

**Intergovernmental Group of Experts on
E-Commerce and the Digital Economy**
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Statement by

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FIRST INTERGOVERNMENTAL GROUP OF EXPERTS
ON E-COMMERCE AND THE DIGITAL ECONOMY
Session 4: How can developed countries partner with developing countries
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Room XVIII, Palais des Nations, Geneva

Intervention by Khan Salehin, UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)

Mr. Chair, thank you.

The UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) through the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) has been at **the forefront of development and harmonization of technical standards, recommendations and guidelines to enable electronic business and paperless trade transaction** for a number of decades. Just as an example, we have recently started working on a transformative innovation technology - ‘Blockchain’ and trying to see its impact and practical applicability.

As discussed over last one and half days, there is a need to look at E-commerce from a holistic approach including cross border trade and trade facilitation related issues. In order to facilitate cross border e-commerce, standardization and harmonization are essential to any exchange of information, be it B2B, B2C or G2G. Standardization and harmonization are aimed at efficiency of processes, which results in economic benefits. Just to provide one example from the many UNECE standards available for facilitating trade: the UNLOCODE or the United Nations Code for Trade and Transport Locations, which is the set of unique 6 digit codes for identifying specific locations, are currently in use in about 250 countries. A recent estimate suggests, adoption of such a code in a new single location in China could save USD 180 million for the traders. Therefore, it goes without saying much that the opportunity in front of us is enormous given the availability of standards and instruments. However, the challenge constitutes the dearth of up-take or application of these instruments in many developing countries. We at UNECE believe that the developing countries could benefit much more **if they adopt technical standards that are best suited to their context and harmonize their regulatory and commercial processes with their trading partners.**

We must note that progress is being made in this direction. For example, we have observed in a recent global survey on Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade, carried out in 120 countries by all the UN Regional Commissions that developing regions including the Latin America and the Caribbean and South-East and East Asia and parts of developing Europe have made good progress in terms of Laws and regulations for electronic transaction. **However, a big gap remains between the developed economies and the developing economies in the implementation of measures like electronic application for letters of credit without requiring paper documentation. This is where we believe a bridge can be built by using the existing tools with the support of the international organizations.**

In this connection, we believe that the e-commerce readiness assessment is an excellent tool for the developing countries to kick-off the journey towards eTrade. Throughout this journey, to provide means to the partnership between the developed and developed economies and to implement relevant measures that will support eTrade, **UNECE offers the 40 policy recommendations and over 400 technical standards on electronic business that can be used as needed.** The UN Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) have experts from every region of the world and we try to encourage developing economies to participate in the development of standards. We aim to develop the most robust standards possible and this requires taking into account the points of view and business requirements of as many actors as possible from both private and public sector and from as many different economies as possible even through consultation calls instead of face-to-face meetings to facilitate participation. **UNECE's flagship knowledge platform, Trade Facilitation Implementation Guide (TFIG) is also available free of charge to any individual, country that requires information not only on UNECE tools but from other international organizations involved in electronic business.**

All in all, we believe that the standards, recommendations and other relevant tools can be effective means or tools for the partnership between the developed and developing economies.

I thank you for providing the opportunity to speak.