UNITED NATIONS
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS

STATISTICS DIVISION
TRADE STATISTICS BRANCH

TASK FORCE ON INTERNATIONAL MERCHANDISE TRADE STATISTICS
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item 7(a) of the provisional agenda

Statistical metadata in merchandise trade

Report by UNSD

1. Metadata are an integral part of the UN Comtrade dissemination systems. They are presented to the user in many forms, such explanatory notes, information on data availability and the replies to the national compilation and dissemination questionnaire[1]. In addition, references on commodity classifications, the country list and glossary are provided online. Annex 1 gives an overview of all metadata in UN Comtrade.

2. A knowledge base has been added to UN Comtrade during the second half of 2006. It contains manuals, explanations on how to use the UN Comtrade system and answers to questions of Comtrade users. Already in the short time since its establishment the knowledge base has become a rich repository of methodological information, answers to specific data questions and technical support information. Complementary to the knowledge base a community forum was created, where questions can be posted (and replied to) by users.[2] When deemed useful, questions and answers from the community forum are posted in the knowledge base.

3. As shown in Annex 1, the UN Comtrade system shows metadata in the database environment, in the knowledge base, in the community forum and in the expert forum. The last one can be viewed by the public at large, but the discussions can only be entered by invitation. UNSD invites all participants to its workshops and expert groups to take part in the expert forum; of course, the TF members are all very welcome to be part of this forum.

[1] Shortly the replies to the most recent survey on national compilation and dissemination practices conducted in 2006 will be included.
[2] The community forum is intended for interaction between the users with UNSD acting as administrator. Yet, on specific questions UNSD might also post replies and answers and/or link to information in the knowledge base.

4. As will be further explained in a separate report submitted under other business, UNSD is reorganizing its Trade Branch website and would like to make it more active by adding to the site all reports produced by the branch for international meetings.

3. Another kind of information concerns the posting (or publishing) of processed data sets into UN Comtrade. Whenever this happens, a service message is issued. Currently that message only contains the date and the number of records of the data set which was added. In the future this service message will be upgraded to include information on what kind of data was published (new data, fully revised data, data revised due to a specific purpose). This will enable the user to pass judgment if revised data would need to replace an earlier version if used for a specific analysis.

Annex 1

All Meta Data within the UN Comtrade System

1. **<u>UN Comtrade Database - "Metadata and Reference"</u>**

    a. *Country List*
        i. *Explanatory Notes*
        ii. *National Reporting Practices (soon NCDP 2006)*
    b. *Commodity List*
    c. *Glossary*

2. **<u>Knowledge Base - "Comtrade"</u>**

    a. *First Time Users*
    b. *Methodology*
        i. *Manuals & Tutorials*
        ii. *Metadata & References*
        iii. *Subscription & Customer Support*
    c. *FAQ*
    d. *How To*
    e. *SDMX*
    f. *Comtrade Web Services*

3. **<u>Community Forum - "Discussions"</u>**

    a. *Subscriptions & Orientations*
        i. *First Time User*
        ii. *Help on subscription*
    b. *Extraction Tools & Interpretations*
        i. *Data Availability & Interpretation*
        ii. *Help on Features*
        iii. *Technical Support*
    c. *Methodology*
        i. *Explanatory Notes*
        ii. *Country Practices*
        iii. *Terminology & Classification*
    d. *Publications*
        i. *Trade publications*
        ii. *Other Sources*

4. **<u>Community Forum - "Downloads"</u>**

    a. *Commodity*
    b. *Country*

5. **<u>Expert Forum - "Discussions"</u>**

   a. *Country Practices & Recommendations*
      i. *Goods for Processing*
      ii. *Re-exports, Re-imports*
   b. *Technical Cooperation*
      i. *Abuja – 2005*
      ii. *Douala – 2006*
      iii. *Bangkok – 2006*
   c. *Tools & Analysis*
      i. *Eurotrace*
      ii. *Standard Unit Value*

6. **<u>Expert Forum - "Downloads"</u>**

   a. *Manuals*
   b. *Classifications*
      i. *SITC, Rev. 4*
      ii. *HS Correlations*

7. **<u>Trade Branch Website - "IMTS"</u>**

   a. *Methodology - Trade Branch manuals and other materials for download*
   b. *Workshops - Workshop documents*