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Submissions from entities in the United Nations system and elsewhere on their efforts in 2012 to implement the outcome of the WSIS

Submission by

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

and International Trade Centre

This submission was prepared as an input to the report of the UN Secretary-General on "Progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society at the regional and international levels" (to the 16th session of the CSTD), in response to the request by the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2006/46, to the UN Secretary-General to inform the Commission on Science and Technology for Development on the implementation of the outcomes of the WSIS as part of his annual reporting to the Commission.

UNCTAD and ITC input to the annual report of the Secretary-General to the CSTD on the implementation of WSIS outcomes during 2012

Action Line C7 (e-business)

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Activities during 2012 related to the action line C7 (e-business) have helped to increase awareness, expand the use of ICT-enabled market analysis tools and enhanced the international profile of relevant issues. The collaboration among the co-facilitators has been strengthened and various actions have been taken to deepen the involvement of all stakeholders. At the end of 2012, UNCTAD, ITC and UPU launched an online consultation process to allow stakeholders to share their opinions on the facilitation process related to e-business. Monitoring progress in the area of C7-e-business implementation remains difficult due to the lack of a clearly defined target within the WSIS outcome documents.

2. ANALYTICAL OVERVIEW

A. Achievements

UNCTAD's *Information Economy Report 2012: The Software Industry and Developing Countries*, contributed to the implementation of C7 (e-business) through analysis and policy recommendations directed to developing-country governments, but also to development partners and other stakeholders in the information economy. The IER 2012 raised awareness of the importance of developing software capabilities in countries at all levels of development in order to accelerate progress towards an inclusive information society. Local capabilities in this area are essential to develop applications that are well adapted to the local needs, cultures, languages and skills. The report benefited from close interaction with a wide range of stakeholders through expert meetings, seminars, the WSIS Forum and calls for contributions. An important input was a joint UNCTAD-WITSA survey of national IT/software associations. A peer review meeting was held with experts from academia, the private sector and international organizations hosted by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). Financial support was provided by the Government of Finland.

Meetings and conferences represent an important way of raising and focusing awareness among relevant stakeholders. In 2012, UNCTAD and ITC jointly organized an interactive multi-stakeholder dialogue session on Promoting the Domestic ICT Sector. In addition, the IER 2012 was presented at a series of press conferences and special research and policy events dealing with ICT for development, including in collaboration with several regional commissions of the UN, the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation, the International Centre for the Promotion of Enterprises in Ljubljana and the Aspen Network of Development Entrepreneurs in Washington DC. The e-business team of the International Trade Centre (ITC) organized an awareness-raising session after its

launch in Dhaka, Bangladesh during the Digital World conference in December 2012. In several occasions, the national IT/software association contributed in the launching events.

In the area of ICT and law reform, UNCTAD (with funds from the Government of Finland) in 2012 continued to build capacity aimed at supporting the creation of cyber-legislation and a more enabling environment for electronic and mobile commerce. In Asia, for example, it launched a joint review with the ASEAN Secretariat of the status of cyberlaws in that region. With regard to Africa, UNCTAD published two studies on mobile money developments in the East African Community (EAC) and on a review of cyberlaw harmonization in the EAC. Moreover, a French edition of UNCTAD's distance-learning course on these topics was finalized.

The development of ICT statistics is crucial for allowing governments to adequately monitor progress in the area of e-business. ICT statistics are increasingly included in the production schedule of the official statistical system. UNCTAD continued to actively support member States' efforts to improve the availability of ICT statistics, especially with regard to ICT use by the business sector and to the ICT sector itself. In July 2012, UNCTAD provided technical advice to a workshop of the Statistical Conference of the Americas to develop a module for enterprise surveys in Latin America and the Caribbean on ICT use by businesses. And together with ITU, a training session was organized for the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The Partnership remains an excellent example of interagency collaboration. UNCTAD continued its collaboration with other parts of the UN system. In September, UNCTAD organized a session on measuring e-commerce at the ITU's World Telecommunications and ICT indicators Meeting in Bangkok, with speakers from UNCTAD, ESCWA, UPU and the Republic of Korea. It contributed to other international meetings such as the OECD WPIIS meeting (Paris) and WSIS Forum (Geneva) and Port Louis, Mauritius (World Telecommunication/ICT Indicators Meeting). In most developing countries, there is still a serious lack of reliable data in these areas.

In Fiji, an ITC project funded by the EU uses a combination of mobile and Web-based applications to facilitate its activities in improving key services, supply capacities, market linkages and value chain performance in the agricultural sector. Based on stakeholder consultations and needs analysis of target beneficiaries, five mobile and Web-based services were identified for development.[1] Feedback from user testing and training workshops suggested that the target users found the developed applications to be useful and usable. Users also indicated willingness to pay for the services, implying that the business model may be sustainable.

In the area of trade related technical assistance, the deployment of e-business solutions such as informational websites and mobile solutions has become increasingly popular. The ITC has been active in both areas. In Morocco, the upgrade of the web portal of the leather industry association FEDIC was initiated in 2012 in the framework of ITC's ENACT programme. The initiative built on the work undertaken by ITC for the textile industry association AMITH in that country, and for the Ministry of

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[1] The five areas are: Fiji Makete that links farmers to the buyers (food processors/exporters and the local markets) through mobile phone and a website; mAlerts that could be used for improved communication and coordination along the supply chain; mPrices for timely market prices delivered through SMS and on website; Farmers' Tips messaging service; and a mobile-based membership application service for the Fiji Food and Livestock Council (FCLC).

Commerce in Tunisia in 2011. In all instances, the website revamping process heavily relied on a multi-stakeholder approach, involving the institutional website owners, their constituents and local service providers. In Algeria, a training of trainers was undertaken in 2011 on ITC's web marketing and e-commerce capacity building portfolio. In 2012, the trainers pursued the training roll-out across the country, with the support of the Algerian trade promotion organization, ALGEX and the women entrepreneurs association, SEVE. Two-day training sessions were organized in six cities benefiting 142 SME managers (45% women). In Bangladesh, ITC used the NTFII Bangladesh project, funded by the Dutch CBI, to provide advisory services on web strategy to export-oriented SMEs from the local IT industry. Training was offered to companies on topics such as web advertisement, social media and search-engine optimization. The level of adaptation to sector specificities was important to the beneficiaries.

In 2012, ITC developed 4 new external as well as internal e-learning courses bringing the total number of courses to 9. Some 250 beneficiaries from 11 countries participated in the courses, representing growth of over 90% compared to 2011. Tens of thousands of visits originating from 151 countries have also been made on open self-training modules which introduce ITC market analysis tools in video.

The structure and navigation of the Learning Management System was upgraded based on user feedback to better address beneficiaries' needs and an automated course completion certificate system was established. Consultations conducted with other agencies (WTO, UNITAR, UNCTAD, IFC and others) should lead, in 2013, to partnerships on joint curriculum development as well as course and beneficiaries' reciprocal referrals. ITC's online courses are accessible via http://learning.intracen.org.

B. Obstacles

1. Lack of well-defined targets

As highlighted before, one of the challenges faced in facilitating the action line on e-business has been the lack of well-defined targets. The Partnership has recommended that a new target – "Connect all businesses with ICTs" – be added to the original WSIS targets.

2. Progress assessment

The ToRs related to the modalities of coordination among co-facilitators in combination with para. 16 of the Geneva PoA are not specific enough to facilitate an adequate progress assessment.

3. INNOVATIVE POLICIES, PROGRAMMES AND PROJECTS

- Online database on information economy statistics

In 2012, all UNCTAD's information on the core ICT indicators related to the information economy was made available on in the UNCTAD Statistical Portal (UNCTADstat).

- Joint UNCTAD-WITSA Survey of National IT/Software Associations

With a view to ensure that the private sector experience was well reflected in the IER 2012, a joint UNCTAD-WITSA survey was conducted of national IT/Software Associations. The results from the survey were reported separately (http://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/dtlstictmisc2012d4_en.pdf).

- Joint UNCTAD-ILO project to support ICT dimension in Women's Entrepreneurship Development (WED)

With the financial support of the Government of Sweden, UNCTAD and ILO will ensure that the ICT dimension is better reflected in the ILO's WED framework. A revised framework, guide and training material will be available by the end of 2013.

- Online consultation for WSIS+10 Review

With a view to contribute to the WSIS+10 Review, ITC, UNCTAD and UPU conducted an online consultation among stakeholders in January-February 2013. The consultation used the template agreed upon by action line facilitators at the WSIS Forum 2012.

4.   FUTURE ACTIONS OR INITIATIVES

- Development of new indicators related to trade in ICT services and ICT-enabled services

Under the umbrella of the Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development, UNCTAD will lead the work on developing core indicators related to trade in ICT services and ICT-enabled services. The process will be financially supported by the Government of Sweden (Sida) and will involve consultations also with non-Partnership agencies and organizations.

- Development of web-based e-commerce solutions

The business usage of ICTs is constantly growing, driven by the global roll-out of mobile infrastructure and broadband internet access services. Companies and trade support institutions (TSIs) are increasingly resorting to e-business solutions, which leverage this infrastructure. However, advanced solutions, in particular in the area of e-commerce, remain are under-represented. There is a clear need for more advanced, innovative web-based e-commerce solutions. TSI for instance can offer online procurement aggregation services; SMEs can resort to low-cost, user friendly cloud-based e-commerce solutions; businesses can become more competitive by deploying open-source productivity apps. All these areas require experimentation: the WSIS platform, in particular its C7 action line on e-business, could be a platform to share related experiences.