

Preface

The present publication, International Merchandise Trade Statistics: Compilers Manual, Revision 1 (IMTS 2010-CM), has been prepared in accordance with a decision taken by the Statistical Commission at its forty-first session, held in New York from 23 to 26 February 2010.^[1] In that decision, the Commission adopted International Merchandise Trade Statistics: Concepts and Definitions 2010 (IMTS 2010)^[2] and endorsed the proposed implementation programme, including the preparation of the revised IMTS Compilers Manual (IMTS 2010-CM).

The provisional draft of IMTS 2010-CM was prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division, in cooperation with members of the Expert Group on International Merchandise Trade Statistics and the inter-agency Task Force on International Merchandise Trade Statistics. It incorporates inputs from national statistical offices, customs administrations and other governmental agencies of various countries, as well as from international, supranational and regional organizations, received during a worldwide consultation, three virtual meetings of the Expert Group and a specially organized meeting on compilation issues of IMTS 2010, held from 6 to 9 December 2011. The draft was reviewed and endorsed by the Expert Group at its fourth virtual meeting on the update of the Manual, held from 20 December 2011 to 19 January 2012.

At its forty-third session, held in New York from 28 February to 2 March 2012, the Statistical Commission took note of the report of the Secretary-General on international merchandise trade statistics (E/CN.3/2012/22) which introduced IMTS 2010-CM, and, thereby endorsed IMTS 2010-CM for use.^[3] The draft text of IMTS 2010-CM was itself provided to the Commission as a background document for information.

IMTS 2010-CM is the cornerstone of the United Nations Statistics Division action plan for the implementation of IMTS 2010. The Manual contains further and more detailed explanation of certain recommendations and provides practical guidance for compilers by describing good or best practices applicable under different circumstances. The Manual promotes the adherence to good practices and recommends specific solutions to compilation issues related to international merchandise trade statistics. To assist in the identification of such practices, the Manual uses wording such as "it is good practice", "countries are advised to" or "countries could". The Manual is consistent with IMTS 2010, which is the internationally agreed standard for international merchandise trade statistics, and does not introduce any new recommendation or encouragement in addition to those contained in IMTS 2010.

The structure of IMTS 2010-CM is largely similar to that of the original Compilers Manual of 2004,^[4] and the updates respond to the need to (a) incorporate guidance on the implementation of new recommendations and encouragements contained in IMTS 2010 and (b) reflect any new or updated country practices. The structure of IMTS 2010- CM follows the logic of the data compilation process.

Great efforts have been undertaken to reflect current practices and information. However, since country practices change over time, the information provided in this Manual is a reflection of the information available to the authors at the time of drafting.

[1] See Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2010, Supplement No. 4 (E/2010/24), chap. I, sect. B, decision 41/103.

[2] United Nations publication, Sales No. E.10.XVII.13.

[3] See Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2012, Supplement No.4 (E/2012/24), chap. I, sect. B, decision 43/117.

[4] United Nations publication, Sales No. E.02.XVII.17.