

Opening Statement on behalf of Mr. Stefan Schweinfest, Acting Director of
the United Nations Statistics Division

Dear Mr. Suryamin,
Dear Colleagues,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to this international seminar on trade and tourism statistics. Strengthening statistical capacity is at the heart of what my office, the United Nations Statistics Division, wants to achieve. We would like every national statistical system around the world to be able to deliver the requested and necessary official statistics to its policy makers for evidence-based decision making. I am therefore very pleased to know that we are bringing together this week in Jakarta a large group of official statisticians and an excellent group of national and international experts to exchange knowledge and experiences on how to best collect and compile trade and tourism statistics.

This seminar is part of the global program for the implementation of the 2008 System of National Accounts (SNA 2008) and its underlying basic economic statistics. It is also part of the regional program for the improvement of economic statistics in Asia and the Pacific.

The seminar focuses on a specific (and important) part of economic statistics, namely on statistics of international trade in services and on tourism statistics. Within the context of the United Nations Statistical Commission the Chief Statisticians of developed and developing countries have worked together diligently and meticulously to make sure that the current recommendations in the field of trade in services and tourism statistics are fully aligned with the recommendations, the concepts and the definitions contained in the 2008 SNA as well as in the 6th edition of the Balance of Payments Manual.

This week all of you will be working together to improve the understanding of these recommendations and to share experiences on how to implement them in your economies. The ultimate goal is to produce the highest quality of statistics on trade in services and on tourism, which are relevant for the policy makers at home and which are also comparable at the regional and international levels.

Mr. Suryamin,
Dear colleagues,

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to the Government of Indonesia and especially to you, Mr. Suryamin and all your staff at BPS Statistics Indonesia for their great efforts to make this workshop a success. I have seen that BPS has taken care of many organizational details and has added voluntarily additional parts to the programme, including a gala dinner at the end of this week. All those efforts are greatly appreciated and will make this seminar into an all-around success.

I would also like to express my thanks to our co-organizers, APEC through its APEC TATF project, and ASEAN for their significant support. The ASEAN secretariat, represented by Beth Alarilla and her team, has worked on improving statistics of international trade in services and tourism statistics over the last 4 years and I hope that the experts from the ASEAN member states can share their experiences and can highlight those difficult issues which need special attention and solution in the compilation of the trade and tourism statistics.

The APEC TATF project organized just recently in June this year in Medan, Indonesia, a seminar on trade in services statistics. APEC underlines the importance of this topic by also participating in this seminar. Through APEC, we have also colleagues from the Americas joining this seminar, and I especially thank those colleagues for all the efforts they have to invest to be present here this week in Jakarta.

Let me also voice a special welcome to those colleagues who came to Jakarta by invitation from my organization, the United Nations. You came over from Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Timor Leste and China, from very large and relative small countries. I hope that all of you will acquire new ideas for your work back home.

Together, all of you, our host, the co-organizers, the participants and not to forget the experts coming from Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Mexico and the United States as well as from the international organizations of WTO, OECD and the UNWTO; all of you are making this seminar possible and all of you can make this seminar in a very enriching experience by your active participation.

Dear colleagues,

In this opening statement, I also like to take the opportunity to stress – very briefly – the relevance of trade and tourism statistics as drivers of the economy and to point out how businesses nowadays operate on a global scale connecting many economies around the world. If we talk about trade, the discussion is no longer just a discussion about how we exchange transactions on a bilateral basis, but is more and more a discussion about how our economy fits with other economies into some global value chains. The discussion is no longer just about who our direct partners are before and after in the value chain, but also about those partners, who are at the beginning and at the end of the global value chains, and who may exercise a certain control over its processes.

Rapid technological advances in the past few decades in transport, computing and telecommunications, including the development of the internet and electronic commerce, have resulted in enterprises availing themselves of resources for production at more distant locations and have enabled them to serve ever wider markets. This trend towards globalization, reinforced by liberalization policies and the removal of regulatory obstacles to economic activities, has fuelled the steady growth of multinational enterprises, international investment and trade in goods and services. Better communication and transport have also facilitated the movement of people for the purposes of tourism, migration, employment and trade.

In other words, trade in services has become global and complex. Trade in services is an integral and very important part of the global operations of businesses.

The seminar this week will not only deal with trade in services statistics, but also with tourism statistics. Like trade in services, tourism is for many economies, especially for some of the smaller economies, a very important driver of the economy.

People's desire to visit places beyond their usual environment, be it in their own country or in foreign lands, results in travel and in the increased demand for goods and services thus generating additional employment and income. The fast growth in the domestic and international travel in the last decades made tourism industries the key contributors to the national income and employment in many countries.

Nowadays, more than 700 million tourists visit foreign destinations and it is predicted that their number will reach 1.6 billion by 2020. For many countries, tourism is one of the key components of their GDP – including investment in the tourism industries, such as building of tourism-related infrastructures. It is understandable, therefore, that countries have a keen interest in better measuring tourism related activities.

In this context the availability of high quality tourism statistics is vital for effective evidence-based policy making. The task of providing the policy makers and society at large with the necessary and reliable information falls on the compilers of tourism statistics both in national statistical offices and in national tourism administrations. This makes the strengthening of a strategic alliance between these institutes as well as between them and the central banks a crucial precondition for the success of national tourism statistics programmes. I sincerely hope that this seminar will contribute to the sense of the importance and urgency of making further progress in the collaboration among the national institutes.

This brings me to the main goal of this seminar, namely to transfer knowledge and good practices which will help to improve the quality of official statistics on international trade in services and on tourism statistics. The seminar strives to achieve this by (i) clarification and elaboration of a number of more difficult conceptual issues and (ii) identification of good practices in the implementation of the international recommendations. Further, the seminar tries to position the compilation in the context of a global statistical work not only with reference to such pillars as BPM6 and SNA 2008, but also to other related statistical guidelines, in particular those on Integrated Economic Statistics and on National quality assurance framework

We are fortunate to have this week a number of key players present who currently help in the international effort to develop a compilers guide for trade in services statistics. This guide should assist statisticians working in national statistical offices, central banks or ministries who have responsibilities in collecting, compiling or disseminating trade in service statistics. UNSD is the focal point of this effort, and we will deliver the first full draft of the guide this month to the Task Force on SITS at the upcoming meeting in Paris.

At the same time, the World Tourism Organization will finalize with support of UNSD and others the Compilation Guide for the International

Recommendations for Tourism Statistics 2008. The final draft will be presented at the Committee of Tourism Statistics at its meeting in January 2014 in Madrid.

Dear colleagues,

Let me conclude, by expressing my thanks for all of you who have made their way (and sometimes a very long way) to Jakarta. We are very happy to have you with us this week.

We are also very happy to have with us this week some very experienced and well-known experts in the field of official statistics both from national and international institutes.

I welcome Mr. Romulo Virola, former Chief Statistician of the Philippines, who represents the World Tourism Organization at this meeting. I also welcome Mrs. Bettina Wistrom of OECD and Mrs. Barbara D'Andrea of the World Trade Organization. Bettina has been the Chair of the Task Force on Statistics of International Trade in Services for many years now. Bettina will inform us of the work of the BOP Committee and on the recent work on SDMX. Barbara is a senior statistician at WTO and an expert on the Modes of Supply. Barbara has supported UNSD co-organized workshops on a number of occasions.

Finally, I would also like to recognize the representatives of the ASEAN Secretariat and APEC namely, Ms. Elizabeth Alarilla and Ms. Sondand Anggraini who will bring in the regional perspective to the workshop. For UNSD it is of great importance that regional organizations take the lead in statistical capacity building activities. We are convinced that follow-up on capacity development should be done locally.

In conclusion, I would like to thank again Mr. Suryamin and his staff at BPS Statistics Indonesia for the valuable efforts to make this event a great success, I thank all participants for making the effort to be here this week and I wish you all very fruitful deliberations and hope that this will be an enriching experience for everyone.

Thank you.