

ACS/UNSD/UNCTAD Regional validation workshop on International Merchandise Trade Statistics (IMTS)

Implementing IMTS 2010 Concepts and Definitions

15-18 May 2018, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago

I. BACKGROUND:

The development of a sound statistical system is key to the implementation of evidence-based policies and to the emergence of an open and unbiased dialogue between stakeholders and policy makers. As a consequence, it is an essential tool of both economic performance and social cohesion.

This is all the more true when trade negotiations are under way and when countries have to understand and precisely assess their offensive and defensive interests in this context. In such a situation, public authorities have to define a global strategy and to translate this approach into specific negotiating positions. Statistics are a key tool in this process. They allow the sharing of a diagnostic of the current situation between all national stakeholders and a clear understanding of the national interests.

UNCTAD has been active in providing knowledge development and capacity building programs to developing countries for over four decades. Its TrainForTrade (TFT) Program has been established some 20 years ago. With its dedicated platform and team, the Program has conceptualized, created and delivered e-learning projects on various subjects related to trade and development in many individual countries or regional centers, usually within wider scope capacity building undertakings. WTO has also been active in building trade capacity since 1995, in particular by providing trade related technical assistance, capacity building and developing e-learning courses. UN Statistics Division (UNSD) manages the development and maintenance on methodology of IMTS, including Standard International Trade Classification (SITC), Classification by Broad Economic Categories (BEC) and related correspondence tables. UNSD also manages repository of official international trade statistics database, called UN Comtrade. Furthermore, UNSD has been providing capacity building and technical assistances to countries through compilers manual, metadata survey, workshops and country missions with aims to support implementation of latest recommendations on IMTS.

As the United Nations' focal point for the integrated treatment of trade and development and the related economic issues, UNCTAD compiles a wide range of data. The statistics are made public via UNCTADstat, the free online data resource encompassing more than 150 indicators and time series, with figures for individual economies and country-groups presented in a harmonized framework (<http://unctadstat.unctad.org/EN/>). The UNCTADstat features: i) Data Center allowing users to easily access, compare, reorganize and download data; ii) Country Profiles presenting a selection of most recent key economic statistics by country; iii) Infographics library, a collection of key messages released to social networking sites from the published time series; and iv) Documentation, FAQ, and other supporting information.

IMTS is part of topics regularly discussed by Inter-Agency Task Force on International Trade Statistics (TFITS) (<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/taskforce/default.asp>). TFITS promotes the development of international standards and respective compilation guidance, systems and classification for international trade statistics. Furthermore, it coordinates training and capacity-building initiatives, especially in

developing countries, to ensure uniform application of international standards and recommendations in the area of international trade statistics.

The Regional validation workshop on International Merchandise Trade Statistics (IMTS) is organized as a follow-up activity to the distance-learning course on International Merchandise Trade Statistics, delivered for the first time (to more than 130 participants from 28 countries) to contribute to enhance the knowledge and the capacity IMTS professionals, mainly from the English-speaking countries from the Caribbean region and Asia.

II. OVERALL OBJECTIVES:

The main goals are to enhance statisticians' ability to apply the most recent internationally agreed recommendations on IMTS, define best possible data sources, set up adequate (or enforce existing) collection systems, and enhance statistics compilation processes. Moreover, the course would communicate the importance of quality, metadata, timely dissemination, and links to economic analysis and national policy objectives.

The workshop would guide trainees on how to better use the internationally available guidance, especially the IMTS Concepts and Definitions 2010 and the related Compilers Manual.

III. SPECIFIC OBJETIVES:

- 1) To revise and assess the training material produced for the IMTS course
- 2) To identify eventual learning gaps to adapt the training material
- 3) To enhance the knowledge and the capacity of trainees through group exercises
- 4) To present country activities in the area of trade statistics
- 5) To report the conclusions and recommendations

IV. AGENDA ANNEX I

V. TARGET POPULATION:

Primary Target: trade data compilers from (depends on countries):

- National Statistical Office (NSO)
- Central Bank
- Ministry of Trade
- Customs Administration