

Terms of Reference

Task Team on International Trade Statistics (TT-ITS)

Last updated: 08.11.2021

Mandate

1. In its 52nd session, the United Nations Statistical Commission welcomed the creation of a Trade Task Team (TT-ITS) under the auspices of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Business and Trade Statistics (UNCEBTS). The aim of the Task Team is to provide strategic vision, direction and coordination for the methodological development and implementation of the recommendations on international trade statistics in national, regional and international statistical systems; revise and update the recommendations on the compilation of international trade statistics and other methodological documents on international trade statistics; promote the development of databases on international trade statistics; promote the implementation of the recommendations on the compilations of international trade statistics, including e-learning training programmes on international trade statistics; and promote the use of international trade statistics in policy formulation.
2. The TT-ITS will coordinate the integration of their work programmes and working methods with the Inter-Agency Task Force on International Trade Statistics (IATF-ITS) to avoid duplication of work and advance the collaboration between countries and agencies.
3. The TT will pursue the vertical integration of international trade statistics to deal with the upstream harmonization of international trade statistics with macroeconomic statistical frameworks such as the the System of National Accounts (SNA) and the Balance of Payment (BPM), and the downstream integration with the various data sources, including customs, administrative and survey data.
4. The TT will take advantage of the complementary knowledge and experience in sources, methods, and compilation practices on the upstream harmonization of national and international agencies and ensure that these practices meet current user requirements for integrated and consistent statistics that are coherent with the BPM and SNA.
5. The TT will pursue horizontal integration that requires collaboration between the various Task Teams of UNCEBTS as well as other expert groups like the Wiesbaden Group and the Voorburg Group. The horizontal integration will benefit from the experience in UNCEBTS and its enterprise-centric approach, using SBR as the central coordinating tool for compilation purposes.
6. To enhance capacity building in the area of integrated trade and business statistics, the Task Team will provide strategic leadership and play an important advisory role in the development and implementation of capacity building and technical assistance activities in trade statistics. It will also provide strategic leadership and promote global trade data programmes. It will undertake the following activities:

- (i) Promote capacity building programmes for countries, development of data tools and data collaboration in International Trade Statistics.
- (ii) Proactively promote technical assistance programmes for countries in order to better strengthen their capacity of data compilation.
- (iii) Promote and support improving the availability, quality, and comparability of integrated international trade statistics.
- (iv) Promote the development of national statistical systems that enable the production and dissemination of trade data of high granularity and frequency based on IMTS, SITS, TEC, STEC, and trade-related business indicators.
- (v) Promote joint international data collections, exchanges and dissemination to reduce countries' response burden, improve data consistency and user confidence.
- (vi) Develop and promote the use of a maturity model for SITS and possibly for IMTS that can be used to measure the capacity development of countries in the area of trade statistics compilation.
- (vii) Promote coordination, collaboration and integration of work programmes capacity building and technical assistance activities among different groups and international agencies.
- (viii) Recommend emerging topics that need special focus in capacity building and technical assistance by international organizations and countries.
- (ix) Promote and endorse e-learning training programmes on international trade statistics; particularly the linkage among trade statistics, business statistics and sustainable development.
- (x) Promote and endorse software and data tools that are specifically developed by the international community for international trade data processing and dissemination.

7. As global trade data programmes and the maintenance of data tools are ongoing efforts of the TT it is expected that specific and broad deliverables in this respect will include:

- (i) Enhancing the comparability of trade data in international databases for IMTS, SITS, TEC, STEC, and trade-related business indicators (requiring monitoring, evaluation, and periodical feedback)
- (ii) Establishing a sustainable governance structure for vital trade data tools (by 2022)
- (iii) Established funding mechanisms to support the maintenance of trade data tools (by 2023)

Composition of the TT-ITS

8. The composition of the TT reflects the global community representing both trade in goods and trade in services experts of countries from all regions in the world as well as representatives from international organizations.

9. The UNCEBTS Bureau invites and subsequently endorses nominations of two members to serve as co-leads of the Task Team. The period for which co-leads would be invited to serve on the TT would depend on the particular issues that the TT need to consider, but would be at least for 3 years.

Organization of work

10. One of the co-leads will focus on the vertical integration while the other will focus on the horizontal integration.
11. The TT-ITS will use e-mail and monthly conference calls for communication. Physical meetings are considered as an option towards the end of each year if issues require additional review and discussions.
12. The TT-ITS will collaborate with the UNCEBTS TT on Capacity Building to jointly develop mechanisms and modalities for the organization of work on capacity building and technical assistance activities taking into account the existing initiative and programme.
13. Furthermore, other mechanisms for promoting, advancing, and coordinating activities on global trade data programmes, including on data tools will be developed in consultation with all relevant groups, the UNCEBTS and international agencies.

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Update of the International Trade Statistics manuals

Mandate

14. At its 52nd session the Statistical Commission endorsed the revision of the International Merchandise Trade Statistics: Concepts and Definitions 2010 (IMTS 2010) and the Manual on Statistics of International Trade in Services 2010 (MSITS 2010), to ensure consistency with the update of other statistical standards, such as the System of National Accounts (SNA) and the Balance of Payments and International Investment Position Manual (BPM6). In addition, the Commission recommended that the Committee take this work forward with the representation and active participation of countries from different regions and international agencies.

15. Ms. Cristina Neves of INE Portugal and Mr. Houssein Ouljour of Office des Changes Morocco were selected as co-leads of the TT to lead the work on the update of the the International Trade Statistics manuals

Scope of work

16. The Task Team on International Trade Statistics will be responsible for the revision of IMTS manual and MSITS. It will also contribute to the development and implementation of data programmes and capacity building activities.

17. For the for the revision of IMTS manual and MSITS, the Task Team will undertake the following activities:

- (i) Analyze the issues regarding vertical and horizontal integration, including the integration of IMTS, SITS and collaboration among respective communities and other task teams working on trade-related topics.
- (ii) Identify research topics, issues, and their prioritization for the revision of IMTS manual and MSITS.
- (iii) Determine the timelines for the update of trade manuals taking into account the overlap of research with the updating of the SNA and BPM and the interest of countries and agencies to contribute to the additional research issues for the update of the international trade manuals.
- (iv) Identify sub teams for each research topic and draft Guidance Notes. GNs need to be in Manual style format.
- (v) Coordinate with other task teams on trade-related topics, including on the research agenda, outreach, experimentation and testing program and on-going capacity building activities on international trade.
- (vi) Engage and liaise with relevant working bodies and programmes including Inter-Agency Task Force on ITS, Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development, UNWTO Committee on Statistics and TSA, City Groups to advance further the work of the task team in methodology and revision of the manuals.

Timelines and deliverables

18. The Task Team will be responsible for the update of IMTS Concepts and Definitions, and Manual on Statistics of Trade in Services..

19. For this purpose the TT will facilitate the development of Guidance Notes (GN) on identified and prioritized topics. Sub-task teams will be assigned to develop GNs on specific topics. In addition to experts from the Trade TT; other experts, including from other UNCBETS task teams; interested country experts; and other relevant expert groups such as IATF-ITS may contribute to the drafting of specific GNs.

20. Considering the timelines for the updates of the SNA, BPM and related statistical standards, the timing of the update of the IMTS manual and MSITS should be expected as follows:

- (i) Development of Guidance Notes, country consultation on research topics, and testing taking in to account the progress made by the update of BPM and SNA: 2021-2022
- (ii) Drafting IMTS 2025 and MSITS 2025 including country consultation on the new text: 2023-2024
- (iii) Adoption of IMTS 2025 and MSITS 2025 by United Nations Statistical Commission: 2025
- (iv) Undertake capacity building activities including the development of the compilation guides for IMTS 2025 and MSITS 2025: 2026-onwards

21. Regarding capacity building activities, deliverables of the Task Team will include a maturity model and enhanced capacities for countries to produce and disseminate trade data of high granularity and frequency based on IMTS, SITS, TEC, STEC, and trade-related business indicators.

22. During the revision process of the manuals, it expected that capacity building activities would facilitate the experimentation of the recommendations of the GN by countries.

Annex: list of countries, institutions and organizations that have **confirmed**, expressed interest or are being invited to participate in the Task Team

| Country¹ | Organization |
|----------------------------|--|
| Canada | Statistics Canada |
| China | National Bureau of Statistics of China |
| Costa Rica | Central Bank of Costa Rica |
| Finland | Statistics Finland |
| Germany | Deutsche Bundesbank |
| Indonesia | Indonesia PBS |
| Israel | Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) |
| Italy | Bank of Italy |
| Jamaica | Bank of Jamaica |
| Mexico | INEGI |
| Morocco | Office des Changes |
| Nigeria | National Bureau of Statistics |
| Portugal | Statistics Portugal |
| South Africa | South Africa Revenue Service (SARS) |
| State of Palestine | Central Bureau is Statistics |
| Turkey | Turkish Statistical Institute |
| UK | UK Statistics Authority |
| United States | Bureau of Economic Analysis |
| United States | U.S. Census Bureau |

| International Organization |
|-----------------------------------|
| ASEANStats |
| AU |
| CARICOM |
| EU |
| FAO |
| GCC Stat |
| IMF |
| ITC |
| OECD |
| UNCTAD |
| UNESCO |
| UNIDO |
| UNSD |

¹ Only countries who have officially confirmed (except Morocco).