



International Trade Statistics

Newsletter

SPECIAL FEATURE:

FRIENDS OF THE CHAIR MEETING ON MEASUREMENT OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND ECONOMIC GLOBALIZATION, 6-8 NOVEMBER 2013, NEW YORK

The 2013 Statistical Commission report (International Trade Statistics, Report of the Secretary-General, E/CN.3/2013/7) on international trade statistics described their status and related policy questions in a world in which production processes are spread among many countries creating not only economic and financial interdependencies but also social and environmental ones. The report highlighted the growing concerns regarding the limitations of current trade statistics to inform the policy debate. For a better measure of the various aspects of international trade and economic globalization, data gaps have to be addressed, best practices developed and additional conceptual development pursued. With this regard, the Commission recognized the need for a coherent approach towards settling the measurement issues and agreed to the creation of a 'Friends of the Chair' (FOC) group tasked with preparing a concept paper on the scope and content of a framework for the measurement of international trade and economic globalization, and on an appropriate mechanism for coordination. FOC group consists of member countries (Denmark, Ireland, Netherlands, Italy, Colombia, Mexico, Costa Rica, USA, Morocco, Cape Verde, South Africa, Uganda, China, India, Korea, Vietnam, Thailand, Iran) and agencies (Eurostat, IMF, OECD, UNCTAD, WTO, UNECE, UNSD). It is chaired and moderated by Canada.

The meeting of the Friends of the Chair group took place in New York from 6 to 8 November with its opening session at UN Headquarters and the remainder of the meeting in retreat format at the IBM training centre in Piermont, New York. The meeting was opened by André Loranger of Statistics Canada, who

chaired the Group. In his introduction, he considered the main tasks of the FOC group to be (1) systematically charting the measurement issues in the area of international trade and economic globalization, and (2) coordinating the ongoing efforts in a multitude of international working groups for greater coherence and efficiency. The agenda of the meeting covers topics such as recent and on-going activities regarding the measurement of international trade and economic globalization, the perspectives from research communities and trade policy analysts to highlight the users' relevance, and the discussion on the draft concept paper for the measurement of international trade and economic globalization.

Besides finalizing the schematic framework with all relevant measurement issues, the group noted the following as points of attention for future work:

- ◆ Address bilateral inconsistencies in trade data;
- ◆ Promote integration of statistics with businesses at the centre, because the current fragmented statistics are an impediment to answering relevant policy questions and understanding global business strategies;
- ◆ Address the issues of confidentiality and access to micro-data as part of the work program given the benefits and particular sensitivities of firm-level data, data on large firms and exchange of micro-data among countries;
- ◆ Classifications, such as Business Functions, BEC and level of embedded technology;
- ◆ Address the is-

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2012 INTERNATIONAL TRADE STATISTICS YEARBOOK (ITSY), VOL. II – TRADE BY COMMODITY – AVAILABLE ONLINE

All parts and tables of the Yearbook are available online:

[http://
comtrade.un.org/pb/](http://comtrade.un.org/pb/)



The analytical trade tables are published in the



[UN Monthly Bulletin of Statistics \(MBS\)](#)

They are also available online at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/imts/analyticaltradetables.htm>

2012 ITSY, Volume II – Trade by Commodity presents detailed data for individual commodities (3-digit SITC groups) with the 2012 data on imports and exports by country (or area). Overall, data for a total of 258 commodities are shown in Volume II. The information is based on data provided by 139 countries (areas), representing 93.1% of world trade of 2012. To provide comprehensive view and coverage for each commodity, the non-reporting countries and areas were estimated by UNSD. All world and commodity tables of Volume II are made available electronically on <http://comtrade.un.org/pb/WorldTables.aspx?y=2012> and <http://comtrade.un.org/pb/CommodityPagesNew.aspx?y=2012> respectively.

World Table A (Total imports and exports by regions and countries or areas) in the yearbook showed total value of world trade reached U.S. dollars 18.0 trillion in 2012, measured in terms of exports valued FOB at the border of the exporting country. This is an increase of less than 0.1 percent compared with the previous year during which trade rose by 19.5 percent. the big-

gest exporter in 2012 with exports of U.S. dollar 2,049 billion was China, followed by the United States with U.S. dollar 1,546 billion and Germany with U.S. dollar 1,410 billion. The United States was the biggest importer with imports of U.S. dollar 2,336 billion in 2012, which resulted in a trade deficit of U.S. dollar 790 billion, while Germany and China recorded trade surpluses of U.S. dollar 242 billion and 231 billion respectively. The share of total exports of developed economies decreased from 65.1 percent in 2000 to 50.3 percent in 2012.

The detailed information about the trade of particular countries by commodity and partner (values and quantities) contained in the tables and graphs for individual countries in Volume I and commodities in Volume II has been taken from the publicly available database UN Comtrade (<http://comtrade.un.org/>). Users are advised to visit UN Comtrade for any additional and more current information as it is continuously updated. In addition, for more detailed information users are requested to refer to the introduction.

ANALYTICAL TRADE TABLES PUBLISHED 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. They are published in the Monthly Bulletin of Statistics (MBS) and are also available online at: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/imts/analyticaltradetables.htm>.

Table	Description	Latest data	Published
T 18	Fuel imports, developed economies: unit values, volume indices and value	3rd quarter, 2013	Dec 2013
T 19	Indicators on fuel imports, developed economies	3rd quarter, 2013	Dec 2013
T 35	Total imports and exports by regions and countries or areas	Sep 2013	Dec 2013
T 36	Total imports and exports: value, volume and unit value/price	Sep 2013	Dec 2013
T 37	Trade indices for countries in U.S. dollars	2nd quarter, 2013	Oct 2013
T 38	External trade conversion factors by countries	3rd quarter, 2013	Dec 2013
T 39	Trade indices for regions in U.S. dollars	2nd quarter, 2013	Nov 2013
T 40	Manufactured goods exports: unit values, volume indices and value	3rd quarter, 2013	Dec 2013

COMPILERS GUIDE FOR THE MANUAL ON STATISTICS OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN SERVICES 2010 (CG MSITS 2010)

While adopting the Manual on Statistics of International Trade in Services 2010 (MSITS 2010) at its 41st session in 2010, the Statistical Commission recognized the challenges faced by the national statistical systems to implement the recommendations contained in this manual. The Commission, therefore, emphasized the importance of compilation guidance and training. In December 2011, the United Nations established an Expert Group on the compilation of statistics of international trade in services (the Expert Group) consisting of national experts of developed and developing countries as well as members of the Task Force.

The potential users of the Compilers Guide were consulted about the annotated outline and the Expert Group began the drafting process by soliciting materials from 40 countries as well as the international organizations. During the drafting process, the UN Expert Group and the TFSITS were consulted through several meetings (virtual and physical) as well as through exchanging emails. The UN Expert group met for a five day face-to-face meeting in June 2013 in Geneva, where drafts of all 24 chapters of the guide were reviewed.

During August and September 2013, the editor, Vladimir Markhonko, revised and updated the Compilers guide following the drafting principles and in accordance with the agreed conclusions of the June Expert Group meeting, while the organizing agencies collected and transmitted the remaining contributions. The complete edited version of the draft guide was then presented to the Task Force at its meeting in October 2013 and was thereafter discussed electronically by the Expert Group during the whole month of November 2013.

It was then agreed that the available version of the Compilers Guide for MSITS 2010 was of sufficient quality to be submitted as a background document to the Commission at its session in March 2014, with the understanding that this draft document would be further finalized and prepared for print in several months following endorsement for use by the Commission. The draft version of the CG MSITS 2010 will be available on the UN Statistical Commission web-site in February 2014.

All previous newsletters are available online at:
<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/newsletter.htm>

STATUS OF DATA COLLECTION IN UN SERVICE TRADE DATABASE

The 2012 data collection cycle was launched in July 2013. The table below indicates the summary of data collection for this cycle indicating the reception of the international trade in services data by EBOPS (or main BOP) categories that are received directly either from the national statistical office or the central bank as well as from our partners with whom UNSD shares the data collection to reduce burden on reporting economies.

As of 4 December 2013, UNSD has collected data from 72 reporting countries or areas:

	2011 data	2012 data
Total datasets received (new or revised)	68	65
Additional datasets expected to be received (Eurostat, OECD, etc)	31	31
Datasets that can be obtained from other sources (NSOs on-line, IMF, WTO, etc.)	39	pending
Datasets that were received in last year's data collection but have not yet been submitted	18	n/a

The database is available at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/servicetrade/default.aspx>

FRIENDS OF THE CHAIR MEETING ON MEASUREMENT OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND ECONOMIC GLOBALIZATION

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sue of sophistication of the statistical system and the need for minimum required country data sets.

In conclusion, it was agreed to work for at least one more year in the current format of the Friends of the Chair group. The group will need to determine the work packages around the conceptual, measurement and data quality issues identified. In terms of next steps, the FOC group needs to confirm and consolidate the conceptual framework and incorporate the work done by the UNECE Task Force on Global Production. Thereafter, it will have to translate the conceptual work into the schematic framework and complete it by placing all basic statistics and measurement issues into it. From

this overview, the FOC group can then derive a programme of work and set priorities for the 2014. It can also use such overview of priorities to make suggestions on the coordination and allocation of work packages by requesting collaboration of Expert groups and Task Forces. It can also use such overview of priorities to make suggestions on the coordination of the work. It was further agreed to organize a conference in the fall of 2014, in which the concept paper would be presented and where working groups could present the outcomes of their work.

Further information is available at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/events/2013/foc.asp>

More information on IMTS international cooperation and assistance activities is available online:

http://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/imts/intl_cooperation.htm

INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON TRADE AND TOURISM STATISTICS 7 – 10 OCTOBER 2013, JAKARTA, INDONESIA

UNSD and the ASEAN Secretariat with support of BPS-Statistics Indonesia and the APEC secretariat organized an International Seminar on Trade and Tourism Statistics from 7 to 10 October 2013 at the headquarters of BPS-Statistics Indonesia in Jakarta, Indonesia.

The agenda of the workshop covered topics such as a new approach for the measurement of international Trade and Global Value Chains, the MSITS 2010 Compilers Guide and the Compilation Guide for Tour-

ism Statistics. Specific topics will include enterprise and establishment surveys; surveys of persons and households; Travel and Tourism statistics; Transportation statistics; Manufacturing services on inputs owned by others; FATS, FDI and multinational enterprises; Guidelines for Statistical Business Registers; and linking trade, FDI and FATS with the business register.

Further information is available at <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/events/2013/jakarta.asp>

WORKING VISIT TO COLOMBIA ON THE IMTS QUALITY ASSESSMENT

At the request from Colombia's National Statistical Office (DANE), UNSD participated in an independent expert commission to evaluate the quality of its International Merchandise Trade Statistics Programme. Starting in July 2013, this Commission, consisting of UNSD, an external consultant appointed by DANE, and an expert from Colombia's National University, held various meetings via video-conference and web meetings to review documentation of Colombia's IMTS programme.

After these preparatory activities, a technical visit by UNSD to DANE's headquarters in Bogota took place from 21 to 25 October

2013, with the purpose of holding interviews with the technical staff responsible for the compilation of IMTS, as well as with internal and external users of trade statistics, in order to finalize a technical evaluation and to draft a report with the commission's conclusions and recommendations for improvement.

The technical assessment covered the various aspects of the compilation process of IMTS, including from planning and design of the IMTS statistical programme to its implementation in data collection, validation, processing and dissemination activities.

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The committee made some specific observations, with the view of encouraging DANE to continue improving the dissemination of metadata and technical documentation of their IMTS compilation methodology and practices; and to continue its efforts to modernize their data dissemination infra-

structure. It also made some general recommendations for improvement in the medium term, including the strengthening of the working arrangements between DANE and Colombia's Customs Authority and the adoption of the SDMX standard for statistical data and metadata exchange, among others.

IADB WORKSHOP ON IMTS COMPILATION METHODOLOGY IN CENTRAL AMERICAN COUNTRIES AND MEXICO

UNSD was invited to participate in a Workshop on "Methodologies for recording statistics on trade flows in Central American countries and Mexico", organized by the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) from 19 to 21 November 2013 in San Jose, Costa Rica. The Workshop covered many of the key issues related to the implementation of IMTS 2010 in the specific context of Central America and Mexico.

In most of these countries, central banks are the agencies responsible for the compilation of both IMTS and Balance of Payments statistics. In this context, the presentations and open questions-and-answer sessions provided UNSD with an opportunity to clarify to the participants important aspects of the international recommendations of IMTS2010 and their relationship to Balance of Payments statistics.

Although most countries in Central America use the special trade system (excluding free zones from their merchandise trade statistics), many of the participants explained how they are already engaged in an effort to adopt the general trade system (covering all the elements of the economic territory). Also, the workshop allowed participants to exchange views and experiences on how many of their countries are conducting statistical investigations to determine change in ownership in trade of goods for processing, based on special surveys of enterprises located in export processing zones. In this topic, the region has strongly benefited from the sup-

port of IMF's Regional Technical Assistance Center for Central America, Panama and Dominican Republic (CAPTAC-DR).

One important conclusion of the workshop was the need to promote the use of additional sources of information beyond customs records that are currently used for Balance of Payments purposes but often not in the compilation of IMTS, as is the case for various enterprise surveys whose results are not used to supplement customs records for IMTS purposes.

IADB presented its work on statistical capacity building, in which supporting the use of administrative records is of high priority. The workshop also provided participants with an overview of IADB's work programme in the field of international trade statistics, including their DataIntal system, which embodies a large regional collection and dissemination programme of commodity trade data at the most detailed ("tariffline") level in, and also includes many other types of information relating to legal framework and trade negotiations. Both UNSD and IADB plan to continue their efforts to strengthen their coordination in statistical activities, with the view of improving both quality and comparability of the IMTS data provided through their respective databases and systems, and of reducing the burden on countries when fulfilling data requests from international organizations through improving data and metadata transmission arrangements.

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EDITORIAL NOTE

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