

**TWENTY-EIGHTH MEETING OF THE
STANDING COMMITTEE OF
CARIBBEAN STATISTICIANS****RESTRICTED****SCCS/2003/28/4****Providenciales, Turks and Caicos Islands
3-5 November 2003****29 October 2003**

STATUS OF MERCHANDISE TRADE STATISTICS**Status of Trade Database**

The process of submission of trade data to the Secretariat continues to show improvement. The status of submission of trade data shows that ten (10) of the thirteen (13) Member States that normally submit data for compilation in the regional trade database have submitted data for 2002.

2. The Secretariat would like focus on two issues:

- (i) the timeliness of submission of data to the Secretariat;
- (ii) the quality of data submitted;

3. It was agreed at the Twenty-Sixth Meeting of the SCCS that data for a given year should be submitted at the end of the first quarter of the following year, i.e. April should be the month for the receipt of data from Member States. The experience this year showed that four (of ten) Member States submitted data before the end of April with one submission on 18 March 2003. Five Member States submitted data before the end of May.

4. Special mention must be made of St Kitts and Nevis for submitting their data during the month of March. This Member State was a past recipient of technical assistance in 1996/97 to facilitate timely production of trade data.

5. Relative to the quality of the trade data, the files for three Member States were free of queries based on the processing of the data at the Secretariat in compiling the database. There were also indications by two Member States that the data submitted

were partly provisional. The Secretariat must commend the effort being made by Guyana in enabling the submission of its trade data, as well as in attempting to improve the data quality.

6. Trade data were also received from The Bahamas, but while these have been processed, ways of incorporating the data into the database need to be explored since the data are not fully compatible with the CET. A possible solution may be to use the HS only. Attention will also be focussed on obtaining data from Haiti where work is in progress with regard to implementing the CET.

7. Members States are urged to continue to improve on the timeliness and quality of the submissions. In the short term there will be continued efforts to enable the timely receipt of data and formulation of the regional trade database. Countries also need to now focus on the coverage of trade and problems related to quantities.

8. The Secretariat also designed a project to capture Antigua and Barbuda's backlog of data for the period 1990-1998 and is awaiting the receipt of input from this Member State in order to implement.

9. Relative to the processing and dissemination of trade data at the Secretariat, the debugging process of the Trade Information System continued with one report in the Report Module to be rectified. The process of enabling an online searchable database is about to be realised which would make available a long series of detailed trade to privileged users.

10. The Secretariat would once again like to emphasise the importance of trade data and the compilation of a timely and high quality regional database to satisfy the following needs:

- (i) Trade statistics are required to inform policies to be negotiated at the international, regional and national levels; and
- (ii) The Secretariat also submits data to the Inter-American Development Bank for inclusion in the Hemispheric Market Access Database.

Correction of the Correlation table based on the Revised Harmonised Commodity Description and Coding System (HS) 2002

11. The Revised HS 2002 has been incorporated in the Common External Tariff and this document has been distributed to Member States for implementation at the beginning of 2004. The correlation table, linking the HS with the Standard International Trade Classification (SITC Rev 3), is currently being verified by a consultant.

12. Initial findings from the consultant's preliminary report reveal numerous discrepancies between the correlation table and the CET as well as differences between the CET and the international classifications. These findings indicate there were a number of duplicate or missing HS and SITC codes, inaccurate linkages to the

international structure of the HS, illogical use of SITC codes and inconsistencies in descriptions.

13. The Secretariat hopes to have the corrected correlation table ready to be submitted to Member States at the beginning of December 2003.

The New Eurotrace

14. The CARICOM Secretariat was among regional organisations from the ACP and Member States in the African region which were invited to a workshop held in Lome, Togo on the New Eurotrace this year. The Workshop was hosted by the Secretariat of the Economic Commission of West African States (ECOWAS) and the delegation of the European Commission in Lome, Togo. The objective of the Workshop was to review the cooperation policy on External Trade Statistics in the light of the New Eurotrace development. The Workshop dealt with the content and strategies in statistical co-operation in the field of external trade with the EU and an exposure to the New Eurotrace by users from Member States of the EU.

15. Among the conclusions and recommendations were that the training material for the new Eurotrace should be further enhanced and that a self-training tutorial be developed; development of a discussion forum for Eurotrace users; the expediting of action on the implementation phase of the new Eurotrace; an enhanced role for regional organizations in first level maintenance of the system and in training at the national level.

ACTION REQUIRED

16. **The Meeting is invited to:**

- (i) **note** the Progress of Work with respect to the compilation of trade statistics database;
- (ii) **consider** the efforts by Member States to improve on the timeliness and on the quality of the data submitted to the Secretariat;
- (iii) **also note** the developmental work undertaken to upgrade the regional trade information system;
- (iv) **further note** the developmental work on the Correlation table linking the HS-SITC; and
- (v) **note also** the potential for further training and acquisition of the new Eurotrace software.
