



REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON INTERNATIONAL MERCHANDISE TRADE STATISTICS
Strengthening Data Compilation and Analytical Capacity
3-6 April 2017, Malé, Maldives

Organized by UNSD in cooperation with Maldives Customs Service
Hosted by Maldives Customs Service

Report of the Workshop

A. ORGANIZATION

The *Regional Workshop on International Trade Statistics: Strengthening Data Compilation and Analytical Capacity* was organized jointly by UNSD in cooperation with Maldives Customs Service. It was hosted by Maldives Customs Service between 3 and 6 April 2017 in Malé, Maldives.

B. PURPOSE

The Workshop was conducted in order to improve the understanding of the recommendations for international trade statistics and to provide a collaborative environment where experiences on how to improve the implementation within national statistical systems through better coordination and cooperation between data providers and compilers are shared. The ultimate goal is to produce international trade statistics of the highest quality that are relevant for national policy makers, and that are also comparable at the regional and international levels. The Workshop strove to achieve this by (i) addressing any questions regarding the methodology and challenges in data compilation of IMTS, (ii) identifying good practices in data compilation, and (iii) providing practical knowledge in trade data analysis and visualization using various tools available (i.e. TradeSift, Tableau).

The topics in the agenda included highlights of the international recommendations in merchandise trade statistics (IMTS 2010), data compilation practices relevant for the region, data analysis and data visualization. The full agenda is provided in annex I.

C. PARTICIPANTS

The Workshop was intended first for the compilers of international merchandise trade statistics, and second, the users of international merchandise trade statistics. One of the goals of this Workshop was to establish close cooperation among institutions providing, compiling and using trade statistics. Data compilers from South Africa, India and Maldives were present, as well as country participants from Customs Administration, the National Statistics Bureau, Central Bank and Revenue Authority. Annex II contains the complete list of participants.

D. INAUGURAL PROGRAMME

Opening statements were delivered by the Chief Superintendent of Maldives Customs Service (MCS), Chief Statistician of National Bureau of Statistics Maldives and Chief of International Merchandise Trade Statistics, UNSD. The inaugural programme was attended by Senior Customs Officials from MSC as a host organisation.

All speakers welcomed the participants and gave appreciation to UNSD and Maldives Customs Service (MCS) for organizing the Workshop.

All speakers emphasized the importance of international trade statistics in the context of economic globalization as policy makers attempt to understand inter-dependency between national and foreign economies through trade. In addition, the importance role of trade in Sustainable Development Indicators (SDGs) was also mentioned. Therefore, compliance with international standards and recommendations is a crucial factor for the monitoring of SDG indicators. Furthermore, well-functioning of inter-agency cooperation and collaboration to compile international trade statistics is a must.

E. SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

The daily sessions started with presentations, followed by questions and answers. At the end of the session, main topics of discussion were summarized and highlighted.

Session on International Merchandise Trade Statistics: To set the stage, UNSD presented the recommendations for international trade statistics: International

Merchandise Trade Statistics, Concepts and Definitions 2010 (IMTS 2010) and International Merchandise Trade Statistics Compilers Manual 2010 (IMTS 2010 CM). The participants discussed the following core topics: scope and time of recording, trade system, commodity classification, valuation, quantity information and partner country, including the updated core elements with regards to scope, valuation, quantity information and partner country.

Session on Data Compilation Strategies: Country presentations were given by India, South Africa and Maldives on their national trade data compilation practices, particularly in the areas of data cleansing, validation, and dissemination. It was followed by presentations on how the Maldives Monetary Authority and Maldives National Bureau of Statistics utilize trade data in the compilation of Balance of Payments statistics.

Session on Data Analysis using TradeSift: A trade economist and expert from TradeSift¹ discussed various methods of analysing trade data that would prove useful in evaluating trade policy, determining opportunities, and providing descriptive statistics. Training was provided on use of the TradeSift software that simplifies the analysis of international trade data by easily calculating indicators at whole economy level and at detailed product level. In the exercises of this session, UN Comtrade data was used.

Side Meeting on IMTS adjustment for BOP trade in goods: At a side meeting, UNSD, Maldives Monetary Authority and Maldives Customs Service discussed possible adjustments to be applied to IMTS for BOP trade in goods taking into account the current compilation practice in Maldives.

Side Meeting on IMTS 2010 Action Plan for Maldives: As part of technical assistance activities to Maldives, UNSD and Maldives Customs Service discussed action plan document, prepared by Maldives Customs Service based on UNSD template, with aims to comply with recommendations and encouragements outlined in IMTS 2010.

Session on UN Comtrade: Trade Data Processing and Data Visualization: UNSD presented an overview of the trade data production process in UN Comtrade from the time

¹ See more at <http://www.tradesift.com/>

data is received from providers to data dissemination. It was followed by a brief introduction on the use of visualization tools to analyse and present trade data. It showcased a few of the existing visualizations available in UN Comtrade Labs.

Session on Quality Framework: The workshop was concluded with a presentation on data quality framework and indicators of quality that encompassed all stages of the statistical production process. A template report on quality was presented and discussed.

Roundtable and Closing Session: Participants reviewed and discussed the main issues stressed during the Workshop. Key findings and conclusions were discussed and agreed upon. The meeting was concluded with the closing remarks by UNSD attended by senior officials from Maldives Customs Service.

CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions reached in the Workshop are as follows:

F. GENERAL/MAIN CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Participants:

1. Recognized the importance of applying the international standards that have been endorsed by the UN Statistical Commission: IMTS 2010 for International Merchandise Trade Statistics. It was recommended that countries develop plans of action to gradually implement elements outlined in the manual.
2. Identified that trade data compilation procedures, such as mapping customs procedure codes to trade flows, data cleansing algorithms, data checking methods, have a direct impact on the quality of the data. It was encouraged that these procedures and methods are shared among participating countries with the goal of replicating existing good practices.
3. Acknowledged that continuous and constant dialogue among data providers, compilers and users, particularly on the process of producing and using data, was crucial. Comprehending both processes were of equal importance, especially for the purpose of telling an accurate story based on a specific objective.

4. Stressed the importance of having data analysis and visualization skills for data compilers and users, and encouraged that regular training be conducted on the use of related tools in order to improve their analytical capacity.
5. Committed to provide high quality international merchandise trade statistics by taking into account various dimensions of quality such as relevance, credibility, accuracy, timeliness, methodological soundness, accessibility, comparability, etc. Countries were encouraged to develop and publish national quality reports that cover the full range of statistical processes and their outputs and update them regularly.
6. Appreciated that the work programme of the Workshop offered training on the full set of data skills: methodological framework, data collection, data compilation, data analysis and data visualization. The Workshop format enabled various stakeholders (i.e. data provider, data compiler, and data user) to learn from each other, and understand others' points of view.

ANNEX-I: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS (Non-Maldives)

| | Name | Country | Institution | Position |
|---------------------|------------------------------|----------------|--|---|
| Non-Maldives | | | | |
| 1 | Mr. Sri Sudipta BHATTACHARYA | India | DGCIS, Ministry of Commerce, Government of India | Deputy Director |
| 2 | Mr. Sri Soumya ROY | India | DGCIS, Ministry of Commerce, Government of India | Deputy Director |
| 3 | Ms. Chandrima DAS | India | DGCIS, Ministry of Commerce, Government of India | Assistant Director |
| 4 | Mr. Michael GASIOREK | United Kingdom | TradeSift, InterAnalysis Ltd. University of Sussex | Senior Lecturer, Managing Director |
| 5 | Ms. Asanda TSHAYINGWE | South Africa | South African Revenue Service | Senior Data Analyst |
| 6 | Ms. Julio SABU | South Africa | South African Revenue Service | Executive – Trade & Industry, Operational Research, Trade Statistics Unit |
| 7 | Mr. Markie MURYAWAN | United Nations | UNSD | Chief, International Merchandise Trade Statistics Section |
| 8 | Ms. Melissa PACA | United Nations | UNSD | Associate Statistician, International Merchandise Trade Section |
| Maldives | | | | |
| 7 | Ms. Aishath SOBAHA | Maldives | Senior Statistical Officer | National Bureau of Statistics |
| 8 | Ms. Azmeela HASSAN | Maldives | Assistant Statistical Officer | National Bureau of Statistics |
| 9 | Ms. Fathimath SHIFAZA | Maldives | Assistant Statistical Officer | National Bureau of Statistics |
| 10 | Mr. Ismail SHAREEF | Maldives | Senior Officer - Balance of Payments | Maldives Monetary Authority |
| 11 | Mr. Mubaah MOHAMED | Maldives | Assistant Manager - Balance of Payments | Maldives Monetary Authority |
| 12 | Ms. Aminath Shara NIYAZ | Maldives | Assistant Manager - Balance of Payments | Maldives Monetary Authority |
| 13 | Mr. Mohamed Sofwaan HASSAN | Maldives | Senior Officer - Balance of Payments | Maldives Monetary Authority |

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|----|-----------------------------|----------|---|--|
| 14 | Mr. Maryam JUWAIRIYYA | Maldives | Senior Tax Officer - Policy Planning and Statistics | Maldives Inland Revenue Authority |
| 15 | Ms. Farisha FATHUHULLA | Maldives | Senior Economic Affairs Officer | Maldives Economic Development |
| 16 | Ms. Aishath Muzna MUSTHAF A | Maldives | Administrative Officer | Maldives Economic Development |
| 17 | Mr. Abdulla WAHEED | Maldives | Chief Superintendent | Seaport Operation Division, Maldives Customs Service |
| 18 | Mr. Mahmood RIYAZ | Maldives | Deputy Chief Superintendent | Tariff and Trade Division, Maldives Customs Service |
| 19 | Mr. Ali ZUBAIR | Maldives | Chief Customs Officer | Tariff and Trade Division, Maldives Customs Service |
| 20 | Mr. Iqbal ISMAIL | Maldives | Chief Customs Officer | Tariff and Trade Division, Maldives Customs Service |
| 21 | Mr. Abbas ABDULLA | Maldives | Customs Officer Gr 3 | Tariff and Trade Division, Maldives Customs Service |
| 22 | Ms. Aminath Irufa MAHIR | Maldives | Customs Officer Gr 3 | Tariff and Trade Division, Maldives Customs Service |
| 23 | Ms. Aminath WAHEEDA | Maldives | Chief Customs Officer | Tariff and Trade Division, Maldives Customs Service |
| 24 | Mr. Ibrahim SHUJAU | Maldives | Superintendent | Information Technology Section, Maldives Customs Service |
| 25 | Mr. Mohamed VIDHAADH | Maldives | Senior Customs Officer | Sea Cargo Documentation, Maldives Customs Service |
| 26 | Mr. Mizyan ABDULLA | Maldives | Customs Officer Gr 3 | Valuation and Documentation Section, Maldives Customs Service |
| 27 | Mr. Mohamed SIFAAN | Maldives | Customs Officer Gr 3 | Air Cargo Documentation Section, Maldives Customs Service |

ANNEX-II: AGENDA



REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON INTERNATIONAL MERCHANDISE TRADE STATISTICS Strengthening Data Compilation and Analytical Capacity 3-6 April 2017, Malé, Maldives

Day 1: Monday, 3 April 2017

08:30 – 09:00 *Registration for participants*

09:00 – 10:00 *Opening session*

- Opening remarks (NSB, MCS, UNSD)
- Adoption of provisional agenda and administrative matters (UNSD)
- Purpose and context of the workshop (UNSD)

10:00 – 10:15 *AM Break*

10:15 – 11:00 *IMTS 2010 Concepts and Definitions (UNSD)*

- Overview of the core concepts and definitions

11:00 – 12:30 *Data Compilation Strategies*

Country presentations from the South African Revenue Service (SARS), Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India (DGCIS), Maldives Customs Service (MCS), National Statistics Bureau of Maldives (NSB) and Maldives Monetary Authority (MMA) on practices in data pre-processing, cleansing, validation, dissemination and visualization:

- Data acquisition & Institutional Arrangement
- Data processing from raw data to produce trade statistics
- Detections of outliers; data estimation and imputation
- Ensuring quality of quantity information
- Tools and techniques for data compilation

12:30 – 13:30 *Lunch*

13:30 – 14:30 *Data Compilation Strategies*

- Data Processing and Database Management (UNSD)
- Trade data processing in UN Comtrade (UNSD)
 - Pre-processing of data
 - Data standardization and harmonization
 - Outliers detection
 - Estimating quantity
 - Data conversion

14:30 – 14:45 *PM Break*

14:45 – 16:00 *Data Quality Framework (UNSD)*

- Overview
- Report on data quality (follow up on SACU workshop)

Day 2: Tuesday, 4 April 2017

Data Analysis using TradeSift

08:30 – 12:30 (with break)

- Introduction to TradeSift and Principles of Trade
- Demonstration of basic TS operations
- Exercise 1: Basic TS operations based on pre-loaded data

12:30 – 13:30 Lunch

13:30 – 16:00 (with break)

- Trade policy, the Sussex Framework and TradeSift's Core Indicators
- Explaining TradeSift Diagnostic Indicators
- Exercise 2: Revealed Comparative Advantage

Day 3: Wednesday, 5 April 2017

Data Analysis using TradeSift (continued)

08:30 – 12:30 (with break)

- Data Sources: Classification Schemes & Obtaining Trade Data
- Exercise 3: Core Indicators
- Analysing RTA's with TradeSift
- Initial project work discussions

12:30 – 13:30 Lunch

13:30 – 16:00 (with break)

- Exercise 4: Identifying and Downloading trade data
- Identifying possible export opportunities
- Presentation of project ideas followed by discussion

Day 4: Thursday, 6 April 2017

08:30 – 10:00 *Data Analysis and Visualization (UNSD)*

- Exploring and analyzing trade data using Tableau

10:00 – 10:15 *AM Break*

10:15 – 11:15 *Data Analysis and Visualization (UNSD)*

- Examples from UN Comtrade Labs and others

11:15 – 12:30 *Round table discussion: needs, challenges in compiling and analysing data (moderated by UNSD)*

12:30 – 13:30 Lunch

13:30 – 16:00 *Closing session*

- Conclusion and recommendations of the workshop
- Evaluation of the workshop and any other business