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**INTER-AGENCY STATEMENT OF TRADE DATA NEEDS**

**NOTE JOINTLY PREPARED BY OECD/UNSD/WTO**

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## **INTER-AGENCY STATEMENT OF TRADE DATA NEEDS**

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1. Detailed merchandise trade statistics are the most important component of trade data needs of international agencies. For example, UNSD "COMTRADE" data base is used by the WTO to issue its reports on international trade; by the FAO in yearbooks on agricultural trade; by the ITC in its market analysis studies for export promotion programmes. The World Bank includes the whole Comtrade database in its internal trade information system.
2. International agencies rely heavily on obtaining information of the OECD Member states through the OECD secretariat. The agencies retrieve these data either from the OECD database or, more widely, from the UNSD "COMTRADE" database. The UNSD, under an arrangement aimed at reducing reporting burdens on OECD Member countries, sources nearly all OECD Members' data from the OECD Secretariat and plans to source all in the near future.
3. The OECD Secretariat Note 9 on data submission under agenda item 4g cites significant improvements in data reception over the last two years. Nevertheless, it mentions that generally less than 50% of the data are submitted within the first six months after the corresponding reference year. OECD countries as a whole account for over 75 per cent of world merchandise trade on a customs bases. Significant delays in data submission can have a significant impact on the soundness of the data that international agencies feed into the global policy making scene and can also adversely affect the extent to which hard data can be used in short-term analysis. For example WTO data collection and processing activities (including world trade estimates by commodity and country grouping) for the annual "International Trade Statistics" report occur from May to the end of August. Hard data submitted after the end of July cannot be fully exploited. In the case of the UNSD, the annual production cycle of the International Trade Statistics Yearbook can currently not start before October of the year after the annual reference period because, before then, not enough country data are available. The UNSD's objective however is to start this work in August to be able to publish these data before the end of the year
4. Figure 2 in the OECD Note 9 shows the 2001 data receipt records of the OECD Members' annual data, including provisional figures. These data receipt records have been compared with data release dates given in the country replies to the OECD questionnaire. The comparison focuses on the earliest availability of detailed provisional figures and the transmission of trade data to OECD. Table I shows the results of this comparison for OECD Members. For a number of major traders, there is a significant gap between data release and data receipt. For the United States, the gap is 5 months. Aggregate EU(15) data are not complete.
5. The OECD Note 9 suggests that the submission of provisional data can improve data delivery rates and both organizations. However, in the case of detailed annual trade statistics, this would significantly increase the processing burden. Furthermore, experience has shown that provisional data can sometimes diverge significantly from the final results. However, UNSD agrees with OECD on the

desirability of receiving provisional data as soon as available and replacing them with revised data a few months later.

6. The needs of all users including the international agencies and the global policy makers, researchers and other users who depend on the agencies' statistics could perhaps be better served if, working together with the national statistical offices, a mechanism could be found whereby the gap between the release of the detailed annual data and submission to the OECD could be reduced.

**TABLE 1: MERCHANDISE TRADE STATISTICS, YEAR 2000:****COMPARISON OF DATA RELEASE BY COUNTRIES AND DATA RECEIPT BY OECD**

<b>OECD Member Country</b>	<b>Data Release Provisional detailed figures</b>	<b>Data Receipt By OECD</b>	<b>Gap in Months</b>
Australia	January	August	7
Austria		April	
Belgium	March	March	0
Canada	March	March	0
Switzerland	February	February	0
Czech Republic	February	May	3
Germany	February	April	2
Denmark	February	January (year after)	10
Spain	April	June	2
Finland	March	August	5
France	February	February	0
United Kingdom	February	September	7
Greece			
Hungary	March	March	0
Ireland	March	May	2
Iceland	March	July	4
Italy	March	May	2
Japan		May	
Korea		November	
Mexico		September	
Netherlands	June(final)	September	3
Norway	May	September	4
New Zealand		May	
Poland	June(final)	September	4
Portugal		November	
Sweden	March	March	0
Turkey	March	September	6
Unites States	February	July	5

Source: OECD and results of OECD's questionnaire sent to OECD Member countries