



ASEAN Community Statistical System (ACSS) Committee, Third Session
Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam, 10-12 September 2013

**WORKING GROUP ON INTERNATIONAL MERCHANDISE TRADE STATISTICS
(WGIMTS)**

TERMS OF REFERENCE (TOR)
Revised as of August 2013

The ACSS Committee at its Second Session in Siem Reap, Cambodia, 27-28 September 2012 agreed to convert the Task Force on International Merchandise Trade Statistics (TFIMTS) into the Working Group on International Merchandise Trade Statistics (WGIMTS) to reflect its permanent status within the decision making framework of the ACSS Committee. The AEC Blueprint envisions ASEAN as a single market and production base region marked by free flow of goods within the ASEAN Economic Community and between ASEAN and the global economy. Continuous provision of broader scope and more detailed information requirements on IMTS will facilitate the ASEAN economic integration.

Objectives

The main objective of the ASEAN Working Group on International Merchandise Trade Statistics (WGIMTS) is to facilitate the development and harmonization of IMTS, enhance timeliness and effectiveness of IMTS data sharing and dissemination, and to better respond to the information requirements in support of economic integration and development as envisaged, for example, in the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) Blueprint.

Specific Objectives

The WGIMTS aims in particular to:

- a. identify issues concerning the collection, production, and dissemination of IMTS by ASEAN Member States (AMSs) to stakeholders and the public, as well as those on harmonisation of IMTS;
- b. recommend data transmission framework and data transmission protocol in accordance with international standards and ASEAN requirements;
- c. recommend appropriate measures towards improved collection, production, harmonisation, and dissemination of timely and comparable IMTS;
- d. improve and monitor adherence to internationally-recommended and/or agreed frameworks, quality standards, and specifications in the compilation and reporting of national and regional IMTS; and
- e. promote and facilitate the sharing of knowledge, experiences and best practices in the collection, production, and dissemination of IMTS through better coordination, statistical capacity building and technical assistance among those involved in IMT data collection, production, and dissemination.



Tasks

1. The general tasks of the WGIMTS are to:
 - a. Define and recommend, for adoption and implementation, **common references** based on international standards for the compilation and reporting of more timely and comparable IMTS, and develop **mechanisms** for improved collection, production, and dissemination of timely and comparable IMTS, such as:
 - (1) Standards for quality, including timeliness, comparability and accessibility of IMTS, in accordance with the ACSS Code of Practice;
 - (2) Statistical framework;
 - (3) methodology;
 - (4) product and country classification systems;
 - (5) Guidelines for transmission of IMTS to the ASEAN Secretariat (data transmission protocol, etc.); and
 - (6) Guidelines for data sharing, confidentiality, and dissemination of IMTS to stakeholders and the public.
 - b. Initiate a regular and comprehensive review of data and metadata relative to agreed specification, methodologies, quality and timeliness in the supply of national trade and related data to the ASEAN Secretariat and recommend measures to address statistical gaps and deficiencies;
 - c. Identify relevant policy and procedural changes and statistical developments that may affect the generation of IMTS, e.g., national customs processes/practices, regional economic agreements, changes in international and regional frameworks, standards and classification systems, among others, and recommend appropriate adjustments and interventions;
 - d. Promote, facilitate and review implementation of the Annual Work Plan and mechanisms for the harmonization and improvement of IMTS at the national and regional levels, including the
 - (1) effective coordination among competent authorities/ agencies at both the national and regional levels, e.g. customs authority, statistical office, central bank, policy agencies, among others, and
 - (2) capacity building and technical assistance programs in coordination with concerned international organizations, as applicable.
 - e. Elevate, through the ACSS Committee, issues and recommendations, to the ASEAN Economic Ministers Meeting (AEM) through the Senior Economic Officials Meeting, as well as to other concerned ASEAN bodies; and
 - f. Develop an Annual Work Plan to include capacity building programme in support of the harmonisation and development of IMTS.
2. The implementation of these tasks shall be guided by an integrated ASEAN work plan that will be agreed upon the WGIMTS members and approved by the ACSS Committee. The integrated ASEAN work plan will include both regional and national measures for the improvement of IMTS.



Organization

1. Each ASEAN Member State shall designate two (2) permanent members to the WG (from agency/ies mandated to compile and/or disseminate official IMTS, hereinafter referred to as the competent national authority/ies (CNA) such as the customs authority/other mandated institutions) who are experts and/or the directly-concerned officials/officers. ASEAN Secretariat shall designate one (1) representative and (1) alternate member to the WGIMTS.
2. Each ASEAN Member State shall designate a country focal point on IMTS, among the designated members, to coordinate and monitor related activities at the national level and to coordinate with the ASEANstats. The WGIMTS focal point shall provide periodic updates on WG matters to the heads of the respective national statistical agencies and other CNAs through the ACSSSub-Committee on Planning and Coordination (SCPC)/ACSS country focal points.
3. An expert designated by the Head of national statistical agency/member of the ACSS Committee shall serve as Chair of the WGIMTS for a period of at least two (2) years or as may be decided by the ACSS Committee. ASEANstats shall serve as Co-chair. The Chair shall be responsible primarily for steering the activities of the WG towards the achievement of the stated objectives within a reasonably set time frame.
4. The WGIMTS Chairperson shall coordinate closely with ASEANstats in planning, initiating and leading the implementation of the annual work plan.

Mechanics and institutional arrangements

1. The Working Group shall meet at least once a year and may recommend the conduct of additional meetings (workshops/seminars, training, etc.) as may be deemed necessary. It can also conduct inter-sessional or preparatory meetings as well as exchange views through telephone, mails, emails or other means;
2. Hosting of the WG meetings shall either be by one of the ASEAN Member States or by ASEAN Secretariat. Consultants or experts may be invited to attend meetings, as needed;
3. At the national level, the WGIMTS members shall lead in the implementation of recommendations, mechanisms and activities and shall keep informed the ACSS country focal point/ACSS SCPC of the progress and developments in the WG.
4. The WGIMTS shall report at least once a year to the ACSS Committee.
5. The meeting venue shall be determined by the WGIMTS in consultation with the hosting agency.
6. As secretariat, ASEANstats shall:
 - a. initiate and undertake all necessary technical and coordination work in line with the implementation of regional activities;



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- b. monitor progress of implementation of the ASEAN work plan and coordinate with ASEAN Member States to track progress of the national work programmes;
- c. coordinate with other concerned divisions in the ASEAN Secretariat regarding data needs for policy as well as policy issues that may affect the generation of IMTS ; and
- d. on behalf of the ACSS Committee and the WGIMTS, provide updates as well as forward requests and key decision points to concerned ASEAN bodies for endorsement or any appropriate action.

Funding Arrangements

Participation in the WG meetings and activities is basically the responsibility of the ASEAN Member States' respective institution(s). In certain circumstances, as deemed necessary, the ASEAN Secretariat shall mobilise resources to facilitate the WG's meeting/activities.

The ACSS Committee may wish to:

Discuss and adopt the Draft Working Group of International Merchandise Trade Statistics (IMTS) Terms of Reference (TOR)

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