UNDERSTANDING AND MEASURING
THE MEETINGS INDUSTRY

A WTO Business Council initiative in partnership with ICCA, MPI, Reed Travel Exhibitions and the WTO Marketing Intelligence and Statistics Sections
Background

The Meetings Industry is an important part of tourism but unfortunately its size and importance is not reflected properly in the official statistics.

National Bureaus for Statistics - as one example - are not including the activities of meetings segments like Conferences, Exhibitions, Incentives, etc. in the structural and economic statistics, mainly because regional methodology like EU methodology on collection of statistics does not include nor support monitoring of such figures.

Part of the spending of this segment is captured in the overall spending (accommodation, air travel, etc), however large amounts are simply not recognised at all: audio-visual renting, catering, signage, conference materials, transfers, etc.

With no officially agreed basic data and the National Bureaus for Statistics not being the natural interlocutor for the key stakeholders within the meetings industry, the present national measurement of the economic impacts of the meetings industry does not pay justice to what is the reality.

Consequently, the measurement of tourism activities in a global macro framework like the TSA is not properly adapted to identify the economic importance of the different segments and of the whole of the meetings industry.

The present situation is that a number of local initiatives – without interrelation - on measurement of the importance of conferences, etc. are flourishing, which by the end of the day is detrimental to the recognition of the Meetings Industry and its role within international tourism.

As a reaction, WTO Affiliate Members Reed Travel Exhibitions and ICCA – in cooperation with MPI - took the initiative to encourage the WTO to focus more on the Meetings Industry and in partnership to undertake a study that would lead to proposals for the improvement of the TSA to reflect the real importance of the Meetings Industry and its contribution to tourism.

This initiative will contribute to improve the conceptual framework of the TSA and raise worldwide awareness of the need for TSA compilers to identify and measure adequately this segment.

At the Meeting of the Committee on Statistics and Macroeconomic analysis of Tourism, the Terms of Reference for the study: Measuring the Economic Importance of the Meetings Industry, the method and the deliverables will be presented together with the results of a survey on the International Meetings Industry that WTO did undertake as part of the Tourism Market Trends study 2004.

The first results of the Study: Measuring the Economic Importance of the Meetings Industry will be presented for discussion at the WTO 2005 Conference on the TSA.