



UNITED NATIONS
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
STATISTICS DIVISION

**Joint UNSD/ ECLAC Workshop on Statistics of International Trade in Services/
13 – 16 September 2005, Panama City**

**CEPAL/UNSD Taller sobre Estadísticas del Comercio Internacional de Servicios
Panamá, 13 – 16 Septiembre 2005**

Opening Statement

Goodmorning and Welcome to the Workshop on Compilation of Statistics of International Trade in Services which is jointly organized by the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNECLAC).

First a word of thanks

Thank you all for coming to Panama City to participate in this workshop. I know that it is sometimes not easy to travel and I am very glad to see everyone here this morning. Thank you also for the presentations which you have prepared and sent to us. I am looking forward to see and hear all your presentations here this week.

I would like to thank in particular the Contraloria General de la Republica de Panama, especially Mr. Kuzniecky and Mr. Quiel, for their essential help in making this workshop a reality. They have already shown to be an excellent host by offering transportation, by making the workshop facilities available (including all copies of documents), by offering its guests coffee and tea and by organizing an excursion tomorrow afternoon.

My thanks go further to Sherry Stephenson of the Organization of American States and to Juan Falconi representing the World Tourism Organization for supporting this workshop and for making valuable presentations today and tomorrow. I appreciate also the participation of Mr. Antelo of the ALADI secretariat and Ms. Medina of the Andean secretariat. Support and cooperation with Regional offices is very important for capacity building in the individual countries.

Finally, I wish to express my thanks to my colleagues of the United Nations, namely Salvador Marconi and Claudia De Camino of UNECLAC and especially Matthias Reister who has communicated with each and everyone of you and has put in many hours to make this workshop a success.

International Trade in Services

Most people around the world are employed in the Services sector - like ourselves, we deliver services. Many of these services are delivered between residents of different countries which we then call international trade in services. In other words, there is no doubt about the economic importance of International Trade in Services. However, there are many problems with the concepts and the measurement of these statistics. This is a field of statistics that is still very much in development.

The Manual on Statistics of International Trade in Services was created to give international guidelines and was published as recently as 2002. Parts of the Manual have deliberately been left unfinished, because discussions are still ongoing on what to measure and how to measure it, especially in the area of the movement of natural persons and implications with worker's remittances.

Nevertheless, there is a great demand for SITS and policy makers want to see data. While some conceptual discussions are still ongoing, the United Nations Statistics Division has been given the task to start work on creating a world wide database on SITS. Therefore, we need to shift the focus now on the compilation of the trade in services statistics.

Purpose of the workshop

That is why we are here together this week. The main question is: how can we measure and compile International Trade in Services statistics? We want to identify difficulties, we want to identify practices and solutions that deal with those difficulties and – where possible – we want to make recommendations for a more effective compilation of international trade in services statistics.

I hope that we will have a fruitful week together with lots of discussion and I want to end my opening statement at the point where I began and thank the Contraloria General de la Republica de Panama for hosting this event.