

# Report on the Informal Working Group on Data for Services Trade and Development Policies

12 July 2023, 15:00 CEST  
during Session 6 of the MYEM

## Background

- I would like to make a report on the progress of the Informal Working Group on Data for Services Trade and Development Policies. UNCTAD was mandated to form this Informal Working Group based on the discussions held during the Multi-year expert meetings held in July 2022.
- During the MYEM of Trade, Services and Development held last year, it was stressed that developing countries are facing various challenges in services trade data. Through this Informal Working Group, we aim to get to the bottom of key questions such as what data is missing and why and identify good practices to overcome those challenges and if there are any innovative ways of using data to make policies.
- UNCTAD hopes this Informal Working Group would be a platform for stakeholders to discuss the needs and the gaps developing countries face and identify workable solutions.

## Progress

- UNCTAD since then had held a series of consultation meetings with experts across various international organisations and academia to understand the specific challenges developing countries face, and then held our first Working Group meeting on 6 June 2023 to discuss the deliverables of the coming months.
- Some of the common data gaps we heard during the meetings were the lack of disaggregated data in terms of partner countries and the data in the deeper sub-categories. Such gaps in data hinder the ability of viewers to analyse and understand business activities and trade trends in depth.
- We also learned that while there are many important initiatives being led by multiple international organisations such as the World Bank, WTO, OECD and the UN to support countries, no one has the full picture of who is doing what and where.
- In terms of what this Informal Working Group could do to address these challenges, a suggestion we heard from multiple experts was to create a publicly available repository of information that could support member states in promoting evidence-based policymaking and create opportunities for capacity building projects.
- The repository could potentially store information such as:
  - 1) the results of a mapping exercise on the existing initiatives and projects conducted by international organisations across the world,
  - 2) examples of good practices in terms of data collection and utilisation of such data in policymaking, and
  - 3) sets of desensitised data collected for purposes other than trade in services such as tax or payment information.

## Way Forward

- Based on the suggested deliverables during the previous consultations and meetings, the UNCTAD secretariat aims to draft a firm workplan of the Informal Working Group and start the mapping exercise to identify what initiatives are being promoted by who and where.
- At the same time, creating a repository would require resources and the UNCTAD secretariat will also discuss if potential funding could be obtained.
- We will hold another Informal Working Group meeting in the coming months to update members of the progress and discuss next steps.