



UNITED NATIONS
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
STATISTICS DIVISION



**Workshop on the Methodology and Data Compilation of
International Merchandise Trade Statistics (IMTS),
Phnom Penh, 2 -5 February, 2010**

Final Report

Organization, purpose and participants

This workshop on **the Methodology and Data Compilation of International Merchandise Trade Statistics (IMTS)** was organized and conducted by the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) in cooperation with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN/ESCAP) and the National Institute of Statistics of Cambodia (NIS) which hosted the workshop from 2-5 February 2010 in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

This workshop is part of a UN/DESA Development Account Project which aims to strengthen and sustain the capacity of the five countries of South East Asia Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Timor-Leste and Vietnam for the production, analysis and dissemination of benchmark statistics. At the first meeting of the Steering Committee of this project early 2009 in Bangkok it was decided to strengthen the capacity in the area of IMTS, in particular with respect to data collection and compilation, taking into account that international trade is one of the economically most important sectors for this sub-region.

This workshop reviewed and discussed the current practices in the collection, compilation and dissemination of IMTS of participating countries and the new international recommendations for IMTS as contained in the draft of *International Merchandise Trade Statistics: Concepts and Definitions, 2010* (IMTS2010). In addition, the participants, with UNSD facilitation, developed a first draft of country specific action plans, which will provide guidance for IMTS compilers in regard to the improvement of IMTS compilation and dissemination, including the implementation of the updated and new recommendations as contained in IMTS2010.

Each of the five participating countries was represented by two staff members from the national statistical agency responsible for the overall IMTS compilation and dissemination (except for Timor-Leste where only one staff from the statistical agency participated) and

from the national customs administration. For Cambodia also staff from the Central Bank and the Ministry of Commerce took part in this workshop.

Summary

Opening session: Mr. Khin Song, Deputy Director General of the National Institute of Statistics (NIS) of Cambodia presented his report on the status of IMTS at NIS. Mr. Matthias Reister, Chief of the International Trade Statistics Section of UNSD welcomed the participants on behalf of Mr. Paul Cheung, Director of the United Nations Statistics Division, and introduced this workshop. Thereafter, H.E. Gne Chhay Leang, Secretary of State, Ministry of Planning of Cambodia welcomed the participants and opened the meeting.

After the formal opening UNSD explained the purpose and organization of the workshop and the meeting adopted the agenda. UNSD introduced its activities in the field of IMTS and provided a presentation on the revision of the international recommendations for IMTS, which covered also the proposed implementation plan. UNESCAP provided a presentation on the ESCAP Regional Programme on improving Economic Statistics. The expert consultant Ms. Estela de Guzman which supported this workshop provided a presentation on ASEAN activities in the field of IMTS and the results of the initial assessment questionnaire on national practices of IMTS compilation and dissemination which was sent to countries in preparation of this workshop.

Session 2 - Country presentations on current practices in the collection, compilation and dissemination of international merchandise trade statistics: The NSO and Customs of all participating countries provided their presentations.

Session 3, part 1 - Data compilation strategies (Customs and non customs data sources; institutional arrangements): The introduction by UNSD was followed by country presentations/ statements of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Timor-Leste and a general discussion.

Session 3, part 2 - Data compilation and data quality assurance at customs and NSO (data processing, use of technology, customs procedure codes, classification, valuation, partner country and quantity measurement): The introduction by UNSD was followed by country presentations/ statements of Myanmar, Vietnam and a general discussion.

Session 4, part 1 - Data quality at the NSO (data quality strategy and data quality reporting): The introduction by UNSD was followed by the discussion of and conclusions for country specific action plans concerning the items discussed under agenda items 12, 13 and 14.

Session 4, part 2 - Scope and time of recording (General guideline of IMTS; Goods for processing; Trade between affiliated enterprises, Inclusions and exclusions): The introduction by UNSD was followed by country presentations/ statements of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Timor-Leste and a general discussion.

Session 5, part 1 - Trade System and Mode of transport (Trade System: Clarification of territorial elements; General vs. Special trade system; Free zones; Other concerns and Mode of Transport: What to record; How to classify): The introduction by UNSD was followed by expert consultant presentation about ASEAN member states practices on trade system and country presentations/ statements of Cambodia and Vietnam and a general discussion. This was followed by the discussion of and conclusion for country specific action plans concerning the items discussed under agenda items 15 and 16.

Session 5, part 2 - Commodity classification and Quantity measurement (Review of recommendations; Other concerns): The introduction by UNSD was followed by expert consultant presentation about ASEAN member states practices of commodity classification and country presentations/ statements of Myanmar, Lao PDR, Timor-Leste and a general discussion.

Session 6, part 1 - Valuation (Valuation reviewed, i.e. value components, estimation methods, valuation and time of recording in case of non-customs sources; Valuation in certain special cases, i.e. electricity, gas and water, used goods etc.; Compilation of Imports FOB in addition to Imports CIF): The introduction by UNSD was followed by country presentations/ statements of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and a general discussion.

Session 6, part 2 - Partner Country (Country of origin and country of consignment for imports; Country of last known destination and country of consignment (destination) for exports; Issues concerning the determination of the country of origin and re-exports (rules of origin); Other concerns): The introduction by UNSD was followed by country presentations/ statements of Timor-Leste and Vietnam and a general discussion. This was followed by the discussion of and conclusion for country specific action plans concerning the items discussed under agenda items 17, 18 and 19.

Session 6, part 3 - Overview of UN Comtrade: UNSD provided a presentation on the UN Comtrade database and its analytical output on IMTS.

Session 7, part 1 - Metadata and Data dissemination (Review of existing and updated recommendations; Use of new technologies): The introduction by UNSD was followed by country presentations/ statements of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Timor-Leste and a general discussion.

Session 7, part 2 - Supplementary topics (External trade indices; Relationship and differences to national accounts and balance of payments statistics - bridge table between IMTS2010 and BPM6; Linking business and trade statistics): The introduction by UNSD was followed by country presentation / statements of Vietnam and a general discussion. This was followed by the discussion of and conclusion for country specific action plans concerning the items discussed under agenda items 20 and 21.

Closing session: The round table discussion concerning the identification of the important issues for participating countries was followed by the introduction of the preliminary findings

and conclusions of the meeting. The meeting concluded with closing remarks by UNSD and UNESCAP.

Findings and conclusions for country actions plans

1. The meeting concluded:

Data compilation strategies

2. that in several countries present at this workshop formalized working arrangements (Memorandum of Understanding) between the agency responsible for the overall compilation of IMTS and customs need to be reviewed/ updated or established in order to further improve IMTS compilation;
3. that in several countries present at this workshop the use of additional data sources needs to be strengthened to achieve full coverage of IMTS and that the issue of coverage should be discussed with the Central Bank (which is in charge of the balance of payment compilation and which might compile information required for IMTS) and with other possible sources such as line ministries;
4. that information about the customs procedure applied to individual transactions is currently in most countries not part of the dataset transmitted by the customs authority to the agency responsible for IMTS compilation;
5. that several countries present at this workshop plan or consider the use of Eurotrace for data compilation in their statistical office but that this would depend also on adequate external support such as for example via the EU-ASEAN project;

Data compilation and quality assurance at customs and NSO

6. that all countries present at this workshop conduct some or comprehensive quality checks at customs and the NSO (on the micro and macro level) but that in some countries the documentation of these checks needs to be improved to allow better coordination and cooperation between customs and NSO on data quality;

Data quality strategy and reporting

7. that none of the countries present at this workshop has currently an established and comprehensive data quality strategy which is based on quality standards and principles and includes regular quality reports; however all countries would like or plan to do so in the future;
8. that all countries present at this workshop plan to document their practices in IMTS compilation in a methodological handbook or national compilers manual;

Coverage and time of recording

9. that several countries present at this workshop need to further review the list of recommended inclusions and exclusions to verify whether those apply in their country and how those are currently treated; one category of good mentioned as currently not included in the IMTS of some countries is non-monetary gold;

Trade system and Mode of transport

10. that several countries present at this workshop plan to follow the forthcoming UN recommendation to prepare a detailed definition of their statistical territory;
11. that several countries present at this workshop plan to fully adopt, as far as possible, the definitions of the customs terms as contained in the Revised Kyoto Convention;
12. that several countries present at this workshop plan to identify re-imports and re-exports in their trade statistics in the future;
13. that the countries present in this workshop either plan to obtain or have already obtained information on the mode of transport from customs and intend to include this information in their data in the future;

Commodity classification and quantity measurement

14. that several countries present at this workshop plan to limit their use of chapter 98 in the future;
15. that several countries plan to improve the compilation of quantity information (net weight and supplementary quantity) in the future;

Valuation

16. that some countries present at this workshop will consider the compilation of imports FOB in addition to the recommended compilation of imports CIF;
17. that in case imports are reported FOB the compiling agency needs to use the information available on the customs declaration concerning the value of freight and insurance or the information contained in other supporting documents to establish the CIF value of imports;

Partner country

18. that some countries consider to compile in the future for imports the country of consignment in addition to country of origin;

Metadata and data dissemination

19. that several countries present at this workshop currently mainly disseminate aggregated data to the general public but not the full set of available detailed data; however parts of the detailed data are available upon request; this appears to be partly due to concerns about confidentiality but partly also due to a lack of a clear mandate and authorization for the dissemination of the detailed data in electronic format;
20. that in some countries resource constraints make it difficult to finalize data for electronic or paper publication;
21. that all countries plan to or would like to strengthen their data dissemination in the future concerning the application of confidentiality, the provision of an advance release calendar, the publication of monthly, quarterly and annual data according to a schedule, online

access to data, the provision of metadata on their web sites or in publications and the dissemination of data to regional and international organizations;

Supplementary topics

22. that most countries consider to explore and research the possibility of compiling trade indicators, index numbers or seasonally adjusted data; Vietnam agreed to share its practices on the compilation of export and import price indices;

Other

23. that all countries recognize the importance of establishing regular training activities to increase awareness of the new and updated recommendations contained in the revised IMTS Concepts and Definitions;

24. that most countries consider government agencies and line ministries as the main users of trade statistics;

Round Table Discussions

25. participating countries found the following issues as important in their countries:

- a. the time lag of official trade statistics dissemination;
- b. the need for efficient data compilation / cooperation with customs;
- c. the compliance with international recommendations;
- d. the need for human resources (in terms of a sufficient number and sufficiently knowledgeable staff) as well as financial and IT resources, either from governments and through outside funding.

Country Action Plans

26. It is understood that suggestions or plans for possible improvements in the compilation and dissemination of IMTS in countries contained in the country specific draft action plans have to be further reviewed and discussed within the responsible agency and with the other institutions involved in IMTS compilation and dissemination.