Workshop
Compilation of International Merchandise Trade Statistics

Organized by the United Nations Statistics Division, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the Economic Commission for Africa
Addis Ababa, 8 - 11 November 2004

Purpose of Workshop

Identify difficulties and find solutions for a timely and high quality compilation of international merchandise trade statistics while using mostly automated customs systems. Clarify the roles of the Customs office and the National Statistical Office to achieve this goal.

Outcome

Six main issues were identified during the workshop meeting, namely (1) ASYCUDA as a system for processing declarations by Customs, (2) EUROTRACE as a tool for producing trade statistics by the NSO, (3) the possible lack of COMPLETENESS of the data, (4) the importance of the QUALITY (including TIMELINESS) of the data, (5) the recommendation by the United Nations for the GENERAL TRADE SYSTEM and the consequences for registration of the different Customs Procedures and, finally, (6) the difficulties faced in the REPORTING of the trade data.

These issues were discussed because of their importance for the trade statistics and because the respective roles of Customs and NSO are not always clearly defined. Some of the recommendations which were made are (i) to switch as soon as possible the full automated customs system to ASYCUDA ++ and (ii) to implement the latest version of EUROTRACE so that processing and reporting of trade statistics becomes easier. No final conclusions were reached other than that at the national level the two administrations should follow through each of these issues and adjust where necessary.