



UNITED NATIONS  
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS

STATISTICS DIVISION  
TRADE STATISTICS BRANCH

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**THE UNITED NATIONS STATISTICAL COMMISSION  
SIDE EVENT OF 41<sup>ST</sup> SESSION:  
INTER-AGENCY CONSULTATION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE STATISTICS**

United Nations Headquarters, New York  
Wednesday 24 February 2010, 9:00 – 10:00 am, Conference Room C, TNLB

## **Report of the meeting**

### **I. Purpose and organization**

1. The inter-agency consultation on international trade statistics was organized by UNSD as one of the side events of the 41<sup>st</sup> session of the United Nations Statistical Commission. The main purpose of the consultation was to exchange views on several issues relevant to the future of international trade statistics in connection with the implementation of *International Merchandise Trade Statistics, Concepts and Definitions, 2010* (IMTS2010) and *Manual on Statistics of International Trade in Services 2010* (MSITS2010) which were adopted by the Statistical Commission at its 41<sup>st</sup> Session. The agenda of the consultation meeting included the following items:

1. Follow up activities on conclusions of the previous meeting;
2. Implementation of IMTS2010 and MSITS2010: how can organizations help countries to cope with the new challenges?
3. Forward looking activities (research agenda, databases, knowledge base).

2. International, supranational and regional organizations as well as the United Nations Regional Commissions were invited to attend this meeting. As this was an open meeting country representatives attending the 41<sup>st</sup> session of the Statistical Commission were welcome as well. The following organizations participated in the consultation: IMF, OECD, Eurostat, UNCTAD, UNIDO, UNWTO, WTO and UNSD. The consultation was attended by a number of country delegates to the Commission as well. IMF, OECD, WCO and WTO submitted notes detailing their respective activities on trade statistics as

related to the agenda of this consultation and those notes are available on the UNSD website at: [http://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/imts/sc/2010/trade\\_10.htm](http://unstats.un.org/unsd/trade/imts/sc/2010/trade_10.htm)

3. UNSD opened the meeting by presenting the follow up activities on the conclusions of the inter-agency meeting during the 40<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission. Under the following two agenda items UNSD explained its views on how countries can be supported in the IMTS2010 implementation as well as its plans concerning the further development of UN Comtrade, the establishment of a knowledgebase on trade statistics and its proposed research agenda. In its presentation OECD pointed out its role in the implementation of IMTS2010 and MSITS2010 which consists of building on existing activities and further developing and promoting an integrated approach to trade and globalization statistics. The presentations were followed by a general discussion on a number of issues including the need to link trade and business statistics, technical assistance activities, goods for processing, and foreign affiliate trade statistics. Agencies were invited to express their views on the implementation of the new recommendations and to inform about their own forward looking activities. The conclusions of the meeting are summarized below.

## **II. Conclusions**

### **4. The meeting:**

(a) Concluded that there has been significant progress on the issues discussed in the last meeting: drafts of IMTS2010 and MSITS2010 were finalized and adopted by the Commission; implementation plans for IMTS2010 and MSITS2010 have been developed; compilation guidance is being or will be developed; some progress was made on several analytical issues such as linking trade and business statistics and the integration of goods and services in one classification; several positive database developments i.e. at WTO and UNIDO took place;

(b) Took note that many international and regional organizations plan and will conduct technical assistance activities within their possibilities; welcomed the regional approach of UNSD and suggested that experts from developed countries could be utilized to pass on their knowledge and experience, i.e. also in the form of study visits;

(c) Several organizations expressed the need and willingness to cooperate more with others on technical assistance. It was indicated that based on past experiences there can be a danger that activities are too isolated and too demand driven to make best use of the available resources;

(d) Concluded that there is a huge need for the development of a compilation guidance (including good practices) and also for technical assistance and training in the area of statistics of international trade in services to support countries in implementing MSITS2010 parallel with putting into practice BMP6;

(e) Emphasized the need for a speedy preparation of the revised *IMTS: Compilers Manual* which would provide an overview of good practices relevant for the implementation of the new and revised recommendations including such topics as goods for processing, quality assurance framework, linking trade and business statistics etc. Several participants see microdata (firm level data) as the future and ‘new frontier’ for trade statistics, although trade statisticians might overall not be well positioned to satisfy the growing user needs;

(f) Emphasized the roles of the Task Force on International Merchandise Trade Statistics (TF-IMTS) and the Task Force on Statistics of International Trade in Services (TF-SITS) as central forums for the coordination of activities and exchange of information between the agencies concerned with the international trade in goods and services.