Regional Seminar on International Trade Statistics
Implementation of recommendations on international trade statistics
12 – 16 May 2014, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Concept Note

February 2014

I.   Background and rationale

1.   The social and economic integration of the African peoples is one of the major objectives of the creation of our continental organization (OAU/AU). Since the inception of the Organization of African Unity in 1963 and its transformation into the African Union in 2000, African leaders expressed their desire for a strong united and integrated Africa. Integration is necessary to increase the volume of trade between African countries. But it is clear that the volume of trade between African countries is very low. The volume of intra-African trade is currently below 12%.

2.   Thus, in order to increase the volume of intra-African trade, the Heads of State and Government of the African Union have dedicated two Summits in 2013 under the theme "Boosting Intra-African trade". During these two high-level meetings, African leaders have made firm decisions to promote the establishment of the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) by 2017 and the establishment of an African observatory for trade.

3.   To support these initiatives and within the framework of the implementation of the strategy for the harmonization of statistics in Africa (SHaSA), the African Union Commission (AUC) in collaboration with the Pan-African organizations (UNECA and AfDB), Regional Economic Communities (UMA, ECOWAS, ECCAS, IGAD, EAC, COMESA, SADC and CEN-SAD) and the Statistics Division of the United Nations, have decided to build the capacity of African countries in the production and the harmonization of statistics of foreign trade. The AUC in collaboration with its partner organizations aims to provide direct support to African countries to strengthen their capacity in the use of international methodology for the production of goods and services trade statistics (IMTS 2010, MSITS 2010) and also in the use of Eurotrace to produce international trade statistics and ASYCUDA for the recording of cross border transactions.

4.   The tourism sector is one of the areas of the development of Africa's economy. But it is clear that tourism statistics and the statistics of international trade in services are very much related. If AUC wants to strengthen the capacity of African countries on international service trade statistics, then it is also important to strengthen the capacity of national statistics experts in charge of tourism. Therefore the AUC in collaboration with its partners will also build the capacity of African experts on tourism statistics including the implementation of the International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics 2008 (IRTS 2008).

5.   To this effect, the AUC in collaboration with the United Nations Statistics Division has developed a common questionnaire to evaluate the development of external trade statistics in all African countries. The questionnaire has already been sent to all focal points of the member States. An evaluation report of the development of international

trade statistics will be prepared. To review and validate the report, the AUC in collaboration with the United Nations Statistics Division plans to organize a seminar on African international trade statistics. The seminar will allow exchange of views with country experts and Regional Economic Communities on the implementation of recommendations of IMTS 2010 and MSITS 2010 in Africa. The linkages between trade statistics and business statistics; between IMTS and balance of payments manual and informal cross border trade will be discussed in the meeting.

6.   In addition, the meeting will provide a platform to exchange trade data between countries, RECs and the partner organizations.

II.   Overall Objective

7.   The overall objective of the meeting is to review and validate the assessment report of the current national compilation practices of international trade statistics in Africa and to discuss with national experts on African the methodologies they use in compiling international trade statistics on goods and services and tourism statistics.

III.   Specific Objectives

8.   The specific objectives of the meeting are among other:
   ✓ Discuss and validate the report on current national compilation practices on international merchandise trade statistics and informal cross border trade in Africa ;
   ✓ Build the capacity of national experts on the International Merchandise Trade Statistics 2010 (IMTS 2010) and the Manual on Statistics of International Trade in Services (MSITS 2010) ;
   ✓ Discuss relationships between IMTS 2010, MSITS 2010 and BPM6 and encourage cooperation among partners;
   ✓ Explore linkage between international trade statistics and business statistics ;
   ✓ exchange views on the methodologies used in the compilation of informal trade in Africa;
   ✓ Discuss trade data exchange between African countries, RECs, the AUC and International Organizations ;
   ✓ Present the zero draft on 2014 African Yearbook on Intra-African Trade.

IV.   Expected results

9.   After the meeting:
   ✓ The final report on current national compilation practices on international merchandise trade statistics and informal cross border trade in Africa is produced ;

- ✓ The capacity of national experts on the implementation of IMTS 2010 and MSITS 2010 is built ; and
- ✓ A way forward (roadmap) to develop the compilation methodologies on international trade and tourism statistics in Africa.

V. Date and venue

10. The meeting will take place from 12 to 16 May 2014 in Addis Ababa, at the Headquarters of African Union Commission.

VI. Participants

11. The meeting will bring among others experts in charge of international trade statistics of the national Statistical offices, central banks, customs offices and ministries of tourism of the African countries and experts from Regional Economic Communities.

VII. Organizers

12. This meeting will be organized by African Union Commission in collaboration with African Development Bank (AfDB), United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD).