



UNITED NATIONS
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
STATISTICS DIVISION

Regional Seminar on International Trade Statistics for Arab countries
12-14 June 2012, Amman, Jordan

Opening Statement

Paul Cheung
Director
United Nations Statistics Division

Dear Mr. Al-Nsour,
Dear Colleagues,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to this Regional Seminar on International Trade Statistics for Arab countries. This seminar is organized as a true collaborative effort of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, the Arab Institute for Research and Training in Statistics and my office, the United Nations Statistics Division. I also recognize the support of the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to the Kingdom of Jordan and especially to the Department of Statistics of Jordan to host this event and to support in this way the global statistical system.

The Middle East region is mostly known for its exports of oil and gas. However, Dubai has established itself as a trading hub of global significance, and Doha is famous for the summit trade negotiations. Travel and Transport are still the largest categories of international trade in services, and the Mediterranean countries have their fair share of this trade.

What has become increasingly evident in the global economy is the fact that the production processes of goods and services have become global processes involving many countries. These global production networks are linked together via the trade of (intermediate) goods and services. For instance, Dubai has become an important trading hub between Europe and Asia offering advanced trading services. Also Jordan has established a place in the manufacturing of clothing and textiles, some of which may be done as a manufacturing service to companies in other countries. Business practices increasingly go beyond national borders. Multi-national enterprises acquire or create establishments in other countries. Companies choose to outsource core or support functions of their business to other countries to increase their overall competitiveness.

In the course of the 3 days of this seminar, the measurement of international trade in a globalized world will be the main topic of discussion starting with the recently revised recommendations for international merchandise trade statistics and the statistics of international trade in services. We will discuss the implementation of these

recommendations and pay attention to the topics of FATS, FDI and multi-national enterprises. A lot of political attention was drawn by the topics of outsourcing of business functions and measuring trade in value-added. Both topics will be briefly introduced during this seminar as well.

Special attention will be given to strengthening institutional arrangements in your countries to ensure that proper national coordination mechanisms exist for the compilation of high quality international trade statistics. In a number of countries, even with well-established trade statistics, there are still concerns regarding the quality and international comparability of data.

While countries are starting to adjust their systems to comply with the new international recommendations for merchandise trade, international trade in services and balance of payments, it is timely to give direction and emphasis of the data compilation issues for these statistics. The seminar will also highlight the linking of trade and other economic statistics in an effort to improve the quality and maintain the relevance of international trade statistics.

The main goals of this workshop are thus to explain the new and updated recommendations, to discuss the implementation plans of countries and for countries to share their experiences in the compilation of international trade statistics both for trade in goods and for trade in services.

In conclusion, I would like again to thank our host, the Department of Statistics of Jordan, and thank the co-organizers, for their very valuable efforts to make this event a success, and I wish you fruitful deliberations and like to express my appreciation for your professional contribution to this important meeting.

Thank you.