

Task Force on International Trade Statistics, Beirut, 27-29 March 2001 Summary of the Meeting

The meeting was hosted by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UN/ESCWA) and chaired by WTO. Mr. H. Sayed, Director of ESCWA's Statistics Division, welcomed the members of the Task Force and wished them every success in their deliberations. The full list of participants is shown in Annex 1. Annex 2 lists available documents.

Agenda item 1: Adoption of the provisional agenda

The participants welcomed the new structure of the provisional agenda. Improvements were suggested, for example to number sub-headings and to allow in next year's agenda for a review of relevant issues covered at international meetings such as the Statistical Commission or the ACC Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities.

Under Other Business, it was proposed to discuss the Task Force's contribution to the Statistical Commission in 2003. EUROSTAT offered to inform participants about its newly adopted Edicom programme. It was also agreed to discuss agenda item 3 (l), (m), and (n) together as they were interrelated.

Agenda item 2: Minutes of the meeting held in Vienna, 21-23 March 2000 and review of other fora's discussions (Statistical Commission)

The minutes were accepted as circulated. It was decided to restructure this year's minutes to include a list of participants (Annex 1), the list of papers (Annex 2), a summary of agreed actions (Annex 3) and also the draft agenda for the next meeting (Annex 4).

As feedback from the Statistical Commission, it was reported that despite ongoing coordination efforts of international organizations, national statistical offices maintain that the reporting burden is still too heavy. Services rendered by national authorities to international organizations may therefore become a topic in future Commission meetings. The UNSD indicated that it would write to Member States to identify multiple reporting to various international organizations and report back to the ACC Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities.

The UNSD also reported that the Task Force's work would not be on the Statistical Commission's agenda until 2003. While the Task Force agreed to this planning, it suggested that the next Task Force report to the Commission highlight its concrete achievements and describe plans for future work.

Agenda item 3a: The Compiler's Manual for International Merchandise Trade

The UNSD reported that since the last Task Force meeting, it had incorporated a number of additional inputs into the draft manual from various national authorities and international organizations. An Expert Group meeting, organized by UNSD in December 2000, had reviewed the Manual. The UNSD is now preparing the final text to reflect the experts' amendments and expects to submit the final version for printing by the end of the first half of 2001. It will be posted at the same time to the Task Force's EDG. The published version will include, as an Annex, the International Merchandise Trade Statistics Concepts and Definitions, Rev.2. Provided the UN raises enough funds, regional workshops

will be organized to help national authorities to adopt the best practices documented in the Manual.

It was pointed out that the Manual leaves a number of issues open. It was agreed that these open issues should serve as input for next year's discussion of the Task Force's future priority work. In this context, the IMF offered to submit a working paper on its current work on indices.

The IMF presented to the Task Force the Data Quality Assessment Frameworks (DQAF) it is implementing at national level. These frameworks are currently employed for national accounts but it was pointed out that they could be used for other fields such as merchandise trade. The Task Force suggested that these frameworks could also serve to assess data quality at international level. The IMF was invited to report back on progress at the next meeting. Other organizations were invited to post their organization's reports on data quality to the EDG. It was decided to introduce the assessment of data quality as a topic on the next agenda.

Agenda item 3b: The Statistical Territories of the World for Use in International Merchandise Trade Statistics

The UNSD reported that it had updated the statistical territories database since the last Task Force meeting. The provisional publication had been posted to the EDG for comments. The final text had been submitted for publication in November 2000. It is planned to send out the publication to national authorities in due course. The UNSD also said that the printed edition would only be reissued when accumulated changes were sufficiently large to justify a reprint. In the meantime, the electronic version will remain posted on the EDG and will be updated when changes occur.

As official country names and regional differences may differ between international organizations, it was decided that in order to improve transparency, each organization should post its geo-nomenclatures to the EDG. The IMF informed the group that their country grouping in respect of trade statistics would be aligned to the UN definitions. The UNSD also agreed to the Task Force's suggestion to add customs unions to the database on Statistical Territories.

Agenda item 3c: HS revision

The WCO updated the Task Force on the latest developments with respect to the Harmonised System. On 19 December 2000, the WTO posted to the EDG the latest correlation tables between HS96 and HS2002 together with the list of editorial amendments to HS2002 (see under the EDG's category on methodological matters). Both documents are only available in text format. The UNSD agreed to post its database version of the HS96/2002 correspondences to the EDG. The WCO agreed to check and approve the database version for official use.

Agenda item 3d: Treatment of split HS codes

The UNSD explained that in converting HS96 to SITCRev.3, some codes cannot be linked through a one-to-one relationship. As a result, these codes need to be split. The methodologies to do this vary. One could assign it to the nearest SITC code (UNSD) or assign it to a higher level of SITC (EUROSTAT). EUROSTAT agreed to send its CN/SITCRev.3 correlation to UNSD for UNSD to compare with its HS/SITCRev.3

correlation and place the results on the EDG. The Task Force decided to cancel this agenda item.

Agenda item 3e: Correlations between HS/SITC/ISIC

The UNSD reported that the HS2002 revision would not be significant enough to justify a revision of the SITCRev.3. UNSD is therefore working on a draft HS2002/R3 correspondence, which it intends to post to the EDG by June 2001. A finalised version of this correspondence table would be sent to countries in September 2001.

The OECD described its work on correlation tables to convert product-based classifications into activity-based classifications. EUROSTAT indicated that product based and activity based classifications are not strictly comparable. Conversions can therefore only be of an approximate nature. It was also noted that the increasing share of confidential trade renders the process more hazardous and less accurate. The result should therefore be considered as a "product by activity" classification rather than an activity classification. Also, as certain assumptions are made as to the underlying production structures, results of the conversion are not necessarily applicable to all countries, in particular developing countries. The OECD regroups only developed countries. The OECD said it would include the forthcoming HS2002 amendments in its correlation as soon as possible.

Agenda item 3f: Use of CPC and other classifications for aggregating trade data

The UNSD had produced a CD-ROM containing trade data sets according to CPC which had been distributed to about 30 countries and 13 international organizations. The feed back received indicated that there was no strong demand for trade data according to CPC at the present time.

EUROSTAT indicated that it converts trade data to CPA, which is similar to CPC. The WTO indicated that CPC could potentially be useful in its efforts to link services trade and merchandise trade with respect to the WTO Members' schedules of commitments.

On the conversion from HS96 to BEC, UNSD reported that a provisional table had been posted to the EDG. Codes that could not be automatically assigned are being reviewed. A final version is expected to be ready at the end of 2001. It was highlighted that this HS96/BEC correlation table will not represent the UNSD "standard" as the countries' BEC may vary giving the differences in the end use of the same products in different countries.

In conclusion, the conversion of trade data into CPC was considered to be a user activity only. Therefore, the UNSD will not continue producing trade data sets according to CPC. The UNSD agreed to post its conversion tables to the EDG.

The Task Force decided to cancel this agenda item.

Agenda item 3g: Simplification of data elements in customs procedures

The WCO updated the Task Force on the "G7 Customs Data Harmonization Initiative". The initiative attempts to standardize and simplify not only customs data requirements but also the format in which data are to be reported electronically (UN/EDIFACT).

The WCO assured the Task Force that the streamlining of data elements in customs declarations would not result in a loss of statistical information. Initial feedback from the UN

and also from EUROSTAT's customs directorate seemed to confirm this. However, the Task Force members requested that core data sets of this initiative be posted to the EDG. Interested organizations could then critically assess the coverage of the data sets from their perspectives.

Agenda item 3h: Improving the estimation of aggregate exports and imports

To improve aggregate trade estimates, the UNSD reported that it had started analysing WTO data for some 12 countries. The results were forwarded to the WTO and reconciliation of the estimates for these countries was going on. Inconsistencies of the estimated data were due to different sources of data and methods of estimation, and also the different time-schedules at which these estimates were carried out throughout the course of the year. During the discussion, the FAO indicated that it also estimated aggregate trade due to the fact that developing countries often have a high share in agricultural trade. The IMF indicated it prepared estimates for its Direction of Trade publication. Although FAO, UNSD, and WTO were trying to use IMF data as a common source of reported national data there were instances where the organizations replaced IMF data with other sources or estimates; consultations with IMF on the reported data were considered essential to achieve an agreed set of reported data.

It was agreed that cooperation and eventually burden sharing between organizations in this area would be extremely useful. Interested organizations (UNSD, WTO, FAO) agreed to collaborate on developing an approach that would provide clear and coordinated procedures for harmonizing the estimates and sharing the burden, initially through the EDG. Such an approach, once institutionalized, would also help to foster contacts at the working level between the organizations.

Agenda item 3i: Estimation of the world export matrix by commodity groups and regions

The UNSD informed the Task Force of the basic differences between the WTO's and its own commodity group definitions. The WTO, UNSD and FAO then briefly described their methodologies for estimating missing trade flows. The WTO starts off at an aggregated level and uses hard data and mirror statistics of individual countries/regions to distribute trade by commodity and region. Both UNSD and FAO start from a lower hierarchical classification level and use basically extrapolation and mirror statistics to aggregate regional and world totals for commodities.

It was clear that the different commodity definitions and methodologies preclude a closer collaboration between agencies. However, reconciliation of trade flows at the aggregate level (for example for the world, and where definitions of commodity groups were identical), was recognised as being desirable. That task was given a second priority, after the reconciliation of the total trade figures amongst the organizations.

The WTO agreed to post its matrix to the EDG. The FAO promised to post its estimation methodology to the EDG.

Agenda item 3j and k: Technical information on index numbers of international trade and Price and Volume indices

The UNSD reported that work on the publication "Technical information on index numbers of international trade" had been postponed due to priority work on the Compiler's Manual and on Statistical Territories of the World. However, the UNSD plans to prepare draft country pages during the second half of 2001 and make them available on the EDG.

EUROSTAT informed the Task Force that its published indices are available from the Comext database. IMF is to develop a manual on export and import prices and will report on progress at the next Task Force meeting. The UNSD said it is estimating terms of trade indices and will make them available to the IMF. The question was raised as to what extent the Ottawa Group on Price Indices could include work on export and import prices in its future agenda. The IMF promised to investigate this matter with its representative in the Group.

Agenda item 3l, m, n: COMTRADE: Status, plans and user needs

The UNSD reported that COMTRADE's coverage had a record year with 2000, especially in respect of African countries. This success could partly be traced back to the successful implementation of Asycuda and Eurotrace customs systems and an extended contact by UNSD with the national authorities. This had also led to improvements in contacts between customs, national statistical authorities and international organizations in the respective countries. Additional arrangements with FAO, ECLAC and IDB also contributed to the improved coverage.

On the EDP strategy, UNSD reported that it aims to develop a client/server application for COMTRADE. Earliest results could be expected in about three years. The new system will also provide for an Internet access to COMTRADE. Meanwhile, UNSD reported that the UNSD and the World Bank are developing a joint Internet site for COMTRADE on the World Bank server. This Internet access will be tested as of June this year and should become operational by the end of 2001. International organizations would be contacted to assist in the test phase. The COMTRADE data would be provided free-of-charge to international organizations by UNSD, but international organizations would be asked to pay the World Bank for the access software. UNSD also mentioned that ITC is also planning to provide an Internet access to a subset of COMTRADE data but no time-schedule was as yet available.

The Task Force members commended the improvements in COMTRADE's coverage. The success of COMTRADE was also seen as a fine example of inter-agency cooperation and coordination.

As for the availability of COMTRADE through the Internet, the Task Force in principle welcomed these efforts. However, it expressed its concern that different organizations providing different functionalities, data sets, metadata, and pricing could be very confusing for users. Moreover, the World Bank's intention of introducing "hidden" costs through charging for its access software seemed to be contradictory to the agreement amongst international organizations to exchange their data freely.

Both OECD and EUROSTAT mentioned the high costs they had incurred in accessing COMTRADE through the mainframe and the possible consequences on their use of the database.

In conclusion, the Task Force asked the UNSD to contact the World Bank to communicate the Task Force's concerns regarding access to their Internet site. The UNSD volunteered to seek information from ICC as regards costs of accessing the mainframe. UNSD also agreed to look into the possibility of providing regular CD-ROM updates of its COMTRADE database to other organizations should the review of ICC charges not be positive for users. It was agreed to delete item 3 (m) from the agenda of the next meeting.

Agenda item 4a: Aggregate trade data – UNSD/IMF collaboration

The UNSD reported that it takes all nationally reported aggregate exports, imports and trade index numbers from the IMF. Contingent on revising its computer programs, it would now also be ready to take data in dollar terms. Sourcing dollar values directly from the IMF would imply a change in the methodology for calculating conversion factors from direct calculation to deriving them from the IMF national currency and dollar figures.

The UNSD also described a procedure for aligning the IMF dollar data and COMTRADE totals. The Task Force recommended that in the cases where alignment led to a revision of COMTRADE data, the revision be reflected in the metadata and the reporting country be notified.

During the discussion, UNSD, FAO and WTO all indicated that they cross check IMF figures with national data. It was agreed to inform the IMF of significant discrepancies through the EDG. The WTO agreed to inform the Fund of the countries for which published IMF figures are not taken, also through the EDG.

Agenda item 4b: The EU in international trade statistics

EUROSTAT informed the Task Force that harmonized EU15 data were available on-line through its Comext database. It had also provided monthly total trade data and annual detailed trade data on an ad hoc basis to international organizations. EUROSTAT proposed to provide the harmonized data to all agencies on a regular basis and according to agreed time-schedules.

The UNSD indicated that it was prepared to store and update harmonized EU15 data in COMTRADE format and to make it available to users through a specific option on the interface.

The Task Force agreed on a time-frame starting with 1995 data and a time-schedule of May and September.

During the discussion, it became apparent that users would be interested in retrieving both extra-trade and intra-trade data. One of the reasons given was that in the absence of official intra-trade figures, users could derive incorrect intra-trade data implicitly from the individual country data available in COMTRADE. UNSD therefore agreed to also store EU's intra-trade figures along with the EU15 data as mentioned above. The OECD has added detailed monthly figures from Eurostat as well (dual track strategy).

The WTO indicated it had not yet fully assessed the implications of replacing national EU15 data with harmonized EU15 data. However, it would follow-up with EUROSTAT and post its evaluation to the EDG for information.

Both IMF and FAO reported that they take EUROSTAT data also for individual EU member states. WTO and OECD continue, for the time being, to use the nationally reported data for individual EU member states.

Agenda item 4c: Exchange of detailed trade data between OECD and UNSD

Both organizations reported that they had received positive feedback from national authorities on their data sharing arrangement. It was therefore planned to progressively extend this arrangement to all OECD member countries during 2001. The Task Force welcomed this highly successful inter-agency collaboration as a good example of reducing national response burden burdens.

Agenda item 4d: Internet site with aggregate exports and imports by country

The WTO presented the joint WTO/ITC report on this subject. The objective of developing and disseminating a common data set would be to provide trade analysts with a unique, consistent aggregate trade data while using scarce resources more effectively through sharing the labour between the organizations. This would also help to enhance all organizations' credibility. Once the data set had been developed, it could eventually be disseminated via an Internet site.

The Task Force members welcomed the idea of a common data set on aggregate exports and imports and on a division of labour between agencies to maintain it. However, a number of issues would need to be clarified with respect to burden sharing. On dissemination, the IMF and EUROSTAT mentioned that copyright issues would need to be clarified.

Recognising that both the common data set and Internet dissemination would be difficult to implement, UNSD proposed an alternative, more simplified approach. This would entail producing a web-site presenting metadata and release dates of the various data sets of agencies throughout the year. However, it was agreed that this approach would not lead to convergence of aggregate country data and the user would still face the difficult task to choose between at times quite different data sets.

WTO volunteered to develop prototype procedures for the creation and maintenance of a common data set. In that context, WTO will be asking other organizations for their input through the EDG. OECD agreed to investigate the experiences of the joint OECD-WB-BIS-IMF web-site on external debt that it maintains on its web-site.

Agenda item 4e: Electronic Discussion Group (EDG) – International Trade Statistics

The Task Force members recognised the usefulness of the EDG forum as a working tool. Some improvements were suggested. For example, the main page should include an e-mail address for technical help and categories on the EDG should become more action-oriented (see Annex 3 for additional categories to be included). The EDG moderators agreed to introduce the changes accordingly.

In order not to overload the EDG and to maintain its effectiveness as a working tool for the Task Force, it was decided not to give access to national authorities.

Agenda item 5a: Status of the globalization projects

Both OECD and EUROSTAT reported on their ongoing activities as regards globalization. EUROSTAT has created a task force that attempts to link trade records to business registers and survey enterprises to estimate the share of external trade flows that can be traced back to intra-firm trade. OECD reported on the development of a Handbook on Globalization. The Task Force members felt that the Handbook may benefit from an endorsement of the Statistical Commission and recommended that the OECD investigate this issue further.

Agenda item 5b: Treatment of e-commerce in international trade statistics

EUROSTAT reported on their e-commerce questionnaire run by the Business Statistics Directorate. OECD also reported on its activities within Structural Business Statistics. WTO reported on the latest discussions of e-commerce within its sectoral councils on goods, services and intellectual property rights.

The discussion within the Task Force was a reflection of the general lack of a harmonized approach to this issue at the international level. There was divergence as to what extent e-commerce was pertinent to merchandise trade statistics. Goods ordered on-line but declared at customs for cross-border passing did not apparently pose any problem. For the significant increase in small parcel shipments through on-line ordering, customs authorities had already reacted through increased scrutiny. On the other hand, opinions diverged on whether "digitised" products (electronic books or software) were classified as goods or services.

The Task Force felt that the impact of e-commerce on merchandise trade needed more careful study. It was agreed that, with a view to documenting what has been done in the area for possible inclusion in the Compilers' manual, agencies would report on their respective e-commerce activities to the EDG. This would also allow the Task Force to clarify a future action plan.

Agenda item 5c: Alternative trade data sources

The UNSD indicated that alternative trade sources had been covered to an extent in both the Compiler's Manual and the Concepts and Definitions. However, for technical assistance activities, the Task Force agreed that a more comprehensive review of countries' experiences on data capture in areas where trade occurs outside the customs regime would be useful. The unobserved economy, smuggling, shuttle and barter trade were cited as examples. A compilation of country practices could be disseminated in a Handbook to supplement the Compiler's Manual.

The UNSD volunteered to act as the Task Force's focal point for this subject and agreed to accumulate the information. Other participants could contribute through the EDG.

Agenda item 5d: Interaction between BOP, SNA and external trade

EUROSTAT reported on its activities with respect to calculating cif/fob factors. The IMF indicated that it had stopped publishing cif/fob factors some time ago because of methodological problems. France's experiences in sampling information on cif/fob estimates appeared to be the best example for improving the methodology for estimating cif/fob factors.

Agenda item 6: Technical assistance

The UNSD, WTO and EUROSTAT updated the Task Force on their respective technical assistance programmes. The WTO asked participants whether, as a way of sensitising data compilers on the importance of tariff related information to the WTO, it could participate in appropriate technical assistance activities. Both EUROSTAT and UNSD agreed in principle provided, of course, that WTO participation would be at its own cost.

It was also mentioned that implementation of customs systems such as EUROSTAT's Eurotrace or UNCTAD's Asycuda would be beneficial for the coverage of COMTRADE. In this context, the UNSD agreed to send a list of non-reporters to EUROSTAT.

Agenda item 7: Other business

Time and place of next meeting

On the invitation of FAO, the next meeting will take place in Rome from 16-19 April 2002, subject to confirmation by FAO.

OECD trade statistics meetings

OECD reported on its international second trade statistics meeting that was held in November 2000. As the meeting was highly appreciated by national authorities, it had been decided to hold another meeting at the end of 2001. The meeting would be held back-to-back with the meeting of experts on trade in services (The trade meeting ITS 2001 will take place 5-7 December 2001, followed by the trade in services meeting on 10-11 December). Possible topics for discussion mentioned were estimation of trade below thresholds, e-commerce, and mode of transport or transit trade.

EUROSTAT work programme

EUROSTAT briefed the Task Force on its recently approved Edicom programme. Edicom aims at improving and harmonizing methods for producing more reliable and less costly statistics and taking full advantage of the latest technical advances in the statistical production process.

Future work programme

The forthcoming Compiler's Manual contains a number of unfinished methodological tasks. It was agreed the Task Force would seek the Commission's endorsement of these tasks as part of its future work programme. It was also felt that in some areas, collaboration with other groups would be appropriate, for example in the area of e-commerce.

Annex 1: List of participants

Mr. Richard Roberts	UNSD	roberts@un.org
Mr. Marco Lancetti	EUROSTAT	marco.lancetti@cec.eu.int
Mr. Henri Tyrman	EUROSTAT	henri.tyrman@cec.eu.int
Mr. Andreas Lindner	OECD	andreas.lindner@oecd.org
Mr. Sebahattin Kocas	WCO	sebahattin.kocas@wcoomd.org
Mr. Adriaan Bloem	IMF	ABloem@IMF.org
Mr. Salar Tayyib	FAO	Salar.Tayyib@fao.org
Mr. Mohamed Al-Badrawy	ESCWA	mbadrawy@escwa.org.lb
Ms. Roslyn Jackson	WTO	roslyn.jackson@wto.org
Mr. Andreas Maurer	WTO	andreas.maurer@wto.org

Annex 2: List of submitted papers

Item 3a	International Merchandise Trade Statistics: Compilers Manual – a progress report by UNSD
Item 3b	Statistical Territories of the World for Use in International Merchandise Trade Statistics: A progress report by UNSD
Item 3c	HS revision, update by WCO
Item 3e	The correlation table between the HS02 and SITC, Rev.3, report by UNSD
Item 3e	Converting from a product-based classification (HS) to an activity-based classification (ISIC, Rev.3), report by OECD
Item 3f	Use of CPC and other classifications for aggregating trade data, note by UNSD
Item 3f	The provisional correlation table between the HS96, HS02 and BEC, report by UNSD
Item 3g	Simplification of data elements in customs procedures, update by WCO
Item 3h,i	Trade data estimates by UNSD, report by UNSD
Item 3h	Improving the estimation of aggregate exports and imports, report by UNSD
Item 3i	Estimation of the world export matrix by commodity groups and by regions, report by UNSD
Item 3i	World export matrix: comparing UNSD and WTO commodity groups, note by WTO
Item 3j	Technical information on index numbers of International Trade: a progress report by UNSD
Item 3k	Price and Volume indices, update by EUROSTAT

Item 3l, m, n	COMTRADE: status, plans, user needs (UNSD)
Item 4a	Comparison of annual totals in COMTRADE and International Monetary Fund's International Trade Statistics, report by UNSD
Item 4b	External trade data supplied by EUROSTAT to international organizations (EUROSTAT)
Item 4b	Reconciliation of intra – EU foreign trade statistics (EUROSTAT)
Item 4b	The EU in International Trade Statistics (UNSD)
Item 4d	Internet site with aggregate exports and imports by country, note by ITC/WTO
Item 5a	Trade aspects of globalization, note by OECD
Item 5a	Status of globalization projects, update by EUROSTAT
Item 5b	E-commerce at WTO (WTO)
Item 5b	Information on EUROSTAT activity on e-commerce, (EUROSTAT)
Item 5d	Interaction between BOP and External Trade in EU Member States (EUROSTAT)
Item 6	Technical Cooperation Assistance (WTO)
Item 6	Technical Assistance, note by UNSD
Item 6	Technical Assistance in the field of external trade statistics (EUROSTAT)
Item 7b	2 nd International Trade Statistics, Meeting at OECD, Final Minutes, report by OECD
Item 7b	The Edicom programme – State of play (EUROSTAT)

Annex 3: Summary of action items

Action	When	Who
1) To post final version of Compiler's Guide to the EDG	June 2001	UNSD
2) Post paper on current work on trade indices to EDG	ASAP	IMF
3) Report on progress on implementation of DQAF	no later than end of 2001	IMF
4) To create a category on data quality on the EDG and to post the agencies' reports	ASAP	All
5) To create a category on the EDG for geo-nomenclatures and post the organizations nomenclatures	ASAP	All
6) To add customs unions to the electronic version of the "Statistical Territories"	ASAP	UNSD
7) To post database version of HS96/2002 correspondence table to the EDG for approval by the WCO	ASAP	UNSD WCO
8) To post results of comparisons of CN/HS/SITCRev.3 correlations to EDG	ASAP	UNSD
9) Post draft HS2002/R3 correspondence table to EDG	June 2001	UNSD
10) To post HS/CPC correspondence to EDG	ASAP	UNSD
11) To post proposed amendments of the G7 Customs Data Harmonization Initiative to the EDG	ASAP	WCO
12) To discuss through EDG procedures to harmonize aggregate estimates and share the workload	July 2001	WTO/ UNSD/ FAO/ IMF
13) To post WTO matrix to EDG	ASAP	WTO
14) To post estimation methodology on EDG	ASAP	FAO

Action	When	Who
15) To investigate to which extent Ottawa Group on Price indices can take on board work on export and import prices	ASAP	IMF
16) To post draft country pages for the forthcoming publication on Technical Index Numbers to the EDG	second half of 2001	UNSD
17) To analyse EUROSTAT's detailed trade data for its usage in compiling WTO world trade matrices and post results to the EDG	June 2001	WTO
18) To inform Task Force on costs of accessing ICC services in respect of COMTRADE	ASAP	UNSD
19) To look into possibility of providing international organizations with regular updates of COMTRADE on CD-ROM	ASAP	UNSD
20) To inform the World Bank of the Task Force's concerns in respect of Internet software costs	ASAP	WTO/ UNSD
21) To post findings on IMF aggregate data to the EDG	cont'd.	All
22) To post list of countries where aggregate totals are not sourced from IMF	ASAP	WTO
23) To develop prototype procedures and presentations for a common data set to be presented at the next Task Force	no later than end of 2001	WTO/ ITC
24) To investigate technical aspects of the joint OECD-WB-BIS-IMF web-site on OECD's server	no later than end of 2001	OECD
25) To create an e-commerce category on the EDG and post each organizations' ongoing work	ASAP	All
26) Post country experiences on use of alternative trade information sources, and other country experiences (UNSD focal point)	no later than end of 2001	All

Annex 4: Draft agenda

TASK FORCE ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE STATISTICS

Rome, 16-19 April 2002

- 1. Adoption of the provisional agenda**
- 2. Minutes of the meeting held in Beirut, 27-29 March 2001 and review of summary of action items**
- 3. Review of decisions of other international bodies with regard to merchandise trade**
- 4. Data collection and dissemination**

4.1 Concepts and Definitions

- (a)* future work resulting from the Compilers' Manual for International Merchandise Trade (*update by UNSD*)
- (b) the Statistical Territories of the World for Use in International Merchandise Trade Statistics (*update by UNSD*)

4.2 Classifications

- (d) HS revision (*update by WCO*)
- (e) correlations between HS/SITC/ISIC (*updates by OECD and UNSD*)
- (f) Simplification of data elements in Customs procedures (*update by WCO*)

4.3 Methodology

- (g) improving the estimation of aggregate exports and imports (*update by UNSD*)
- (h) estimation of the world export matrix by commodity groups and regions (*update by UNSD/WTO/FAO*)
- (i) price and volume indices of international trade (*update by UNSD*)

4.4 Databases on international trade (update by UNSD)

- (j) COMTRADE: Status, plans and technical issues

- 5. Exchange of data and information amongst international organizations**

5.1. Data exchange

- (a) aggregate trade data (*update by UNSD and IMF*)
- (b) the EU in international trade statistics (*update by EUROSTAT*)
- (c) exchange of detailed trade data between OECD and UNSD (*joint update*)

5.2. Information exchange

- (d) Internet site with aggregate exports and imports by country (*update by ITC/WTO*)
- (e) Data Quality Assessment Frameworks (*update by IMF*)

6. Globalization

- (a) status of the globalization projects (*update by EUROSTAT and OECD*)
- (b)* treatment of e-commerce in international trade statistics (*exchange of views and information*)
- (c)* alternative trade data sources (*update by UNSD*)
- (d) interaction between BOP, SNA and external trade (*update by EUROSTAT*)

7. Technical assistance (*updates by various international organizations*)

8. Other business

- (a) time and place of next meeting

Note: * follow-up on decisions by the Statistical Commission