

World Metrology Day – May 20, 2020

MEASUREMENTS FOR GLOBAL TRADE (WMD 2020 message from the BIPM and BIML Directors)

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Have you ever wondered how many products and services are traded across the world, or considered how much energy crosses borders as either electricity or gas? You may not be aware of the exact amounts and take measurements for granted, putting trust in what manufacturers, transporters and governments do to ensure fairness and safety in the trade and transport of commodities.

Fortunately, international systems have been established to provide the necessary assurance and confidence that these measurements are accurate, and that they are a sound basis for global trade.

According to the World Trade Organization (WTO),* the global trade of products was a record US\$ 19.67 trillion in 2018. Considering that the price of a significant proportion of the global trade of products is determined using legal units of measurement, it becomes clear that metrology plays a huge – and indeed critical – role in global trade.

Technical regulations and standards are adopted by governments to protect both producers and consumers at national and international levels. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) estimates that about 80% of global trade is affected by standards or regulations. A sound measurement system must be in place, so that the application of standards and regulations does not become a technical barrier to trade (TBT) which would lead to increased costs, inhibit the free flow of goods, or require repeated testing.

Trust in the assessment of conformity against specifications reduces costs and increases confidence for businesses and consumers; this is underpinned by the strong and effective worldwide metrology system.

We all depend on items that are transported to us, either from a store nearby or from a country on the other side of the world. Accurate measurements ensure that the goods and services we need are delivered safely and reliably.

As Directors of the International Bureau of Legal Metrology (BIML) and the International Bureau of Weights and Measures (BIPM), we work actively to elevate the importance of the role that measurement plays in global trade to ensure fairness, confidence, and protection of both the producer and consumer.



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* https://www.wto.org/english/res_e/statis_e/wts2019_e/wts19_toc_e.htm