

**Fifth meeting of the informal working group on data for services, trade and  
development policies  
18 June 2026**

**Opening remarks**

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Excellencies, distinguished experts, colleagues,

It is a pleasure to welcome you to the fifth meeting of the Informal Working Group on Data for Services, Trade and Development Policies.

This Working Group was established following the recommendation of the ninth session of the Multi-year Expert Meeting on Trade, Services and Development.

Its purpose is: to identify services-trade data gaps, share good practices in data collection, and showcase innovative ways in which data can be used for services trade policymaking.

The first four meetings of the Working Group, held between June 2023 and April 2024, helped clarify why this agenda matters. Services are central to diversification, productivity, digital transformation, and participation in value chains. Yet services-trade data remain less available than data on goods trade. Services are often intangible, less visible at borders, and difficult to classify by sector, partner and mode of supply. Many developing countries also face constraints in statistical infrastructure, business registers, IT systems and human resources.

The work of the Group has already led to concrete results. It contributed to the 2025 First UNCTAD Primer on data for trade in services and development policies, which aims at helping policymakers navigate the complex landscape of services-trade data sources. The discussion has also been taken further through a series of webinars, examining how policymakers can apply the Primer and make better use of existing data to answer concrete policy questions.

The relevance of this work was reaffirmed at the twelfth session of the Multi-year Expert Meeting on Trade in Services, held last April under the theme “Servicification for economic diversification”. Delegations underlined that better trade in services data are essential to understand how services contribute to development impacts such as

productivity, employment, diversification, and export competitiveness. The meeting also highlighted that services are no longer only final activities or export sectors. They are increasingly part of the productive infrastructure that shapes competitiveness, value addition, and participation in regional and global value chains.

A key message from these exchanges is that effective policymaking requires country-level evidence built from linked administrative and firm-level data, not aggregate trade statistics alone. This means connecting data already held by statistical offices, finance ministries, customs, labour agencies and investment agencies, while protecting confidentiality. At one of our webinars, Bhutan shared its experience, in sustaining and promoting tourism during COVID-19. It was highlighted that the challenge is often not only to collect more data, but to better connect and use the data that already exist.

The Working Group also recommended the creation of an **UNCTAD knowledge-sharing hub** on services trade. Such a platform could support policymakers and technical experts by facilitating the exchange of good practices, analytical tools, training materials and practical policy applications of trade in services data.

Today's meeting takes this agenda one step further. We will focus on services trade, supply-chain shocks and resilience, and identify what data can tell policymakers. Value chain resilience is not only about goods, ports or inventories. It is also about the services that allow firms to operate smoothly: transport and logistics, digital connectivity, payments, finance, insurance, certification, engineering, business services, or cloud services, to name a few.

The emphasis today is on firm-level and administrative data: how goods and services trade data can be linked at the firm level, and how such data can help identify the services that allow firms to absorb shocks, diversify and recover. Linking goods and services trade data at the firm level means matching different datasets so that each firm's full trade profile (both goods and services) is observed together, enabling a much deeper understanding of how firms engage in international trade.

Input-output approaches also remain relevant, especially for mapping economy-wide and indirect exposure, including hidden dependencies through services inputs. But today's discussion will focus more specifically on what linked microdata and administrative sources can reveal about firms' actual exposure, adjustment and resilience.

This meeting will also help us consider the practical challenges of using administrative data for this purpose, including data access, confidentiality, institutional coordination and analytical capacity.

I look forward to an engaging and substantive discussion, and I thank all speakers, discussants and participants for contributing to this important work.

Thank you.

### **Closing remarks and way forward**

Distinguished experts, colleagues,

Thank you for an engaging and substantive discussion.

Today's meeting has shown clearly that services are central to supply-chain resilience. But they can also become bottlenecks or sources of dependency.

The discussion also confirmed the importance of firm-level and administrative data. Linked microdata can help policymakers move beyond aggregate trade figures and identify how firms are exposed to shocks, how they adjust, and which services matter most for resilience.

As a way forward, UNCTAD will take the insights from this meeting into its continued work on the use of data for services trade policies, the Primer follow-up, and the development of the knowledge-sharing hub on services trade. We will also continue exploring analytical approaches and practical use cases that can help developing countries strengthen resilience through better use of services-trade and firm-level data.

I thank all speakers, discussants and participants for their contributions, and look forward to continuing this work together.

Thank you.