Working Group on Measuring E-commerce and the Digital Economy

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Wednesday 18 April to Friday 20 April
The context

Policy recommendations from 1st session of IGE on E-commerce and the Digital Economy:

12. Recommends the establishment of a Working Group on Measuring E-commerce and the Digital Economy in a format that aligns with available resources; and invites the secretariat to prepare a concept note on the working group and explore interest among development partners to financially support its operations;

At the 66th Executive Session of the TDB:

- Decision to take into consideration the policy recommendations of the 1st session of the IGE.
The need for better statistics

- Credible and internationally comparable statistics needed for policy making
- Agenda 2030 – avoid widening inequalities
- G-20 priority under German and Argentinean Presidency

Two types of challenges
1. Methodology exists but data lacking
   - Applies especially to developing countries
2. No methodology exists
   - Cross-border e-commerce
   - New features of digital economy

Number of countries having reported data to UNCTAD on ICT use by businesses, by development group, 2003-2016.
Role of the Working Group

- Support discussions in and report to the IGE on E-commerce and the Digital Economy
- WG focus: e-commerce and the digital economy
- Complement work of other international organizations
  - ITU: ICT infrastructure, ICT access and use by households and individuals
  - ILO: ICT employment
  - UNESCO: ICT education and skills
- Inter-agency activities
  - Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development (14 agencies)
  - Task Force on International Trade Statistics
  - Informal group on cross-border e-commerce
- Strengthen UNCTAD’s work in all three pillars that require better statistics
Possible outputs and activities

- Mapping of data availability among member states – identify gaps
- Discussion of definition of relevant indicators and priorities for data collection
  - ICT use by enterprises
  - E-commerce (domestic and cross-border; B2C, B2B, C2C)
  - Trade in ICT services and ICT-enabled services
  - New features of the digital economy (IoT, 3D printing, cloud computing, etc.)
- Consider need to adapt OECD definitions to fit developing countries
- Discuss the role of commercially held sources of data
- Peer review of UNCTAD Manual for the Production of Statistics on the Information Economy
- Identify needs for capacity building
- Explore new avenues for South-South Cooperation
Practical arrangements

▪ Meet in Geneva once a year – *ideally back to back with ITU or OECD meetings on measuring ICT and the digital economy*

▪ Participants:
  o National statistical offices and other authorities involved in data collection
  o Relevant international organizations and think tanks

▪ Serviced jointly by DTL (ICT Policy Section) and GDS (Development Statistics and Information Branch)

▪ One chair and one vice-chair

▪ IGE to decide focus of each meeting of WG
Resource implications

- Implementing the work would require extra-budgetary resources
- One full-time staff member (P3)
- Travel and DSA for participants of developing countries, and especially LDCs
- Consultancy funding for preparation of background papers as needed
- Total estimated annual cost (including overheads): $318,000
Thank You!

“Digital economy data gap risks widening inequalities, UNCTAD says”