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AMF - WTO Follow-up Regional Workshop on the Compilation of Trade in Services Statistics, in cooperation with UNSD and UN ESCWA

Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

20 - 23 November 2017

Final Report

I. Background

The Follow-up Regional Workshop on the Compilation of Trade in Services Statistics was organized by the Economic Policy Institute of the Arab Monetary Fund (AMF) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) in collaboration with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA), the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) during 20-23 November 2017.

Trade in services is a key driver of economic growth and employment. Trade in services negotiators and policy makers in the Arab region need relevant data for negotiating strategies and taking knowledge-based decisions.

Prior to the workshop, selected participants were invited to enroll in the five-week UNCTAD-UNSD-WTO e-learning course on Trade in Services Statistics focusing on concepts and definitions of the MSITS 2010. The online course, maintained by UNCTAD was run in co-operation with the WTO. This integrated approach, combining online learning and face-to-face delivery, maximizes pedagogical quality.

The aim of the follow-up workshop was twofold. First, to take stock of progress in areas recommended by participants in the first workshop held in January 2015, in particular in Balance of Payments services statistics, Foreign Affiliates Statistics (FATS), and Foreign Direct Investment statistics (FDI).

The second objective was to focus on best data collection and compilation practices in services sector of trade interest to the region as identified through a pre-course questionnaire sent to selected participants. The workshop's agenda was crafted according to participants' specific needs with a view to establish a roadmap for further improvements of their statistics according to the Manual on Statistics of International Trade in Services (MSITS 2010) and its Compiler's Guide.

For trade in services statistics derived from the Balance of Payments, the selected sectors were (i) transport, (ii) travel and tourism, (iii and iv) manufacturing services on inputs owned by others and maintenance and repair services, (v) computer services and (vi) construction. The latter opened the way to discuss FATS and the related FDI framework.

The workshop was attended by 37 participants from government entities in 16 Arab countries largely from central banks, as well as national statistical offices, and ministries of trade/economy. The workshop saw a high level of interactivity, with participants sharing experiences on their data collection practices and discussing specific data needs and challenges faced.

Finally, the workshop was considered a step forward and for many a springboard for enhancing their

efforts on compiling comprehensive sectoral trade in services and start the development of FATS.

II. Opening

The Director of the Economic Planning Institute in the Arab Monetary Fund opened the meeting and welcomed the participants. He praised the long cooperation with WTO on trade policies and capacity building.

The WTO and UNESCWA thanked the AMF, as well as UNSD, UNCTAD and the experts Mr. William Cave and Mr. Malik Ban Hani for their readiness to participate in the event. They emphasized the importance of trade in services statistics for economies in the Arab region and the challenges for national statistical offices and central banks to provide policy makers and trade negotiators with the necessary data.

III. Workshop Findings

Following the opening ceremony, participants were updated on the region's availability of trade in services statistics. This highlighted the lack of statistics at the detailed service sector level as well as of FATS. Participants reviewed the recommendations of the first workshop to assess progress made, had a feedback session on the e-learning course and a presentation on modernization and integration of data sources. An interactive quiz recap session tested the knowledge acquired through the e-learning course.

The second and third day were devoted to the specific sector needs as expressed by the participants in the pre-questionnaires. Concepts and definitions were explained in depth as well as possible data sources. Each sector – transport, travel, manufacturing services on inputs owned by others, maintenance and repair services, computer services, and construction were given ample time for open discussion. Construction actually gave leeway to also explain FATS and related information on FDI. Morocco presented its detailed questionnaire on construction which allows the collection of information for the BOP and FATS.

Several presentations were made by individual countries on progress made as well as ongoing initiatives and projects throughout the course (Iraq, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates). Due to time constraints, other countries submitted their presentation but were unable to present.

A recap session and a discussion on technical assistance and statistical capacity building for the region concluded the last day of the workshop.

IV. Conclusion and recommendations

The workshop concluded with several recommendations to be implemented by the countries. An additional event was suggested in two to three years.

Recommendations:

- On the e-learning course:
 - The Invitation letter should mention time requirements to follow the course;
 - The course design could be more interactive;
 - The numerical examples should be discussed in the face-to-face meeting;
 - Develop a shorter version of the course for non-statisticians
- Development and maintenance of a central statistical business register
- Ensure a well-coordinated infrastructure for integrated economic statistics involving national statistical authorities, central banks, ministries, and other regulators

- Ensure data sharing arrangements between these entities
- Knowledge sharing:
 - Exchange templates/questionnaires (UN/ESCWA offered to host on web)
 - Exchange country examples/experiences
- Identify new data sources, e.g. financial statements of multinationals on the web for FATS
- Focus on most important services sectors and partners of the economy – establish a priority list
- The workshop could be complemented by specific projects implemented in the field
- The course materials, available in English, should be made available in Arabic to accelerate improving data compilation and data quality.
- The workshop reiterated the need to develop a platform available to respond to questions for clarification on concepts, definitions, and existing compilation practices. In this context, the online compilation guide to MSITS2010 including best practices was seen as a starting point.
- On technical assistance:
 - Organize bilateral capacity building activities at the regional level to "learn from each other"
 - Involve regional and international organizations in capacity building
 - Integrate the development of trade in services statistics in National Strategies for Statistical Development (NSDS)
 - Exchange compilation experiences between countries (best practices)
 - Undertake communication efforts to receive the commitment of the hierarchy of the respective countries

Annex 1 Agenda

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Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates
20 - 23 November 2017

Monday, 20/11/2017 (Day 1)		
9:00 - 9:45	Welcome address and opening	AMF, WTO, UNESCWA, UNSD
9:45 - 10:15	BREAK	
10:15 - 10:30	Objectives of the Workshop, presentation of speakers, agenda and housekeeping issues	AMF, WTO, UNESCWA
10:30 - 10:45	Overview of trade in services statistics availability for Arab countries - Where are the data gaps?	WTO
10:45 - 11:15	Overview of the recommendations of the 2015 Workshop and results from the pre-course questionnaires	WTO UNESCWA
11:15 - 11:30	Data Sources for trade in services statistics for Arab countries: Modernization and Integration	ESCWA
11:30 - 11:45	BREAK	
12:00 - 13:00	Feedback on the UNCTAD-WTO-UN e-learning course on Trade in Services Statistics	UNCTAD, WTO
13:00 - 13:30	LUNCH BREAK	
13:30 - 14:30	Interactive recap session on concepts in trade in services statistics following the e-learning course	WTO
14:30 - 15:30	Progress report from the 2015 workshop: Country presentations	All countries of the region

Tuesday, 21/11/2017 (Day 2)		
8:30 – 8:40	Summary session on previous day	WTO
8:45 – 9:40	Service sector 1: Compiling Transport	William Cave
9:40-10:30	Open discussion on Transport data collection and compilation issues and country presentation(s)	All
10:30 - 11:00	BREAK	
11:00 - 11:40	Service sector 2: Compiling Travel	Malik Bani Hani
11:40 - 12:00	Tourism Satellite Account and its Compilation Guide	UNSD
12:00 - 12:30	Open discussion on Travel data collection and compilation issues and country presentation(s)	All
12:30 - 13:00	LUNCH BREAK	
13:00 - 13:45	Service sector 3: Manufacturing services on physical inputs owned by others and maintenance and repair services	William Cave
13:00 - 13:45	Open discussion on Manufacturing services and maintenance and repair services collection and compilation issues and country presentation(s)	All
13:45 - 14:20	Service sector 4: Compiling Computer services	William Cave
14:20 - 15:00	Open discussion on Computer services data collection and compilation issues and country presentation(s)	All
20:00	<i>Dinner Invitation at Intercontinental (Liwa Ballroom)</i>	<i>All</i>

Wednesday, 22/11/2017 (Day 3)		
8:30 - 8:40	Summary session on previous day	WTO
8:40 - 9:20	Service sector 5: Compiling Construction	Malik Bani Hani
9:20 - 10:30	Open discussion on Construction data compilation issues in the region, and country presentation(s)	All
10:30 - 11:00	BREAK	
11:00 - 12:00	Compiling FATS	WTO
12:00 - 12:30	FATS data collection and compilation issues in the region open discussion and country presentation(s) (part 1)	All
12:30 - 13:00	LUNCH BREAK	
13:00 - 14:00	FATS data collection and compilation issues in the region, open discussion and country presentation(s) (part 2)	All
14:00 - 14:30	Compiling FDI as complementary information	Malik Bani Hani
14:30 - 15:00	FDI data collection and compilation issues in the region, open discussion	All

Thursday, 23/11/2017 (Day 4)		
8:30 - 9:30	Summary recap session on previous days and open discussion	WTO and UNESCWA
9:30 - 10:30	Technical assistance and capacity building in trade in services statistics in the region: the way forward	AMF, WTO, UNSD, UNESCWA, UNCTAD
10:30 - 11:00	BREAK	
11:00 - 11:45	Participants' evaluation	All participants
11:45 - 12:30	Closing of the workshop and awards of certificates and e-learning course certificates	AMF, WTO, UNESCWA, UNSD UNCTAD

Annex 2
List of participants