EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
GLOBAL SDMX ARTEFACTS FOR
INTERNATIONAL MERCHANDISE TRADE STATISTICS

December 2018

Note by the Working Group

An inter-agency working group comprising of Eurostat, the International Trade Centre (ITC), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD; as the secretariat and chair of the working group), and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has been established to support the implementation of SDMX standards in International Merchandise Trade Statistics (IMTS) in 2013.

IMTS refers to a specialized multipurpose domain of official statistics concerned with the provision of data on the movements of goods between countries and areas.[1] The main source of data is customs declaration and it is supplemented by non-customs sources such as foreign shipping manifest, informal trade cross border survey, aircraft and ship registers, enterprise survey, parcel and postal records, etc. Therefore, trade data is considered having the characteristics of a highly structured set with a large data volume comprising multiple dimensions and measures in a single observation.

The working group, which develops these new standards, seeks to specify uniform structures, concepts, definitions, and code lists for IMTS data and metadata which comply with the latest version of the SDMX standard (2.1), and which follow the latest recommendations for IMTS

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[1] See: IMTS Concepts and Definitions 2010

(IMTS 2010). To the extent possible, SDMX-IMTS reuses concepts and code lists that have been already agreed internationally. The design of the draft Data Structure Definition (DSD) for SDMX-IMTS was completed in early May 2015 and was released for global consultation and public review in order to receive broad input on the proposed DSD. As of May 2015, the draft DSD consists of 31 concepts of which 18 are dimensions, 12 are attributes, and the remaining one is the measurement. The global consultation was conducted from June to August 2015. A total of 87 countries, economic areas and organizations responded to the survey.

The results of the global consultation were integrated into the final global SDMX-IMTS, and the release of a revised version was made available during the second quarter of 2016. In late 2016, the DSD was submitted to SDMX Secretariat as version 1.0. The working group agreed that the first version should be tested through pilot projects in interested countries for "ground truthing". Therefore, separate technical assistance missions were undertaken in Mexico (18-20 Sept 2017) and Morocco (16-18 Oct 2017) with the aim of implementing SDMX-IMTS version 1.0 in both countries, identifying implementation challenges and addressing them, and preparing recommendations for amendment in the next version of the DSD based on the experiences. In December 2018, SDMX-IMTS version 1.1 (19 dimensions and 11 attributes) was ready for submission to SDMX Secretariat followed by endorsement by SDMX Sponsors. This includes improvement identified in pilot projects, alignment with the latest common code lists, clarification during SDMX Expert Group Meeting and feedback from 1st Regional Training Workshop on SDMX-IMTS in Tunisia in 2018.

As its current configuration, SDMX-IMTS version 1.1 consists of multiple DSDs depending of level of details (whether or not a transmission contains confidential data or aggregated figures) and commodity classification used. See possible configurations below:

Table 1. Configuration of SDMX-IMTS version 1.1

Level of Details	Description	HS Versions
DSD1	This DSD is meant to specify all required elements for data collection. It may also be sufficient for data transfer within an organization. Transfer of confidential elements are supported.	2017, 2012, 2007, 2002, 1996, 1998
DSD2	This DSD is meant to specify all required elements for data dissemination. This includes tariff line data disseminated by UNSD or other organizations. Confidential elements are not	2017, 2012, 2007, 2002, 1996, 1998

	supported. Some data flows may also restrict country specific commodity codes, though the DSD will support them.	
DSD3	This DSD is meant to specify all required elements for data aggregated at a national level. It also defines required elements for the transfer of some indices. Greater support for trade indices will be planned in future updates to this DSD.	N/A

Meanwhile, the working group and other relevant partner organisations have been discussing the implementation strategies and capacity building activities in countries. The follow-up proposals are as follows: undertaking of specific implementation project in countries; conducting regional training workshop in cooperation with other organizations or creation of SDMX-IMTS extraction module in commonly used trade data processing system (i.e., EUROTRACE). As of December 2018, the pilot implementation projects on SDMX-IMTS have been undertaken in the following countries/regions: Mexico, Morocco, Egypt, and SPC.