware, Steven Bulman and Carol Aristone of the Foreign Trade Division (FTD) of the US Census Bureau, Carla Miller of the World Institute for Strategic Economic Research (WISER) and Ronald Jansen of the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD).

USITC briefed the conference participants on the changes incorporated in HS-2007

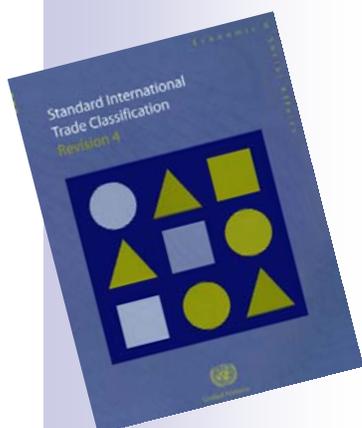
and on the implementation of HS-2007 at US Customs, while FTD explained how the changes in HS headings will be shown in the US trade statistics. The presentation of UNSD explained time series problems that will occur due to changes in HS-2007; it announced and described the new SITC, Rev. 4; it further highlighted the connection between HS-2007 and CPC and stressed the wishes of the industry community to have more detail in the HS headings in the areas of software packages and petroleum products.

On the second day, FTD described in detail all its products which include some series of data in SITC, soon to be updated with SITC, Rev. 4. Also demonstrations of

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The 4th revision of the Classification by Broad Economic Categories was released in July 2003



The Standard International Trade Classification, Rev. 4 is available online at unstats.un.org/unsd/cr/registry/

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applications by USITC and the US Department of Commerce showed still extensive use of SITC in the data series. UNSD demonstrated the new look of UN Comtrade including its new Portal, Knowledge Base and Community Forum; further a progress report was given on the NCDP

Questionnaire 2006 (first results), as well as on the drafting of the Supplement to the Compilers Manual. Finally, WISER demonstrated a trade data application which contained an interesting feature in the presentation of its growth rates. ■

YOU HAVE ASKED US:

CAPITAL, INTERMEDIATE AND CONSUMPTION GOODS

Q: Are there any statistics available about capital, intermediate, and consumption goods, as well as their share in world trade?

A: In the System of National Accounts (SNA), this three basic classes of goods are based on the Broad Economic Categories (BEC) classification. They are constructed by adding up the following categories:

1. *Capital goods:*

- 41* Capital goods (except transport equipment)
- 521* Transport equipment, industrial

2. *Intermediate goods:*

- 111* Food and beverages, primary, mainly for industry
- 121* Food and beverages, processed, mainly for industry
- 21* Industrial supplies not elsewhere specified, primary
- 22* Industrial supplies not elsewhere specified, processed
- 31* Fuels and lubricants, primary
- 322* Fuels and lubricants, processed (other than motor spirit)
- 42* Parts and accessories of capital goods (except transport equipment)
- 53* Parts and accessories of transport equipment

3. *Consumption goods:*

- 112* Food and beverages, primary, mainly for household consumption
- 122* Food and beverages, processed, mainly for household consumption
- 522* Transport equipment, non-industrial
- 61* Consumer goods not elsewhere specified, durable
- 62* Consumer goods not elsewhere specified, semi-durable
- 63* Consumer goods not elsewhere specified, non-durable

You can extract the data from UN Comtrade database by specifying BEC classification. ■

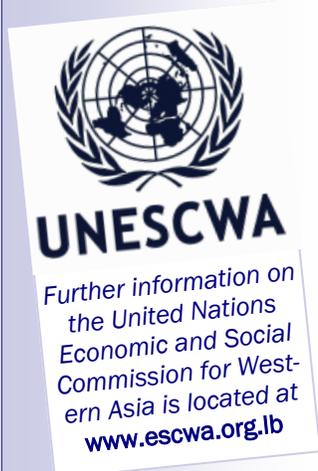
YOU HAVE ASKED US:

CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN HS2007 AND SITC REV. 4

Q: We are preparing our computer system to comply with the adoption of HS2007 and there are quite a number of tasks involved in this preparation. How can we obtain the HS2007-SITC Revision 4 correspondence?

A: The final version of SITC rev. 4 is available on the UNSD website (see <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/sitcrev4.htm>).

In addition revisions to correlation tables between SITC, Rev.4 and SITC, Rev.3 and vice versa have also been updated (see Appendices II and III in the same link above). ■



UPCOMING EVENTS:

UN-ESCWA WORKSHOP ON STATISTICS OF TRADE IN SERVICES, CAIRO, 6-9 FEBRUARY 2007

The purpose of this workshop to be conducted in Cairo, Egypt, from February 6 to 9, is to build and strengthen national skills in applying the statistical systems and classifications related to international trade in services and to share the experiences and concerns of member countries of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and UN organizations working on Statistics of International Trade in Services (SITS).

As part of the agenda, the statistical treatment of modes of supply and services transactions between residents and non-residents will be discussed, as well as classifications, statistical concepts and methods associated with

international trade in services, data collection strategies, and characteristics of the services sector.

Participants from National Statistical Offices, Central Banks and ministries of commerce/planning are invited to attend the workshop. Experts from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) will present working papers.

The workshop will create an opportunity to discuss and provide recommendations for UN-ESCWA member countries to develop, improve and upgrade their collecting and processing capabilities of statistics of international trade in services.

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UPCOMING EVENTS:

THIRTY-EIGHTH SESSION OF THE UN STATISTICAL COMMISSION NEW YORK, 27 FEBRUARY-2 MARCH 2007



The thirty-eighth session of the Statistical Commission will be held

at United Nations Headquarters, New York, from February 27 to March 2, 2007.

The United Nations Statistical Commission, was established in 1947, is the apex entity of the global statistical system. It brings together the Chief Statisticians from member states from around the world. It is the highest decision making body for international sta-

tistical activities especially the setting of statistical standards, the development of concepts and methods and their implementation at the national and international level.

Commemorative events of the Statistical Commission 60th anniversary will include a seminar on Evolution of National Statistical Systems, a High-level Forum on the Statistical Commission and the Global Statistical System, a seminar on Innovative Technology in Data Collection, and a Dialogue on Statistical Development with International Agencies.

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EDITORIAL NOTE

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