WEBINAR - "COVID-19 and E-Commerce"
Findings from a survey of e-commerce businesses and policy responses in 23 developing countries

Date : 20 November at 10:00 – 11:15 (Geneva time, UTC+1)

Participation : The event will be online via the WebEx platform, in English only

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Background

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 crisis, UNCTAD's E-Commerce and Digital Economy (ECDE) Programme has engaged with a diverse network of stakeholders and carried out a survey to better understand the magnitude of the impact on e-commerce businesses across developing countries and least developed countries (LDCs), identify key trends and challenges faced by e-commerce businesses, as well as public and private policy responses to cope with the crisis.

The survey covered 23 countries, mainly LDCs in Africa and Asia-Pacific, that benefitted from UNCTAD's e-commerce capacity building programmes, either through an eTrade Readiness Assessment (eT Ready) or a national e-commerce strategy. The survey allowed to assess the impact of COVID-19 on e-commerce businesses from early March to end of July 2020. Businesses include companies selling, at least parts of, their goods or services online and third-party online marketplaces. The responses from the private sector were complemented by public sector responses elaborating on measures taken during the COVID-19 crisis to support e-commerce, as well as to use e-commerce for economic recovery efforts.

The resulting paper "COVID-19 and e-commerce: impact on businesses and policy responses" to be presented in this webinar, summarizes the findings of the survey and outlines key policy recommendations. They are meant to support COVID-19 economic recovery plans with reforms and initiatives geared towards enhancing digital readiness in developing countries and LDCs. The webinar will provide a platform for experience sharing and dialogue among public and private stakeholders, and in turn, this will contribute to enhance ongoing efforts in beneficiary countries of UNCTAD ECDE capacity building programmes.

Objectives

The objectives of this Webinar are the following:

➢ Present the main findings and conclusions of the paper "COVID-19 and e-commerce"
➢ Give stakeholders voice to strengthen the relevance of key policy measures recommended in the paper
➢ Raise awareness on the role of international cooperation and multi-stakeholders inclusive partnerships to enhance digital readiness for COVID-19 coping and recovery strategies in developing countries and LDCs

Provisional agenda

0 – 10'	• **Opening remarks,** Shamika N. Sirimanne, Director, Division on Technology and Logistics
10' – 25'	• **Presentation of the findings and recommendations of the paper "COVID-19 and e-commerce"** - Alessandro Vitale, Programme Officer, UNCTAD

25'-50'	• **Panel discussion on the challenges and opportunities ahead to accelerate digital readiness in the context of the COVID-19 recovery efforts**
	
	   - Mostafiz Sohel, Convener, BASIS E-Commerce Alliance (Bangladesh)
	   - Priyanka Chetry, CEO, Grocerdel (Cambodia)
	   - Francis Dufay, CEO, Jumia Côte d'Ivoire
	   - Richard Niwenshuti, Coordinator Single Project Implementation Unit, Ministry of Trade and Industry, Rwanda
	   - Philipp Kruschel, Head of Secretariat, German Alliance for Trade Facilitation GIZ

50' – 70'	• **Moderated Q&A based on inputs from webinar participants**
75'	• **Wrap up of the conclusions and webinar closure**
Moderator: Torbjörn Fredriksson, Chief, UNCTAD ICT Policy Section	