

E-COMMERCE AND DIGITAL ECONOMY PROGRAMME

YEAR IN REVIEW 2020

Facilitating inclusive digital economies
in challenging times



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Content

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms	4
List of Figures, Tables and Boxes	5
1. Introduction	10
2. Highlights from 2020	14
3. Contributing to the SDGs	16
4. Main activities and accomplishments in 2020	18
4.1 Building knowledge on how to benefit from e-commerce and the digital economy	18
Implications of COVID-19 for e-commerce and development	18
The Digital Economy Report	19
Technical Notes on ICT for Development and Policy Briefs	20
Other research activities	22
Database on statistics related to e-commerce and the digital economy	22
4.2 Building capacity to harness the digital economy	23
E-commerce and Law Reform	23
eTrade Readiness Assessments	28
Development of National E-commerce Strategies	35
Technical assistance on measuring e-commerce and the digital economy	38
eTrade for Women	38
4.3 Building consensus, fostering dialogue	47
Intergovernmental Group of Experts on E-commerce and the Digital Economy	47
Working Group on Measuring E-commerce and the Digital Economy	48
The future is digital but needs to be more inclusive: leveraging eTrade for all	48
E-commerce Weeks	52
Digital Cooperation for Development	52
5. Goals and objectives for 2021 and beyond	54
6. Management	56
6.1 Human resources	56
6.2 Financial information	57
6.3 Risk analysis	59
6.4 Lessons learned	60
7. Annexes	62
Notes	70

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
B2C	Business to consumer
DER	Digital Economy Report
EAC	East African Community
ECDE	E-commerce and Digital Economy
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ECS	E-commerce strategy
EIF	Enhanced Integrated Framework
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IGE	Intergovernmental Group of Experts on E-commerce and the Digital Economy
ILO	International Labour Organization
ITC	International Trade Centre
ITFC	International Islamic Trade Finance Corporation
JSI	Joint Statement Initiative
LDCs	Least Developed Countries
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
PDEP	Pacific Digital Economy Programme
PIFS	Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
RCO	Resident Coordinator Office
RPTC	Regular Programme of Technical Cooperation
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SMEs	Small and medium-sized enterprises
UN	United Nations
UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund
UNCITRAL	United Nations Commission on International Trade Law
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNECLAC	United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNESCWA	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Africa
UNGIS	UN Group on the Information Society
UPU	Universal Postal Union
WAEMU	West African Economic and Monetary Union
WSIS	World Summit on the Information Society Forum

List of Figures, Tables and Boxes

Figure 1. E-commerce and Digital Economy Programme's Results Framework	12
Figure 2. B2C E-commerce index, average values by country group, 2019 vs. 2020	21
Figure 3. Cyberlaw adoption rates in developing and least developed countries, 2018 vs. 2020	24
Figure 4. UNCTAD's eTrade Readiness Assessment status, as of December 2020	29
Figure 5. Overall implementation rate of eT Ready recommendations by country	32
Figure 6. Number of implemented recommendations by country and policy area	33
Figure 7. UNCTAD's E-Commerce Strategy status, as of December 2020	35
Figure 8. Share of Aid for Trade resources for the ICT sector, 2015-2019	51
Figure 9. ECDE Programme team organigram, April 2021	56
Figure 10. ECDE Programme donors, 2020	57
Figure 11. ECDE Programme expenditures by type, 2020	58
Table 1. eTrade for all's 7 key policy areas and partners as of December 2020	49
Table 2. ECDE Programme expenditures by programme component and type, 2020	58
Box 1. Examples of actions taken to implement recommendations related to legal and regulatory frameworks	25
Box 2. Growing partner support for the implementation of eT Readies' recommendations	31
Box 3. eT Readies support e-commerce regional integration in West Africa	36
Box 4. Meet the eTrade for Women Advocates (2019-2020)	41



Message from Shamika N. Sirimanne, Director, Division on Technology and Logistics

Since the COVID-19 pandemic struck our economies and societies, digital solutions have been used more than before to maintain economic and social activities in times of various lockdown measures and travel restrictions. At the same time, the wide gaps in digital readiness became even more apparent. Recent developments have further shown the wisdom of member States when they back in 2016, at the UNCTAD Ministerial in Nairobi, decided to strengthen UNCTAD's work on enhancing development gains from the digital economy and e-commerce. Their perspicacious actions laid the foundation for what evolved into the E-commerce and Digital Economy (ECDE) Programme.

Our economies are being transformed at record speed as more and more people, governments and businesses go digital. The rapid development of the digital economy is disrupting production, consumption and trade patterns, significantly affecting the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Impacts will depend on policies and the readiness of countries, enterprises and people to take advantage of digitalization, and its benefits will not be equally distributed. Significant efforts are needed to create a more inclusive digital economy.

The pandemic has added urgency to the need for action. It has taken a huge toll in terms of lives and it plunged the world into a deep recession. At the same time, it has accelerated various digital transformation processes around the world. Digital solutions for telemedicine, telework, online education and – not least – e-commerce have been increasingly used to keep economic and social activities going, most likely with lasting effects. Without adequate actions, inequalities will widen even more.

Digital divides, differences in readiness and the high concentration of digital market power all point to the need for new policies and regulations to create a fairer distribution of gains from digital transformations. Finding suitable solutions will require effective international collaboration and policy dialogue, with the full involvement of developing countries.

The ECDE Programme has a key role to play in this context. It was set up with the aim of helping to reduce inequality, enable the benefits of digitalization to reach all people and ensure that no one is left behind – nor left offline – in the evolving digital economy. This overall goal has become even more important to achieve due to the pandemic and to support the recovery efforts.

This *Year in Review* is the first assessment of the work done under the common programmatic vision of the ECDE Programme. It focuses on activities that took place during 2020 and highlights key achievements related to its work to build knowledge, capacity and consensus. In doing so, it applies the Programme's monitoring and evaluation system for measuring results, with a view to ensuring a robust and results-driven approach to programme management and monitoring.

I would like to express my appreciation to the growing number of member States that are turning to UNCTAD for assistance to help them achieve more inclusive outcomes of the evolving digital economy. I am also grateful to our peer organizations in the *eTrade for all* initiative, for their commitment to connect the dots and work for a digital and sustainable future for all. Finally, growing trust and funding from development partners are essential for this Programme to fulfil its potential in this Decade of Action.



Message from Torbjörn Fredriksson, Chief, ICT Policy Section

The COVID-19 pandemic affected the ECDE Programme in several respects. It forced us to change the methods of delivering our work, adapt our research focus and find creative ways of interacting with our partners and beneficiaries. Since March 2020, the ECDE Programme team has largely been teleworking from home, and planned physical meetings, conferences, workshops and field missions have had to be undertaken virtually. Ministries of Commerce in many developing countries have adapted well, showing that they are embracing new technologies. This shift has been both challenging and a valuable learning experience.

Highlights during 2020 included several innovations. **New products** included the first virtual eWeek, which was held only a few weeks after the first lockdown was imposed in Geneva. The first eTrade Readiness Assessments of non-LDCs were conducted in Côte d'Ivoire and Iraq, in cooperation with **eTrade for all** partners. We set in motion a systematic monitoring exercise of the implementation of recommendations made in earlier assessments, with a first report published in December. The eTrade for Women initiative established its first regional communities of women digital entrepreneurs. A number of studies were conducted to learn more about the impact of the pandemic on e-commerce, culminating in the COVID-19 and E-commerce Global Review undertaken under the **eTrade for all** umbrella. And we hosted the UN Group on the Information Society (UNGIS) Dialogue on the Role of Digitalization in the Decade of Action.

New partnerships emerged. The **eTrade for all** initiative expanded to 32 members as ILO and the Commonwealth Secretariat joined. The initiative provides the ideal platform for promoting

better digital cooperation and more and more stakeholders are using it. We received growing support from donors, notably Germany and the Netherlands, and engaged in new partnership discussions with Switzerland. More support enabled us to strengthen the team by recruiting **new colleagues**, a process that is still ongoing. The expansion of the team is necessary in view of the growing number of requests for assistance from member States, and to leverage our expanding partnerships for cost-effective delivery of our services.

Some upcoming milestones for 2021 and beyond are also worth highlighting. We will join the UN Capital Development Fund and the UN Development Programme to launch the Pacific Digital Economy Programme, our first such regional effort. Work on a regional e-commerce strategy for the Economic Community of West African States will commence, and the Revised UNCTAD Manual for the Production of Statistics on the Digital Economy will be used to develop new training courses. The Digital Economy Report 2021 is scheduled for release in September. We will contribute to the virtual UNCTAD XV Ministerial Conference to take place from 3-7 October 2021, and, a few weeks later, we hope to welcome you at the Asia eCommerce Week in October 2021 in Abu Dhabi or online, or both.

I would like to finish by expressing my sincere appreciation to the entire ECDE team, for having been able to continue to deliver effectively and efficiently and build momentum, by using creative solutions during a challenging year. The support from our beneficiaries, partners and donors is also gratefully acknowledged. We look forward to working with you all to continue harnessing the potential of the digital economy for sustainable development. This mission has never been more important.



AFRICA
eCommerce Week
10-12 December 2018 Nairobi, Kenya

Empowering African Economies in the digital era

Logos for UN Women, African Union, and European Union are visible on the right side of the banner.

The E-commerce and Digital Economy (ECDE) Programme in 2020

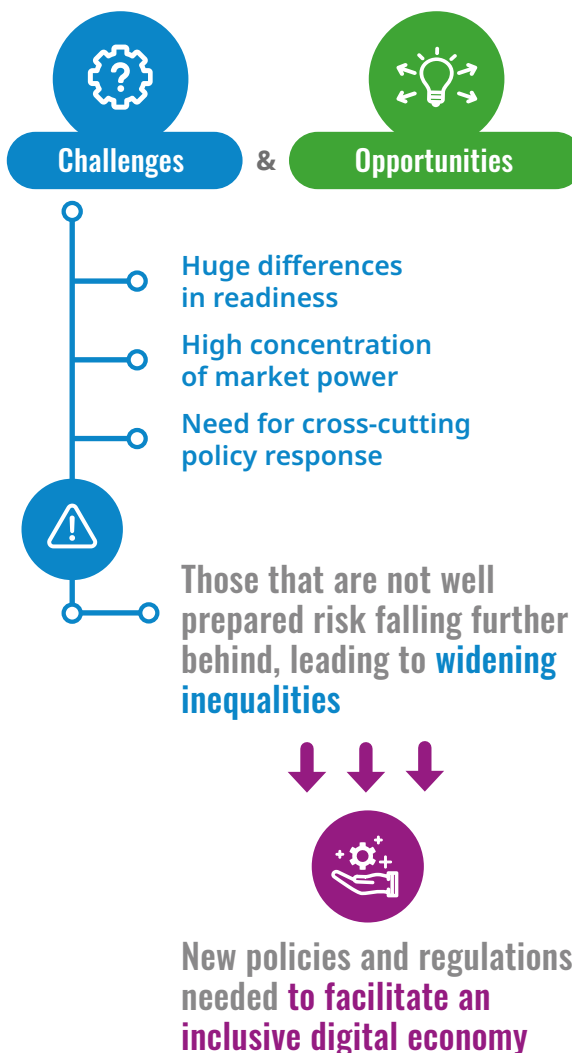


1. Introduction

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes the role of information and communications technologies (ICTs) in advancing progress towards the achievement of every single one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with ICTs being widely acknowledged as a catalyst for decent work and economic growth, industry and innovation, and gender equality.¹ While the accelerating trend of digitalization and its potential for advancing development outcomes is indisputable, its net impact depends on the level of digital readiness of countries to take advantage of the opportunities it presents. Many developing countries, especially the least developed countries (LDCs), are inadequately prepared to capture opportunities emerging as a result of digitalization. Moreover, there is a risk that digitalization will lead to increased polarization and widening income inequalities, as productivity gains may accrue mainly to a few, already wealthy and skilled enterprises and individuals. In 2020, the significant divides in digital readiness were further accentuated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The speed at which the digital economy is unfolding, and the gaps that exist in terms of the ability of countries, enterprises and individuals to engage in it, underline the urgency of scaling up global support for capacity-building and technical assistance to countries trailing behind in the digital economy. A particular challenge for countries is to address a large number of policy areas in parallel and in a coordinated manner, often without reliable statistics and other information to inform the decision-making process.

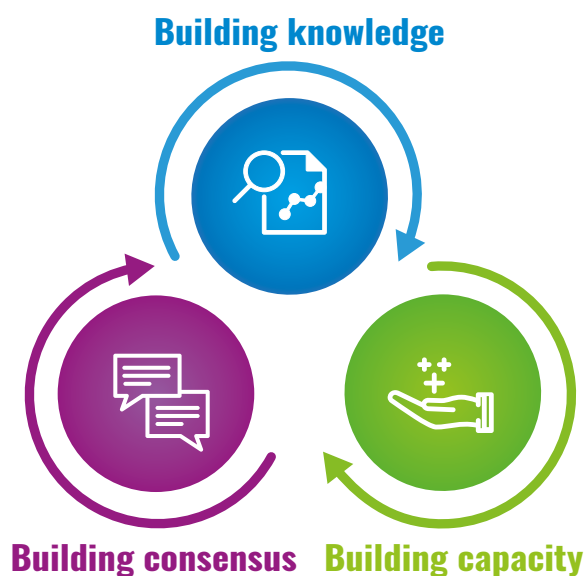
Digitalization presents both



It is in this context that UNCTAD's ECDE Programme comes in. In 2016, the Nairobi Maafikiano – the outcome document of the 14th UNCTAD Ministerial Conference – formally acknowledged UNCTAD's leadership role in the area of e-commerce and the digital economy for development through its three pillars of work.

A three-pillar approach

The ECDE Programme provides a unique platform for:



- **Generating research and better statistics** to enable governments and other stakeholders to understand the implications of economic digitalization for sustainable development.

- **Providing assistance** to developing countries as they seek to prepare for and adapt to digital disruptions.

- **Fostering global multi-stakeholder dialogue** and a more coordinated approach on e-commerce and the digital economy from a development perspective.

In addition to its three-pillar approach and ensuing synergies, the Programme's added value is derived from a global reach with a focus on supporting countries trailing behind, a strong emphasis on partnerships, a mainstreamed approach to gender, and a high degree of relevance to the current development context, which has been defined by the COVID-19 pandemic and which led to several adaptations of the Programme's work in 2020.

To enhance the effectiveness of its interventions, a more efficient use of resources and a robust and results-driven approach to programme management and monitoring, the ECDE Programme uses a Results Framework that unites all individual projects under a common vision.

The Framework is organized around the main working areas and positive changes expected in the short, medium, and long term to reduce digital divides between and within countries and promote equitable, inclusive, and sustainable gains from the digitalization of economic and social activities (see Figure 1).

Figure 1.

E-commerce and Digital Economy Programme's Results Framework



→ Impact ←

Enhanced inclusive and sustainable development gains and economic benefits from e-commerce and the digital economy for people and businesses in developing countries, particularly LDCs

Level of accountability at Impact level: Governments of member States, private sector, civil society

Outcome 1

Improved decision-making and policy formulation at the national level on e-commerce and digital economy for development, in a gender sensitive manner

Outcome 2

Improved efficiency of governments, international organizations, civil society and private sector in addressing issues and providing assistance on e-commerce and the digital economy for development, in a gender sensitive manner

Level of accountability at Outcome level: Governments of member States

Output 1.1

Research and analysis enhancing the understanding and increasing the awareness of policy makers about policy options and good practices to benefit from e-commerce and the digital economy

Output 1.2

Capacity building assistance to policy makers for integrating e-commerce and the digital economy in the national development agenda in dialogue with other stakeholders

Output 2.1

Facilitation of cooperation, exchange of good practices and consensus building among policy makers, as well as research institutions, academic centres, private and public entities at the national, subregional, regional and international levels in the areas of e-commerce and the digital economy for development

Level of accountability at Output level: UNCTAD

Activity 1.1.1

Digital Economy Report

Activity 1.1.2

Technical notes on ICT for development

Activity 1.1.3

Policy briefs

Activity 1.1.4

Database on statistics related to E-commerce and the Digital Economy

Activity 1.1.5

Other research activities

Activity 1.2.1

E-commerce and Law Reform

Activity 1.2.2

ICT Policy Reviews & National E-commerce Strategies

Activity 1.2.3

Measuring E-commerce and the Digital Economy

Activity 1.2.4

eTrade Readiness Assessments

Activity 1.2.5

eTrade for Women

Activity 2.1.1

Intergovernmental Group of Experts on E-commerce and the Digital Economy

Activity 2.1.2

Working Group on Measuring E-commerce and the Digital Economy

Activity 2.1.3

eTrade for all

Activity 2.1.4

eCommerce Week(s)

Activity 2.1.5

Digital Co-operation for Development (UNGIS, SG Roadmap, WSIS)

The Results Framework is operationalized via a Work Plan and is accompanied by a detailed monitoring and evaluation (M&E) Framework, the primary purpose of which is to guide progress measurement in terms of expected results and against expected targets.

This first *Year in Review* for the ECDE Programme as a whole, provides an overview of its main activities and accomplishments in 2020, based on the evidence collected in line with its Results and M&E Frameworks. It is not an exhaustive account of everything that was done. Instead, it highlights key facts and figures as well as main developments and outlines some of the Programme's main objectives for 2021 and beyond, based on country demands as well as donor and partner priorities. An overview of the Programme's management, including human and financial resources as well as risks, is also provided.

Challenges and limitations:

- Both the Results Framework and corresponding M&E Framework are at an early stage of maturity. This *Year in Review* 2020 is the first time that they are operationalized. As the Programme is still evolving, it has not been possible to report baseline and/or actual data on all the performance indicators in the Results Framework. Further fine-tuning of the Results and M&E Frameworks has been outlined as a priority for the upcoming period in view of lessons learned from the development of this *Year in Review*.

- The ECDE Programme has varying degrees of control over the different levels of results in its Results Framework. The achievement of expected outcomes is dependent on Member State governments and partners' willingness and ability to take action on the knowledge and recommendations provided by UNCTAD. Some variance between expected and actual performance at the outcome level should therefore be expected.

- Considering that it is not always possible to predict donor support for the ECDE Programme over the course of the next five years, or how specific activities will evolve, the Programme's M&E Framework is both a living and iterative document which will be reviewed periodically as needed, to ensure that the M&E process supports evidence-based decision-making and continual programme improvement to the greatest extent possible.

2. Highlights from 2020

Against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, UNCTAD's ECDE Programme continued to evolve while adapting its focus and activities to reflect the evolution and impact of the pandemic on e-commerce and the digital economy.



The Programme saw strong demand for assistance from LDCs and other developing and transition economies and witnessed growing support from development partners.

In 2020, 13 countries

benefited from capacity-building activities under the Programme

Living up to its commitment to partnership, a significant development in 2020 was the expansion of



32 partners
as of Dec 2020



subscribed to the collective vision of supporting developing countries on their journey to e-commerce for development, while championing successful initiatives.

2 new partners
in 2020



The Commonwealth Secretariat
The International Labour Organization

Leading role
in UNGIS



United Nations Group on the Information Society, which was chaired by UNCTAD in 2020-21.



27 news articles

were published on the UNCTAD website generating

96,000+ unique page views

The article '[COVID-19 has changed online shopping forever, survey shows](#)', which shed light on the pandemic's impact on the way consumers use e-commerce and digital solutions, generated more than 50,000 unique page views, making it the second most read news item on UNCTAD's website in 2020.

Thanks to new commitments from some donors, extra-budgetary funding will more than double, enabling the programme to:



\$2.7 million
in 2020

\$6.5 million
in 2021

→ Strengthen the team

→ Respond to more requests for assistance in all its areas.

The Programme demonstrated agility in steering resources where needed. As with many other organizations, following the measures introduced by the Swiss authorities in relation to the epidemiological situation caused by COVID-19, in March 2020, the ECDE team switched to 'working from home' mode, which was still ongoing at the time of drafting this report (April 2021).

During the pandemic, the ECDE team undertook dedicated research efforts related to the pandemic and its impact on e-commerce



'COVID-19 and E-commerce: A Global Review'

The first research-oriented project undertaken under the *eTrade for all* umbrella.



Targeted surveys of consumers as well as e-commerce companies

to further enhance understanding of the pandemic's impact



Dedicated repository on the eTrade for all platform

with useful knowledge resources from all partnering organizations on ways to cope with the COVID-19 fallout.



In the spirit of innovation, several new activities and features were introduced to strengthen and provide new impetus for existing work streams.

eTrade for Women communities

eTrade Readiness Assessment follow-up

Refinements of the Programme's Results and M&E frameworks.

The Programme also "went digital" in a number of ways to ensure its delivery in critical times.



virtual eWeek

2,000+ participants at the virtual eWeek **in 2020**

as compared with 1,500 at the "physical" eCommerce Week in 2019



48 Women digital entrepreneurs in 2020

from 17 countries across South-East Asia and Africa participated in [eTrade for Women e-Masterclasses](#)



All delivered online

- The Intergovernmental Group of Experts
- Training workshops
- Publication launch events and stakeholder consultations

3. Contributing to the SDGs

Digital technologies can help accelerate progress towards every one of the 17 SDGs of Agenda 2030. By working to increase understanding, build capacity, and foster dialogue between developing countries and their partners to enable them to reap the benefits and mitigate the risks of digitalization, the ECDE Programme contributes directly to SDGs 5, 8, 9, 10 and 17.²



The research pillar generates better official data and analysis, which are needed to facilitate policy formulation to harness digital trade for development and promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth (SDG 8), foster innovation (SDG 9), reduce inequalities (SDG 10) and boost exports of developing and least developed countries (SDG 17).

Through its *eTrade for Women* initiative, which is centered on the potential of women digital entrepreneurs to thrive as business leaders and emerge as influential voices in the public policy debate, the Programme advances inclusive and sustainable economic growth by empowering women in the digital economy, in line with SDG 5 and SDG 8.



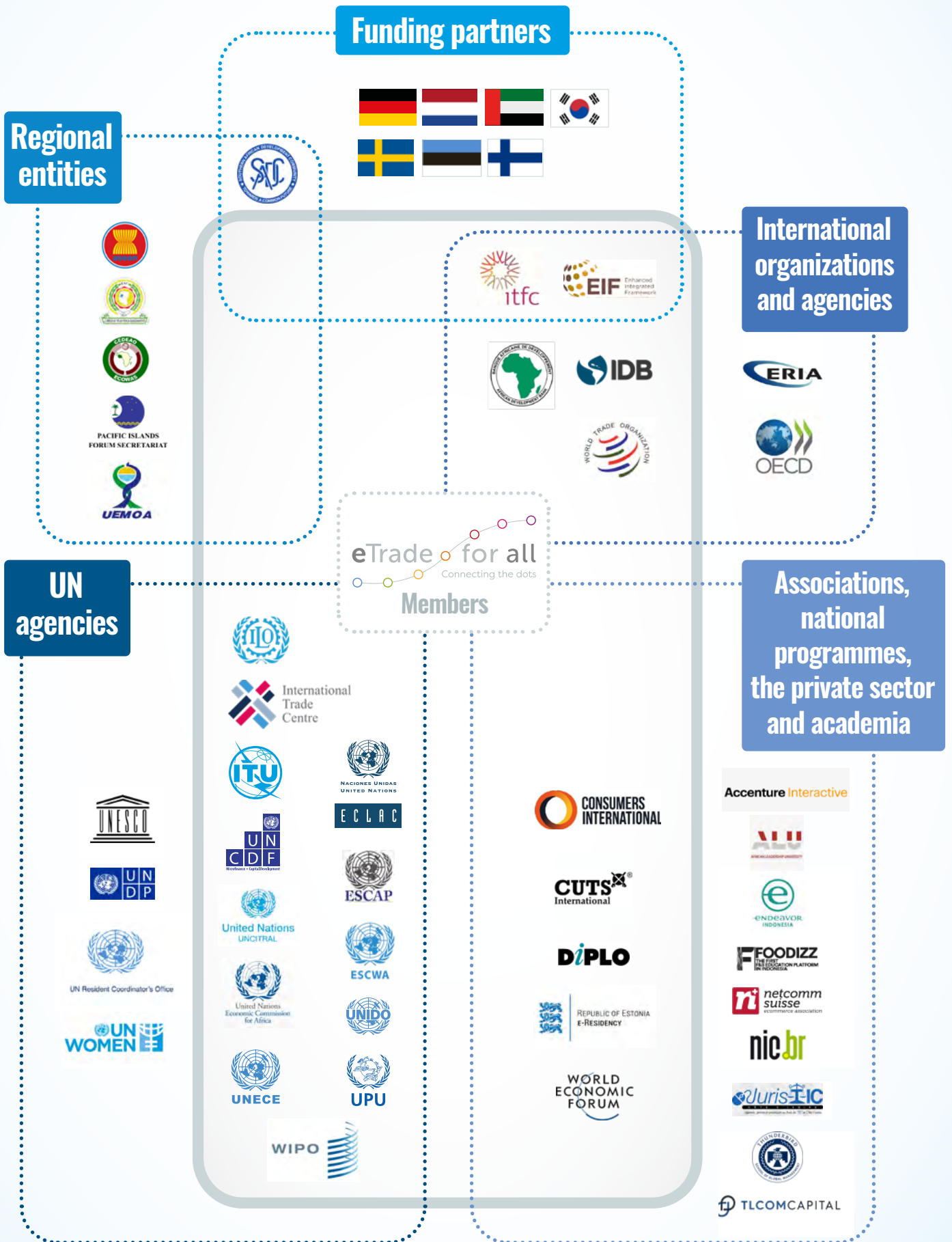
“ We will improve digital cooperation. Digital technologies have profoundly transformed society. They offer unprecedented opportunities and new challenges. When improperly or maliciously used, they can fuel divisions within and between countries, increase insecurity, undermine human rights, and exacerbate inequality.

Shaping a shared vision on digital cooperation and a digital future that show the full potential for beneficial technology usage, and addressing digital trust and security, must continue to be a priority as our world is now more than ever relying on digital tools for connectivity and social-economic prosperity. Digital technologies have a potential to accelerate the realization of the 2030 Agenda. We must ensure safe and affordable digital access for all. The United Nations can provide a platform for all stakeholders to participate in such deliberations.»

Declaration on the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, 21 September 2020

The Programme’s *eTrade for all* initiative, established for the purpose of enabling the international community, in partnership with the private sector and other stakeholders, to join forces for a more inclusive digital future, epitomizes SDG 17.

ECDE Partners in 2020



4. Main activities and accomplishments in 2020

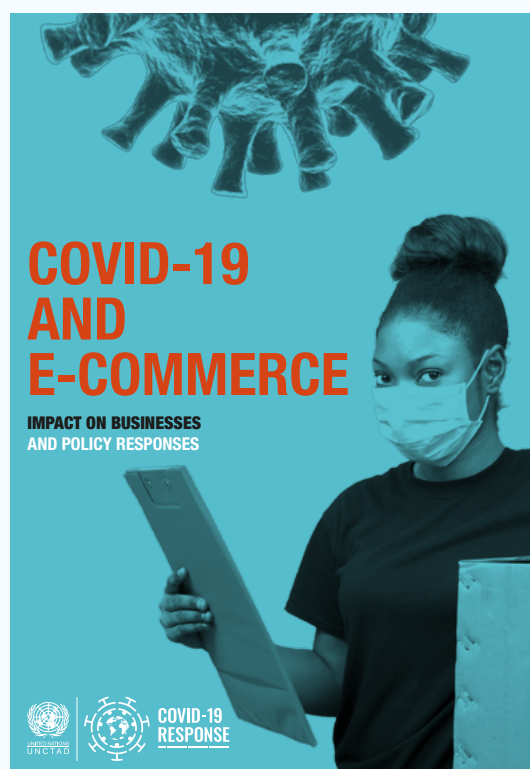
4.1 Building knowledge on how to benefit from e-commerce and the digital economy

A key component of the ECDE Programme is its policy-oriented research and analysis related to the development implications of e-commerce and the digital economy. A stronger evidence base is required for countries to improve economic, social and environmental outcomes. In 2020, the Programme gave particular emphasis to the links between the COVID-19 pandemic and the implications for e-commerce. Preparations for

the Digital Economy Report 2021 got underway and various statistical information was updated on the readiness of countries to engage in and benefit from e-commerce and on the volume and composition of e-commerce. New research was undertaken to consider the implications for developing countries of trade negotiations related to e-commerce.

Implications of COVID-19 for e-commerce and development

In 2020, the research agenda of the ECDE Programme was adjusted to give more focus on the pandemic's implications for e-commerce. A [first assessment](#) published already in April 2020 drew attention to the rise in the use of digital solutions against the backdrop of wide divides in terms of digital readiness. This was followed up with two sets of surveys. The [first](#) was released in October, covered consumers in nine countries and was conducted in collaboration with NetCommSuisse and NIC.br. The [second](#), which focused on e-commerce businesses and policy makers in LDCs and other developing countries, stressed that despite new opportunities for digital business models, the outlook looked challenging for many e-commerce businesses. Two-thirds reported a rise in operational costs and almost half expected to cut their workforce.



These and other inputs fed into a major undertaking under the *eTrade for all* initiative to analyze the impact of COVID-19 on E-commerce at both the global level and regionally. While most of the research took place in 2020, the [Global Review](#) report was published in March 2021. Regional reports prepared by four UN regional commissions were also planned for release in 2021. The report was featured as part of the online “Aid for Trade Stocktaking Event” organized by the World Trade Organization on 23-25 March under theme 3: Digital connectivity and e-commerce, attended by more than 100 people.

The critical global policy challenge that emerged from this study was to ensure that greater efforts are made to reduce inequalities in e-trade readiness. All stakeholders have a responsibility in this context to ensure that e-commerce plays a positive role in national and international recovery efforts. Resources should be committed to that goal.



The Digital Economy Report

The Digital Economy Report (DER) is an UNCTAD flagship publication that is published every two years. It analyzes current trends and major international policy issues regarding ICT, e-commerce and the digital economy, and their implications for trade and development. The Report reflects the increasing pervasiveness of the digital economy

and its key role in trade and development. During 2020, the main focus was on commissioning leading experts to prepare background papers that will feed into DER 2021, which will focus on cross-border data flows and development.

The DER has a long shelf life and is one of the most downloaded publications of UNCTAD. During 2020, more than 100,000 visits were recorded on UNCTAD's website for the 2019 edition of the DER, making it the third most visited report of the organization.

The DER received coverage in multiple international media, including The Economist, the Hindu Business Line, Forbes, and The Guardian Nigeria. The latter two drew attention to the risks to developing countries of remaining mere providers of raw data, and also highlighted the importance of investing in data culture to harness the opportunities presented by the digital economy.



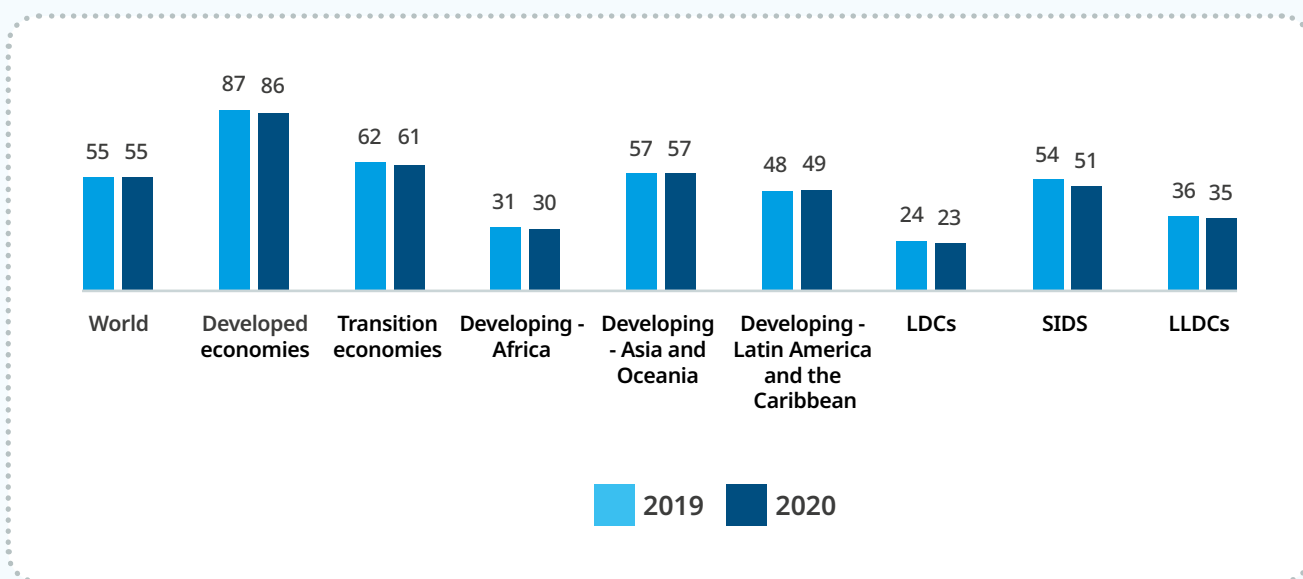
Technical Notes on ICT for Development and Policy Briefs

The Technical Notes offer an important outlet to disseminate targeted research activities that can be published on relatively short notice and that are of relevance to various components of the ECDE Programme. In 2020, two Technical Notes were issued. The [first](#) offered an update of UNCTAD's estimates of global e-commerce sales for 2018. The [second](#) provided an analysis of the implications for developing countries of the digital economy growth and its use of various mineral resources. This study focused on seven elements: gallium, germanium, indium, rare earth elements (REEs), selenium, tantalum and tellurium. These are all “functional elements”

that are essential raw materials for the building blocks for all ICT hardware, such as microchips and integrated circuits.

The 2020 edition of the [UNCTAD B2C E-commerce Index](#), which is a measure of an economy's readiness to engage in and benefit from e-commerce, was issued in early 2021. The 2020 edition of the index revealed persistent wide gaps between countries with the highest and the lowest level of e-commerce readiness, pointing to the need to address weaknesses in the countries trailing behind in order for further digital transformation to bring inclusive development gains. The only country group that saw an improvement in the average score was Latin America and the Caribbean.

Figure 2. B2C E-commerce index, average values by country group, 2019 vs. 2020



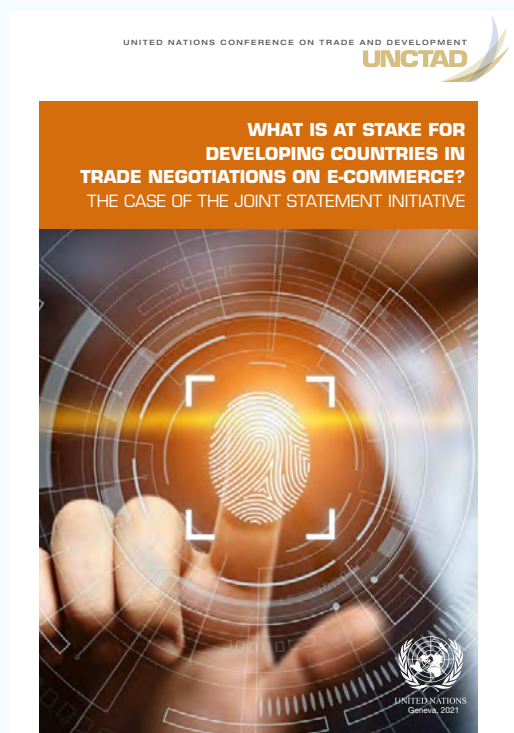
Source: UNCTAD

UNCTAD Policy Briefs are short policy-oriented documents which draw from research and analysis on ICTs, e-commerce and the digital economy for development, mostly the Digital Economy Report but also other research as appropriate, and link to topical issues of relevance to Agenda 2030. They are parti-

cularly useful for outreach purposes as they allow to reach a wider audience. In 2020, no new policy briefs were published from the ECDE Programme as more focus was devoted to assessments related to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Other research activities

In 2020, a collaboration with the UNCTAD Division on Trade and Commodities resulted in a report on the implications for developing countries of the ongoing Joint Statement Initiative (JSI) negotiations on e-commerce. The [study](#), which was released in early 2021, focuses on the development implications of aspects that may be covered in a possible negotiation outcome, and seeks to help countries assess various options for harnessing e-commerce for sustainable development. In a commentary, the Acting Secretary-General of UNCTAD stressed that “the possible outcome of the JSI negotiations will likely affect the governance of various dimensions of e-commerce, with implications for all countries, whether they are party to these negotiations or not.”



Database on statistics related to e-commerce and the digital economy

Access to relevant statistical data is fundamental to analyze trends of ICT usage, e-commerce and the digital economy in member States, and to inform policy discussions at the national and international levels. Adequate e-commerce and digital economy statistics can help identify gaps between countries or opportunities in economic sectors. In order to help disseminate internationally comparable statistics on key issues covered by the ECDE Programme, UNCTAD reports on data related to trade in ICT goods and services, trade in digitally deliverable services, the size of the ICT sector and the use of ICT by enterprises. This work is also linked to various capacity-building activities (see section on Technical assistance on measuring

e-commerce and the digital economy under 4.2 below) and the Working Group on Measuring E-commerce and the Digital Economy (see section 4.3).

One aspect of this activity involves conducting an annual survey of official information economy statistics from National Statistical Offices or other competent authorities of member States through an online questionnaire. UNCTAD validates and processes the data collected in order to include them in UNCTADStat on the UNCTAD website. In 2020, this area of work was negatively affected by the liquidity crisis in the United Nations, which led to the freezing of a post for a statistical assistant. As a result, no annual survey could be conducted. It is anticipated that a survey will be implemented in 2021.

4.2 Building capacity to harness the digital economy

The pandemic has pushed all countries to accelerate their efforts to deal with digital transformations. It has stressed the need for effective digital governance, policy reforms, inter-ministerial coordination and multi-stakeholders dialogue in an inclusive manner. It has also highlighted the urgency to scale up effective support to developing countries in relevant areas to enable them to be better prepared to harness digital disruptions. Significant support and investments are needed in key areas such as ICT connectivity, legal frameworks, awareness raising and training of e-commerce users, logistics, payment solutions, and access to finance. To support evidence-based

policy making, major efforts are also needed to improve the availability of relevant statistics.

The ECDE Programme is working with governments to help them understand challenges pertinent to e-commerce and to build the adequate environment for its development by conducting national assessments (eT Readies) and monitoring their implementation, developing e-commerce strategies (ECS), providing policy and legal advice to countries requesting assistance in building legal frameworks (e-commerce and law reform) and in measuring e-commerce and the digital economy.

E-commerce and Law Reform

Enhanced trust online is key to boost e-commerce exchanges within and among countries. Improved e-commerce legal infrastructure and its effective implementation is therefore paramount. The COVID-19 pandemic and associated increases in e-commerce transactions exacerbated the need for a supportive legal environment, including in light of significant increases in cybercrime and online fraud. This is also one of the seven priority areas of the *eTrade for all* initiative.

UNCTAD's work in the area of E-commerce and Law Reform focuses on **four areas**:



e-transactions,



consumer protection online,



privacy and data protection,



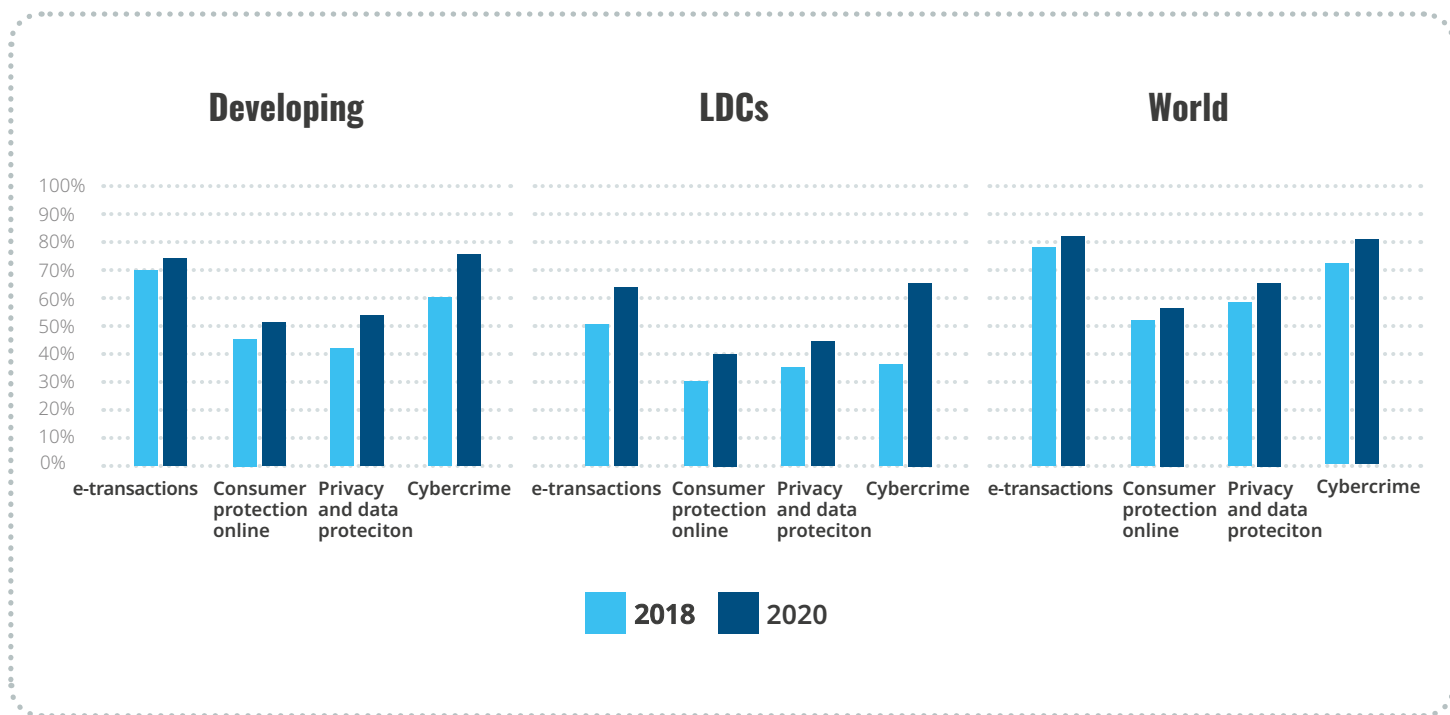
cybercrime.

While the availability of such legislation is generally high in developed countries, it is inadequate in many other parts of the world. This situation places many developing countries at a disadvantage with regard to leveraging the digital economy, and may create barriers to various services exports.

Beyond the adoption of the legislation, it is also essential to strengthen the implementation and enforcement of relevant laws and regulations in many developing countries.

The Global Cyberlaw Tracker shows some improvement in terms of the adoption of e-commerce legislation between 2018 and 2020 (Figure 3).³ There is a particular need to improve the situation among the LDCs, which are trailing behind the most in the areas of data protection and consumer protection online.

Figure 3. Cyberlaw adoption rates in developing and least developed countries, 2018 vs. 2020



Source: UNCTAD

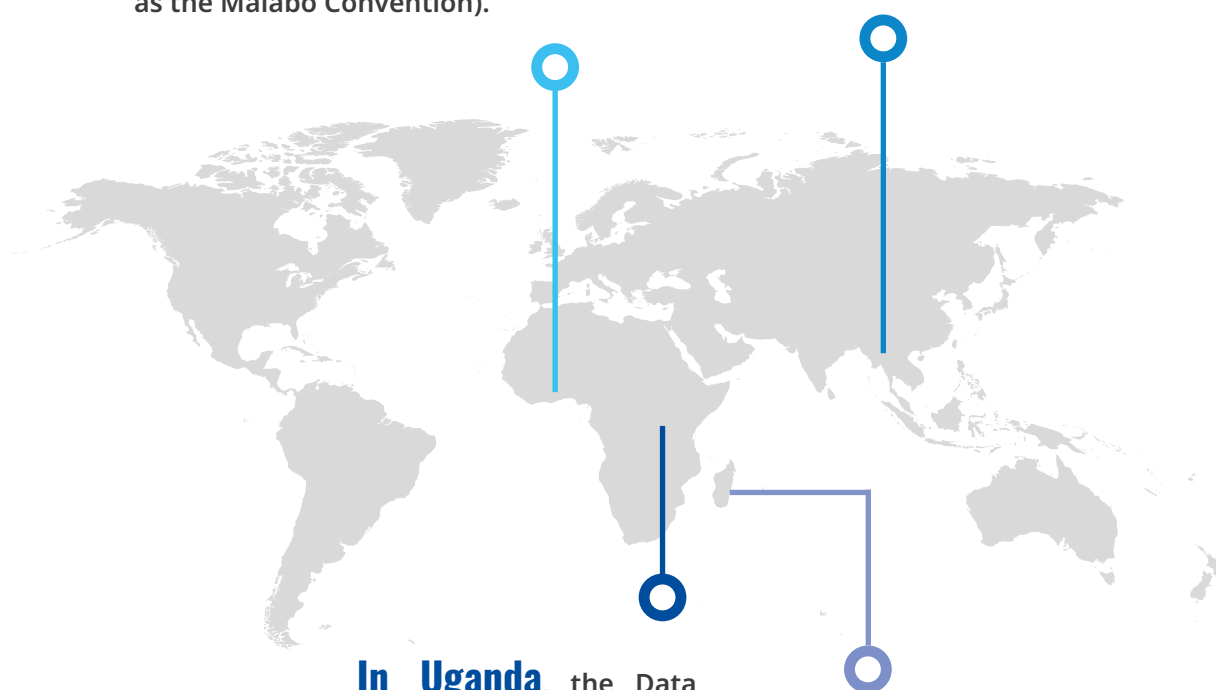
During 2020, the follow-up to the eTrade Readiness Assessments of 13 LDCs found that important actions had been taken in response to recommendations contained in the assessments. Actions to implement recommendations related

to the area of legal and regulatory frameworks had been taken in 11 of the countries, with an overall implementation rate of 51 per cent.⁴

Box 1. Examples of actions taken to implement recommendations related to legal and regulatory frameworks

In Togo, the law on personal data protection was adopted in October 2019 to enable the ratification of the African Union Convention on Cyber Security and Personal Data (also known as the Malabo Convention).

In Cambodia, the E-Commerce Law was enacted in November 2019 and complemented by an implementation decree passed in 2020 to ease the registration of e-commerce businesses, as well as the Consumer Protection Law to better safeguard the rights of online shoppers and businesses.



In Uganda, the Data Protection and Privacy Act 2019 was passed and assented to by the President in February 2019.

In Madagascar, the Ministry of Commerce issued an e-commerce Technical Guide in February 2020 outlining the obligations of e-commerce seller and steps to be undertaken to ensure consumer protection and personal data protection.

The ECDE Programme in 2020 received two specific requests for assistance related to e-commerce and law reform. Two online webinars were organized at the request of Government of Guatemala, with contributions from *eTrade for all* partners, the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). Another request was received by the Government of Kazakhstan to conduct an in-depth analysis of its existing regulations and laws related to e-commerce, undertake an in-depth analysis of the compliance of such legislation with draft provisions of the consolidated text of the draft Joint Statement Initiative negotiations on e-commerce, and to prepare a set of recommendations on key components of the comprehensive and unified legal framework, taking into account international best practice. The project will be funded through an International Trade Centre (ITC)/European Union (EU) project and is to be implemented between March and December 2021.

Based on support by the ECDE Programme and UNCTAD's TrainforTrade project to member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) aimed at improving the security of online transactions through the use of Digital identity, a compilation of case studies was published in 2020. The assistance helped to foster experience sharing and cooperation among ASEAN members and leveraged coordinated approaches, best practices and synergies with local and regional partners.

Activities organized with UNCTAD provided a forum, guided by knowledgeable experts on the fields of e-commerce and digital economy, that allowed a diversity of stakeholders to better understand the current challenges and future opportunities for Guatemala in this field.”

Eduardo Sperisen-Yurt, Ambassador, Permanent Mission of Guatemala to WTO

It is anticipated that requests for assistance will increase in the next few years as the eTrade readiness of more countries is assessed, and in view of the uptake of e-commerce. Against this background, more financial and human resources will be assigned to the E-commerce and Law Reform area. In 2021-2022 UNCTAD will enhance its assistance to member States seeking to consolidate their legal frameworks and building capacity of policy and law makers as well as sensitize businesses and consumers in collaboration with relevant partners.

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Côte d'Ivoire Évaluation de l'état au commerce él



UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT
UNCTAD

Fast-tracking implementation of eTrade Readiness Assessments



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UNION



Int'l
Trade
Centre

The eTrade Readiness Assessments (eT Readies) provide a diagnostic of the state of e-commerce in beneficiary countries in seven policy areas considered most relevant for e-commerce development.⁵

They represent a key policy tool for governments, the private sector and development partners to better engage in e-commerce and the digital economy and to maximize coordinated actions on the ground.

In addition, eT Readies provide specific recommendations on how to address existing weaknesses through concrete actions in an “Action Matrix”, and propose partners that could provide support in the respective areas.

The national assessments and the [synthesis report](#) of the findings of 7 eT Readies conducted in the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) and issued in 2020 will serve as an input to a regional e-commerce strategy, following a request from the ECOWAS Commission received in 2020 (see Box 2).

The increasing number of requests received from governments of developing countries as well as the substantial funding received in 2020 to support countries in this area demonstrate the relevance of the programme to support countries in their digital transformation.

27 eT Readies conducted by UNCTAD since 2017 out of 44 requests received.

7 assessments finalized in 2020 including

5 LDCs

[Benin](#)

[Malawi](#)

[Mali](#)

[Niger](#)

[Tanzania](#)

2 developing countries

[Côte d’Ivoire](#)

[Iraq](#)

Figure 4. UNCTAD's eTrade Readiness Assessment status, as of December 2020

UNCTAD eTrade Readiness Assessment status

- as of 31 December 2020



The eT Readies methodology has been enhanced over time to reflect learnings from earlier assessments and to better respond to the needs of each beneficiary country and increase policy impact.

Accomplishments in 2020

- **Increased policy dialogue and inter-ministerial coordination**

High-level national and regional launches of the eT Readies of Benin, Niger and Iraq organized in 2020 offered an opportunity to discuss the recommended e-commerce priority actions and prepare a roadmap towards policy implementation with Ministers, development partners and key e-commerce players. In Benin, the Minister of

Commerce has taken immediate steps towards the formulation of a national e-commerce strategy in 2021, with UNCTAD assistance.

- **Enhanced capacities and awareness around e-commerce**

Throughout 2020, a series of activities (including national multi-stakeholder consultations, focus group discussions, project kick-off events, eT Ready dedicated surveys) in beneficiary countries contributed to increasing the capacities of e-commerce players to engage more effectively in policy discussions and better understand the opportunities offered by e-commerce and the digital economy. In Benin, Niger and Côte d'Ivoire, close to 100 public and private sector stakehol-

ders actively participated in national focus group discussions, identifying barriers and opportunities and building consensus on national policies for digital transformation. Dedicated questionnaires were used to collect the perspectives of national e-commerce players and authorities on the assessment in an inclusive and comprehensive manner.

- **Building strategic partnerships**

The eT Readies are carried out in cooperation with several *eTrade for all* partners. In 2020, for example, the Universal Postal Union (UPU), ITC and Consumers International contributed actively to the eT Readies of Côte d'Ivoire and Iraq.

The ECDE Programme increasingly engaged with resident development partners through, and in collaboration with, the UN Resident Coordinator Offices (UN RCOs). UN RCOs have become an important player in the ECDE Programme's capacity-building initiatives, by mobilizing partners on the ground and creating synergies around digital development issues. For example, launches of the assessments for Benin, Niger, Iraq, Malawi and Côte d'Ivoire prompted a dialogue with the community of partners on their roles – including on how the digital dimension is integrated in their programmes – and mobilized their support in the implementation of policy recommendations.

In 2020, steps were also taken to prepare for two new eT Readies (in Tunisia and Jordan) which will be completed in 2021. At the same time, UNCTAD will initiate discussions with countries requesting assistance and continue to look into ways to support other requests.

- **Strengthening attention to follow-up and implementation**

Moving from the eTrade Readiness Assessments to their implementation, the ECDE Programme's capacity-building support in 2020 was geared towards assisting developing countries, in particular eT Ready beneficiary countries, through a mix of follow-up actions, which included:

1. **Creating a knowledge base for decision making in support of implementation of recommendations.**

Under this action, eT Ready implementation stakeholders were identified and consulted in 18 countries, including eT Ready national Focal Points and line ministries, countries' Permanent Missions in Geneva, key private sector representatives, UN RCOs and *eTrade for all* partners. An eT Ready implementation monitoring methodology was designed, stakeholder consultations were undertaken, a survey administered to collect data, and an analysis of the findings compiled. In December, a report of the first eT Ready monitoring exercise was published.⁶

2. **Assessing gaps and updating countries' implementation priorities in view of the COVID-19 pandemic.**

While this activity was mainly integrated into the first eT Ready monitoring exercise, the analysis was complemented by an ad hoc study undertaken in countries benefitting from ECDE capacity building support (see section 4.1). The study [“COVID-19 and e-commerce. Impact on businesses and policy responses”](#) was delivered and launched in November 2020 during a webinar attended by more than 250 participants, sharing successful experiences contributing to foster an enabling environment for e-commerce, particularly in LDCs. The webinar further reinforced the need for public-private partnerships and international cooperation to enhance digital readiness of the countries most at risk of rising digital inequalities.

3. Mainstreaming ECDE policy recommendations in development cooperation frameworks at the country level.

The ECDE Programme reached out to UN RCOs in more than 20 countries to assess their level of engagement of in-country development partners in e-commerce development, with the objective of seeking synergies, mobilizing partners from the early stage of the implementation process, reinforcing multi-stakeholder dialogue and providing digital-related inputs into national strategic frameworks. As a result, two-way communication was established with 13 RCOs (Bangladesh, Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Iraq, Kenya, Lao PDR, Malawi, Niger, Rwanda, Samoa, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda), which led to:

- A jointly organized policy dialogue in Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire, March 2020) and Virtual Development Partners Roundtables as part of launches of the eT Readies of Benin, Niger and Iraq;
- UNCTAD participating in multi-agency coordination meetings in 5 countries (Lao PDR, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania and Uganda), which led to mappings of e-commerce-related partner interventions in 3 countries (Lao PDR, Rwanda, Senegal);

- UNCTAD providing strategic policy inputs in Lao PDR for an update of the National Development Plan (NSED 9) and COVID-19 Socio-Economic Response Plan (SERP). The latter provided the basis for closer cooperation with *eTrade for all* partners on the ground (ITC, the United National Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), UNCITRAL among others) to develop a proposal to leverage mutual expertise in the SERP context.

4. Raising awareness of development partners to scale up support for the implementation of eT Ready recommendations.

The ECDE Programme convened a Virtual Development Partners Roundtable in December 2020, which was attended by more than 30 partners⁷, including donor agencies and many *eTrade for all* partners. The Roundtable was instrumental in reaffirming the role of the *eTrade for all* partnership to translate increased funding support from donors into development solutions that could accelerate reforms and investment projects for e-commerce development, in line with eT Readies' recommendations.

5. Enhancing the visibility of countries' efforts to improve the e-commerce ecosystem.

Raising the profile of e-commerce and

Box 2. Growing partner support for the implementation of eT Readies' recommendations

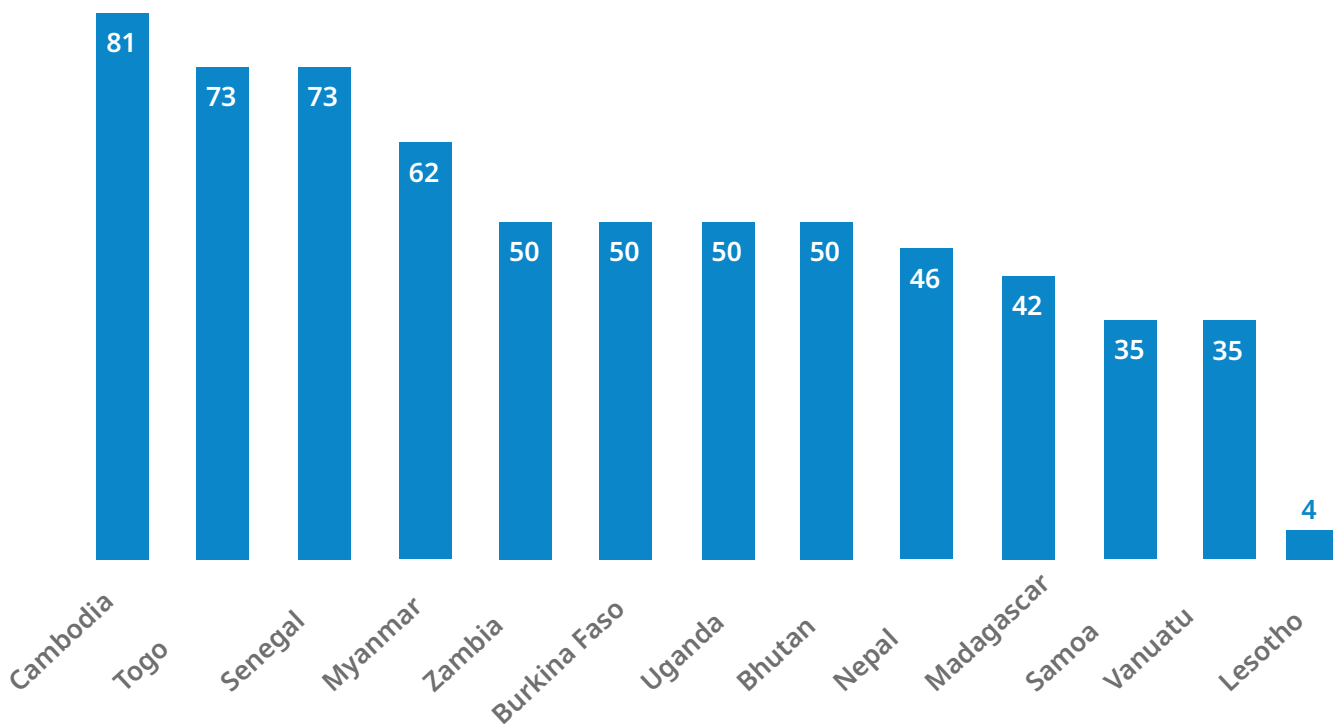
During the Roundtable, the Government of Germany flagged its intention to continue its partnership with UNCTAD beyond 2021. The Government of the Netherlands had just committed a top-up of USD 1.5 million for 2021-2022 in support specifically of the implementation of recommendations contained in the eT Readies. This additional funding will allow UNCTAD in 2021 to assist with the development of a national e-commerce strategy in Benin and a regional e-commerce strategy for the ECOWAS region, strengthen the legal frameworks and enhance the availability of e-commerce statistics in selected countries. Other partners, such as Switzerland, also showed interest in joining as a core donor of the ECDE Programme.

the digital economy agenda in developing countries, particularly LDCs, is key to attracting public and private sector investments for achieving the SDGs. In order to raise awareness of the need for international cooperation towards more inclusive digital development through e-commerce, several successful initiatives undertaken by the public and private sectors in countries benefiting from the ECDE Programme were featured in the form of web stories covering Cambodia, Kenya, Myanmar, Kiribati, Uganda and Senegal and disseminated through different media outlets (UNCTAD website, social networks, reports and presentations).⁸

The above follow-up actions mainly related to eT Ready implementation substantially contributed to achieving good progress towards the ECDE Programme’s outcome indicators.

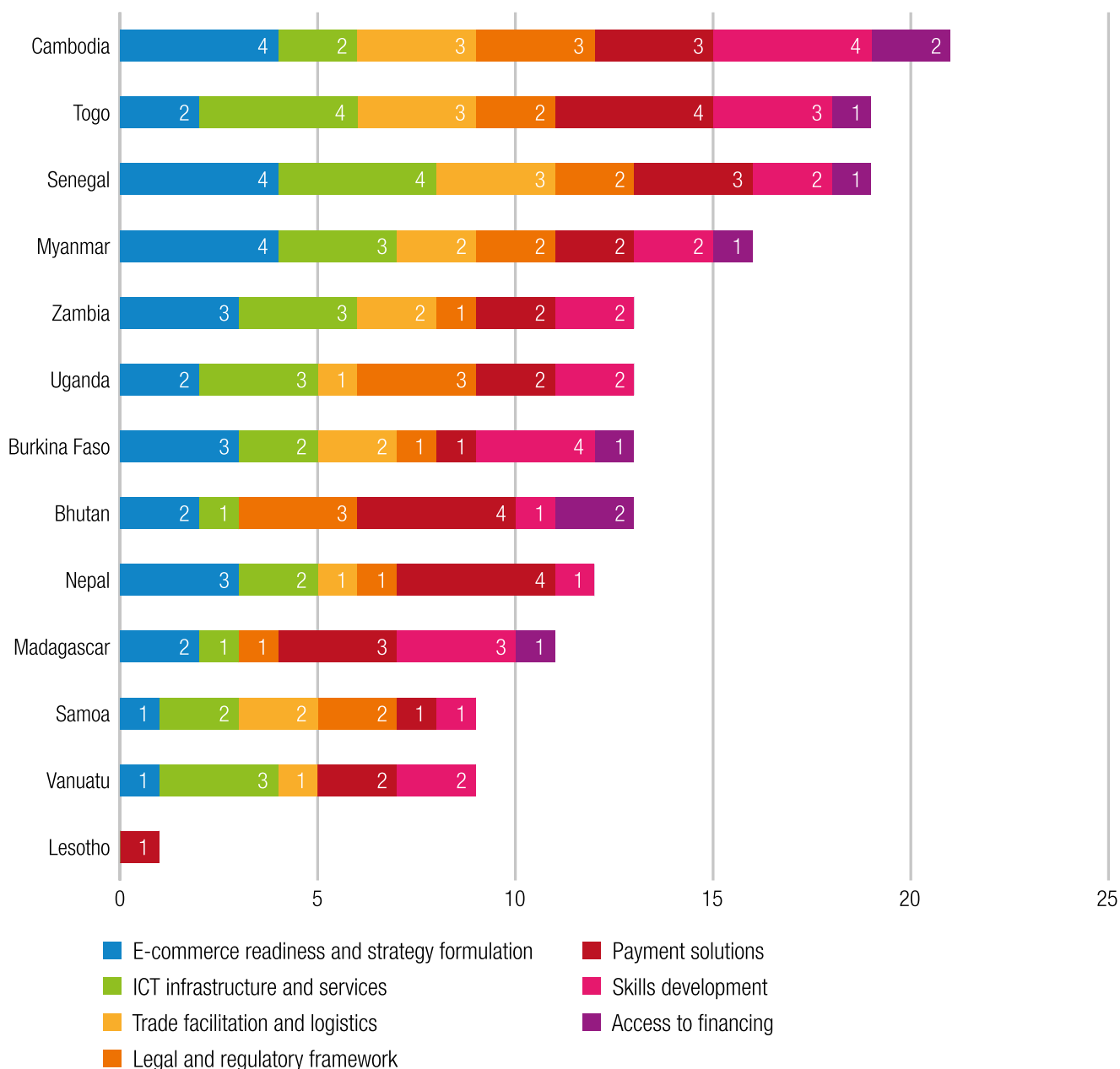
Based on the results of the first eT Ready monitoring exercise carried out in 2020, 13 out of 18 countries that had benefited from an eT Ready Assessment by June 2019 reported progress in implementing various recommendations contained in the assessments. The report “Fast-tracking implementation of eTrade Readiness Assessments” revealed different rates of implementation (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Overall implementation rate of eT Ready recommendations by country (percentage)



The overall implementation rate in the countries included in the monitoring exercise was on average 50 per cent, based on 169 actions taken by countries to implement key recommendations of the eT Readies, by policy area (Figure 6).⁹

Figure 6. Number of implemented recommendations by country and policy area



UNCITRAL and UNCTAD have been cooperating in the area of the digital trade for many years. That cooperation has become closer in the framework of eTrade for all. UNCITRAL is glad to provide regular input on the legal and regulatory pillar of the eTrade Readiness assessments and to participate in workshops and other promotional activities. We value this work that allows us to advocate for and support the adoption of UNCITRAL texts relevant for the digital economy. We did so successfully during the year 2020 in Afghanistan and Kiribati.”

Anna Joubin-Bret, Secretary of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law

Out of 169 actions based on recommendations formulated by the assessments, direct assistance from the ECDE Programme has been instrumental to equip countries with a national e-commerce strategy, as noted in the next section, and enhance countries' skills development initiatives to support women digital entrepreneurship through work undertaken by the eTrade for Women initiative (see section on eTrade for Women below).

In addition, women digital entrepreneurs from Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Senegal and Uganda benefited from three regional Masterclasses organized in 2020 by the eTrade for Women initiative, a spin-off of the *eTrade for all* partnership.



The integration of developing countries, especially LDCs, in global trade remains a challenge, and Germany sees digitalization and e-commerce as part of the solution! This is why we are strong supporters of UNCTAD's work on the eT Readies. The assessments are proving to be a great tool for our partner countries to establish exactly what areas they need to improve, or capitalize on, not least to be able to better cope with the prevailing COVID-19 pandemic and the risk of widening digital divides. We appreciate very much that several partner countries have started with follow-up activities already, e.g. designing strategies."

Stephan Bethe, Head of Division Trade Policy, German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development



The COVID-19 pandemic has shown the importance of e-commerce and of scaling up efforts to help countries that are left behind in the digital economy to catch up. We need to step up our efforts to build more inclusive, resilient and sustainable economies. We believe eTrade provides great opportunities for developing countries to access new markets and to help improve economic and social outcomes. And unlocking the digital space for female entrepreneurs is a huge opportunity for global development."

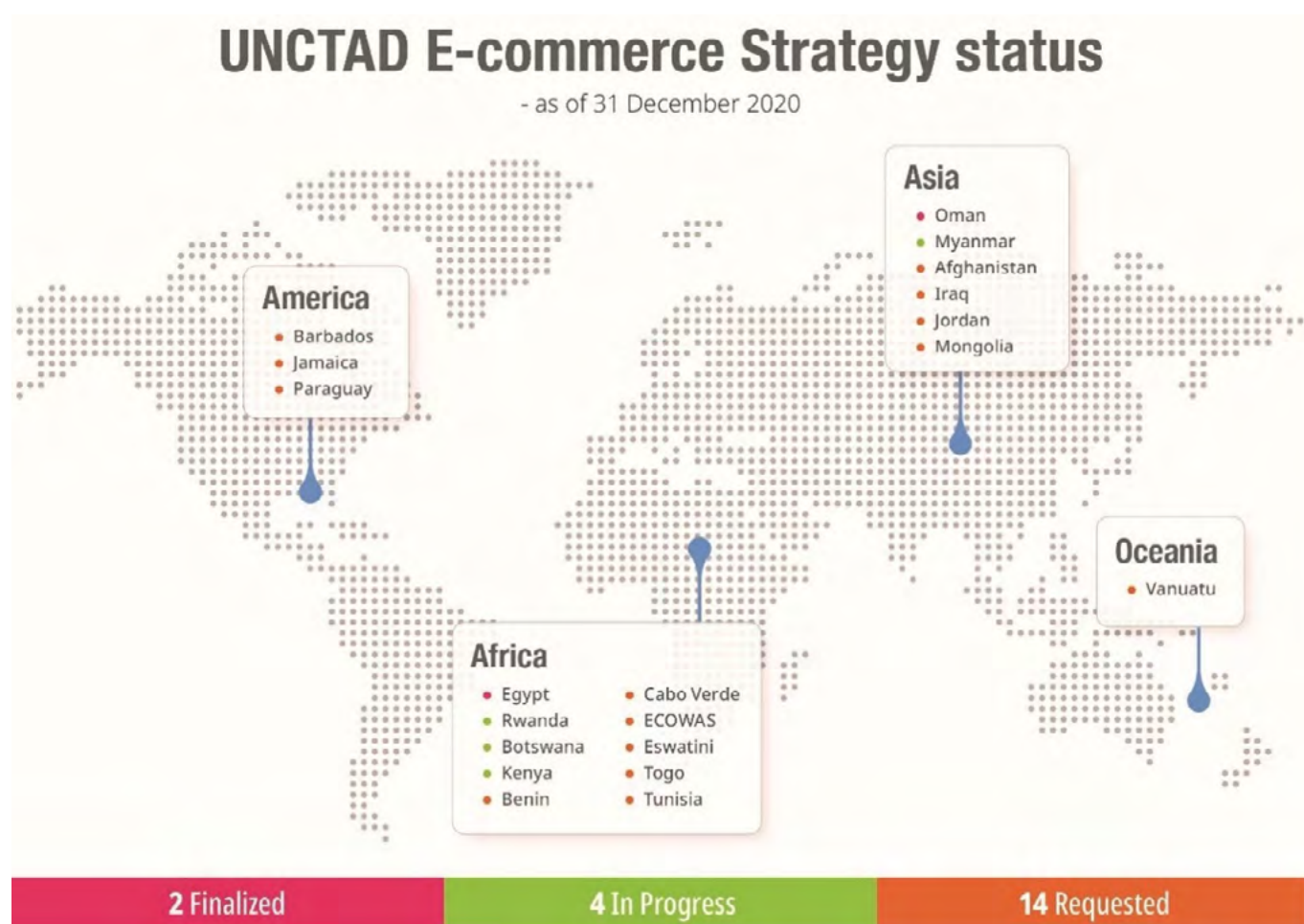
Steven Collet, Director of the Department for Sustainable Economic Development, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Netherlands

Development of National E-commerce Strategies

UNCTAD's policy advice and support to countries for developing comprehensive and forward-looking strategies to leverage e-commerce in favour of economic growth aims to identify strategic priorities and concrete policy measures through a multi-stakeholder consultation process, the review of best practices, and inputs

from experts and *eTrade for all* partners based on the diagnostic of the e-commerce ecosystem. Technical assistance/training components are part of the process in view of strengthening the capacity of the government to manage the complex, dynamic, multi-faceted and rapidly evolving nature of policymaking in this area.

Figure 7. UNCTAD's E-Commerce Strategy status, as of December 2020



A growing number of countries are opting to adopt dedicated policy and strategy on e-commerce and the digital economy more broadly to leverage the transformative power of new technologies. Preliminary research suggests that 11 developing countries and LDCs had adopted an

e-commerce strategy as of the end of 2020, 2 of which incorporated a gender dimension to some extent.¹⁰ This makes the ECDE Programme's work in this area increasingly relevant. Since 2017, UNCTAD has assisted 2 countries in finalizing their e-commerce strategy (Egypt and Oman)

and in 2020, support was ongoing in another 4 countries, i.e. Botswana, Kenya, Myanmar and Rwanda.

The eT Ready monitoring exercise carried out in 2020 identified the development of an ECS as a priority in Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Lesotho, Madagascar, Togo, Uganda, Samoa and Vanuatu.¹¹ Discussions also started with several countries in 2020 to initiate work on strategy development in 2021 with UNCTAD support. As a result, Benin and the ECOWAS Commission submitted a request in 2020 (see Box 3), followed by Kiribati and Solomon Islands in early 2021. New requests were also received in 2020 from Eswatini and Jordan. In both cases, the Governments requested an eTrade Readiness assessment to be conducted prior to the ECS, acknowledging the complementarities between the two products of support.

Supporting the development of national e-commerce strategies is indeed an important complement to the eT Readies. Examples of such complementarities can be noted for Cambodia, Myanmar, Nepal, Senegal and Zambia, which have prepared ECS based on the diagnostic prepared by UNCTAD, and in most cases were funded by

the EIF, an *eTrade for all* partner. Among those strategies, the ECDE Programme supported the development of a National E-Commerce Strategy in Myanmar, funded under the EIF Tier 2 Project titled “Myanmar – Services Trade Enhanced Project” (M-STEP). Progress was made in 2020 in line with the roadmap of the Digital Economy Development Committee launched in May 2019 and the Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan (MSDP, Strategy 3.7).

At the regional level, the East African Community (EAC) Secretariat and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) have both embarked on developing regional e-commerce strategies using eT Readies as diagnostic tools. In the case of the PIFS, a Pacific E-Commerce Assessment was released in 2020 based on the 5 eT Readies conducted by UNCTAD in the region, plus 5 conducted by the PIFS using UNCTAD’s methodology for eT Readies. Similarly, the ECOWAS Commission, jointly with WAEMU, has taken stock of the findings of the UNCTAD eTrade Readiness Assessments carried out in the region to start developing a strategic regional vision for e-commerce development.

In other instances, requests have emerged as a

Box 3. eT Readies support e-commerce regional integration in West Africa

An UNCTAD report taking stock of the findings of the seven evaluations conducted in the WAEMU region¹² has outlined recommendations contributing to the development of a joint ECOWAS-WAEMU approach to prepare a regional e-commerce strategy. The report findings were presented at UNCTAD eWeek High-level Session “Enhancing e-commerce readiness in the ECOWAS region”, in April 2020. The High-level Session highlighted the need for better policy coordination among regional economic communities to spearhead a regional e-commerce development agenda that builds on the diversity of e-commerce readiness across member countries. The UNCTAD report has recommended the development of a regional e-commerce strategy that will be centered on

the need to strengthen essential infrastructures (electricity, e-commerce logistics, street addressing), advance ongoing critical digital economy development projects (ICT connectivity, e-government, legal reforms, payments' interoperability), as well as steer and monitor e-commerce sector development building on a regional e-commerce observatory. As a result of this process, the ECOWAS Commission has formally requested UNCTAD assistance in 2020 to develop a regional e-commerce strategy. A first regional preparatory workshop was organized in December 2020 in Abidjan by the ECOWAS Commission, in collaboration with UNCTAD, bringing together national high-level representatives and e-commerce experts.

result of ongoing initiatives aimed at establishing an enabling environment for e-commerce at national or regional levels. This was the case for Kenya, which has already made good progress in developing its national policy and regulatory framework for e-commerce but felt the need to further strengthen its domestic policy environment with an ECS. Kenya's ECS will support ongoing EAC efforts to develop a regional e-commerce strategy and the e-commerce related developments at African Union level and in the context of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

Secured financial support for UNCTAD assistance in the area of ECS includes funds from GIZ (for Kenya) and from the Netherlands (for Benin and ECOWAS) which will be conducted in 2021. Insufficient funding to respond positively to all ECS requests received and the growing interest expressed in 2020, as well as in previous years, indicates persisting needs for increased resource mobilization in this area.

The time required for developing an ECS typically ranges between 12 to 18 months depending on the domestic context, including whether a dedicated institutional setting for e-commerce policy-making exists and the state of national



I would like to thank the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) for partnering with the Economic Community for West African States (ECOWAS) to hold the high-level session on Enhancing E-Commerce in the ECOWAS region. The session provided the opportunity to present the eTrade Readiness Assessments of Benin, Mali and Niger and discussed their main elements of a regional ECOWAS e-Commerce Strategy in the broader ECOWAS context to strengthen the development of e-commerce based on the findings of the eTrade Readiness Assessments conducted in the region."

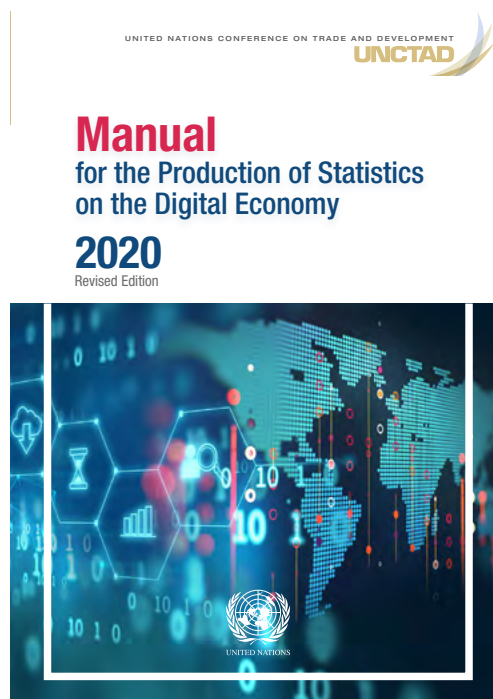
Jean-Claude Kassi Brou, President of the ECOWAS Commission

dialogue around these issues. Thorough evaluation of the impacts of the UNCTAD-supported ECS will only be possible after sufficient time has lapsed following the official endorsement by government of the strategy and its implementation. Following the adoption of national/regional strategies, the ECDE Programme will offer its support to beneficiary countries to monitor their implementation.

There is a great need to strengthen the capacity of national statistical systems to produce better, more reliable and internationally comparable statistics of relevance to e-commerce and the digital economy. The lack of such data currently constitutes a significant gap in the toolkit policy makers need in order to design and implement ICT policies for development, including in support of areas such as international trade, export promotion and foreign investment promotion.

In 2020, the main focus of the ECDE Programme in this area was on finalizing the revision of the [UNCTAD Manual for the Production of Statistics on the Digital Economy](#), based on inputs and feedback received from participants to the first meeting of the UNCTAD Working Group on Measuring E-commerce and the Digital Economy in December 2019. The Manual was finalized in early 2021 and is the basis for developing training material for offline and online training courses. The online courses are being developed in collaboration with the TrainforTrade programme.

Due to a shortage of extra-budgetary funding and to the UN liquidity crisis, it was not possible



for the ECDE Programme to provide any technical assistance in this area during 2020.

For 2021, it is anticipated that training activities will commence at the regional level, tentatively in the Pacific region, and that the ECDE Programme will provide various support to National Statistical Offices in response to requests received.

eTrade for Women



2019, aims at advancing inclusive and sustainable economic growth by empowering women in the digital economy, in line with SDG 5 and SDG 8. The

The eTrade for Women initiative, launched in September

initiative combines the transformative power of female entrepreneurship with the positive impact of digital technologies, so that women digital entrepreneurs can thrive as business leaders and emerge as influential voices in the public policy debate. The initiative, a spin-off from *eTrade for all*, is carried out in close cooperation with selected *eTrade for all* partners and benefited



from the generous support of the governments of the Netherlands and Sweden.

Throughout 2020, the initiative has run activities along its 4 strategic action lines: advocacy, capacity-building, community-building and policy

1. Advocacy

Throughout 2020, eTrade for Women mobilized its Advocates, a small group of influential women leaders in the digital sector, to raise their voices about women digital entrepreneurship, act as role models for the next generation of women entrepreneurs and strive to influence policymaking at the national and global level, for more inclusive digital policymaking.

The Advocates engaged in several high-level events, such as the World Summit Information Society Forum (April 2020), the Women in Tech Virtual World Tour 2020 «Women Taking-up Space» (May 2020), the World Medium and Small Enterprises Day (June 2020), the United Nations Commission on Trade Law (July 2020), as well as the Macedonian eCommerce Conference (November 2020).

They delivered inspirational and compelling messages, but also shared advice and provided guidance to help other women digital entrepreneurs, including the members of the eTrade for Women Communities, on how to overcome their challenges, which was critical during COVID-19.

dialogue. The exceptional context due to the COVID-19 pandemic required an adjustment of the strategy to address women's needs for more support and collaboration while digitalizing all the physical events initially planned.

”

I am committed to inspiring other women, to show them that if they embrace digital technologies, sky is the limit. When I embarked on my entrepreneurial journey, I set out to change the e-commerce industry in my country (...). Now I want to use my story to change the global e-commerce landscape. Without more women digital entrepreneurs, e-commerce growth cannot benefit everyone, and it cannot help fight poverty effectively.”

Nina Angelovska, Former Minister of Finance, North Macedonia, and co-Founder of Grouper.mk

Box 4. Meet the eTrade for Women Advocates (2019-2020)

The first cohort of eTrade for Women Advocates gathered seven outstanding women entrepreneurs who are leading high-impact digital businesses:

Ms. Nazanin Daneshvar



is the eTrade for Women Advocate for Western Asia. She is the co-Founder of Takhfifan.com, the biggest female-founded company operating in Tehran. Through its online marketplace, the company allows merchants to offer thousands of goods and services at a discount, serving millions of customers from all over the country. Nazanin is also a member of the Board of the Information and Communications Technology Union in Iran.

Ms. Helianti Hilman



is the eTrade for Women Advocate for South-East Asia. She is the Founder and Chairperson of Javara, a company that works across the supply chain to sustain Indonesia's forgotten food biodiversity and connect over 60,000 farmers, fishermen and food artisans with international markets. Helianti is also the founder of Sekolah Seniman Pangan, an action-based food entrepreneurship school for rural youth in Indonesia.

Ms. Nina Angelovska



is the eTrade for Women Advocate for the Balkans. She is the co-Founder of Grouper.mk, the first deal platform in North Macedonia whose business model has transformed the e-commerce industry in the country and has become known as the game-changer of e-commerce. Nina is a former Minister of Finance of her country and is the President of the Macedonian E-commerce Association.

Ms. Claudia de Heredia



is the eTrade for Women Advocate for Latin America and the Caribbean. She is the co-Founder of Kichink!, Mexico's first electronic trading platform powering over 40,000 small businesses across the country. She received the "Game Changer Award" by Google for innovative entrepreneurship and is part of the Women's Forum Mexico Advisory Board.

Ms. Patricia Zoundi Yao



is the eTrade for Women Advocate for Franco-phone Africa. She is the Founder and CEO of Quick Cash, a company that brings fintech to rural areas across Côte d'Ivoire by making it easier for rural people and workers in the informal sector to make money transfers. Patricia is also the Founder of Canaan Land, a social enterprise dedicated to training farmers in sustainable farming techniques.

To go further:

Watch [The video presenting the eTrade for Women Advocates](#)

[Check the Profiles](#) of the eTrade for Women Advocates

Ms. Clarisse Iribagiza



is the eTrade for Women Advocate for Eastern Africa. She is the Founder and CEO of HeHe, the largest e-commerce business in Rwanda, digitizing several hundreds of businesses, 60% of which are female-led and serving 2 million consumers while focusing on logistics and the last mile. Under Clarisse's leadership, HeHe has also created an innovation academy to continue digitalizing Africa's rural supply chains.

Ms. Xiaofei Yao



Ms. Xiaofei Yao is the eTrade for Women Advocate for China. She is the founder of Rogrand, the largest pharmaceutical mobile service platform and a health management tool in China. The company is improving the supply chain and marketing efficiency of China's pharmaceutical industry, servicing hundreds of thousands of pharmacies, clinics and medical institutions. Xiaofei is also Vice-chairman of China Association of Pharmaceutical Commerce and Vice-chairman of China Pharmaceutical News and Information Association.

2. Capacity-building

Another key area of eTrade for Women is dedicated to offering women entrepreneurs the possibility to strengthen their skills to thrive as business leaders and pioneers of digital transformation in their respective countries and regions.

Prepared and delivered jointly with the Advocates, 3 Masterclasses were organized in 2020 for Francophone West Africa, Eastern Africa, and South-East Asia, gathering 48 women digital entrepreneurs from 17 countries. Each Masterclass offered 3 days of engagement, with a combination of inspirational and business-oriented sessions, networking opportunities, as well as a high-level policy dialogue; with a programme tailored to best reflect the specificities of the region's digital ecosystem. Masterclasses also included a significant capacity-building component and covered specific digital skills such as search engine optimization, growing user bases,

social media advertising, sales and negotiations, and turning data into intelligence for business growth.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, only the Masterclass for Francophone Africa, organized in February 2020, was delivered face-to-face. The others were organized in a virtual format.

Masterclasses can trigger new business networking opportunities and cross-border partnerships, as evidenced by the case of two entrepreneurs in Senegal and Benin. Youma Fall from Senegal participated in the Masterclass held in Abidjan in February 2020, which allowed her to build new business relationships with other women digital entrepreneurs across the region, such as Elodie Atekossode from Benin, whose software development company has since agreed on a revenue sharing arrangement with PayDunya.

3. Community-building

The year 2020 marked the beginning of the eTrade for Women Communities: these unique regional networks aim at providing a safe space where women digital entrepreneurs can share best practices, create synergies, learn and develop new skills, inspire each other and discover new business opportunities.

In November 2020, the first community was established in Francophone West Africa with

17 women digital entrepreneurs from Benin, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Chad. Shortly after, 2 more communities were created: one in South-East Asia with 16 members and a third community in East Africa gathering 15 women digital entrepreneurs based in the region. Different sets of activities such as networking meetings, inspirational sessions with the Advocates and skill-building training were organized in order to support women digital

entrepreneurs who belong to the communities.

Entrepreneurship is often a lonely adventure; and women entrepreneurs suffer even more from lack of interactions and networks. Members reported that the space provided by eTrade for Women communities filled a gap in networking opportunities and visibility of women entrepreneurs in the digital economy, in particular during the COVID-19 pandemic.



“The community is already helping me by providing trainings that are answers to my current needs. I have access to a network with women from different countries, to partnerships, and I can now offer my services to a bigger audience.”

Armelle Koffi, Founder and Project Engineer, ORA Technologies et Multimedia Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire

4. Advancing Policy Dialogue



“By bringing all the concerned actors around the table, it will be easier to implement new measures because they have been previously discussed and agreed upon,” she said. “In the past, when new laws were adopted, they were difficult to comply with because those affected hadn’t been involved in their formulation.”

Patricia Zoundi Yao, Founder and CEO of Quick Cash, Côte d'Ivoire

The Policy Dialogues are creating awareness among public policy makers of the need to exchange regularly with the private sector. This is for instance illustrated by the participation of Patricia Zoundi Yao, eTrade for Women Advocate for Francophone West Africa, in a series of consultations on e-commerce and digitalization at the local and regional level: further to her participa-

Throughout 2020 the initiative took advantage of the convening power of UNCTAD and *eTrade for all* to facilitate a series of formal Policy Dialogues and consultations between policy makers and women entrepreneurs at the local, regional and global levels.

The Advocates and Community members had the opportunity to share their entrepreneurial journey and participate in the creation of a more inclusive digital economy at local, regional and global level events such as the Masterclass in Cote d'Ivoire (February 2020), during the UNCTAD eWeek (April 2020), or as part of the virtual Masterclasses organized for [Eastern Africa \(July 2020\)](#) and for [South-East Asia \(October 2020\)](#).

tion in the eTrade Readiness Assessment for Côte d'Ivoire organized by UNCTAD and the Government, Patricia Zoundi Yao was invited in subsequent discussions with local authorities, as well as in the first Forum on eCommerce organized by ECOWAS in partnership with UNCTAD and *eTrade for all* partners.

Partnerships

eTrade for Women has leveraged strategic partnerships with private and public entities, including with *eTrade for all* partners. Such collaborations have allowed the initiative to generate stronger impact and bring the right expertise to its members (with substantive and geographic relevance).

They have also increased the initiative's visibility and outreach, by offering channels to disseminate its work and messages. Partnerships have allowed for genuine multi-stakeholder dialogues – with a view to connecting the dots between the public and private sectors. For instance, Advocates have reported being called upon by their respective governments to join working groups on how to best address the gender dimension at the local level, or contribute as a trusted-business representative to bring the voice of SMEs to the policy table.

Way forward

eTrade for Women will continue to pursue its objective to further the empowerment of women digital entrepreneurs and foster more gender-responsive policy and regulatory environments, while adapting to the post-pandemic world where physical interactions are still very limited, but where it is essential to ensure that women's needs are fully acknowledged.

A new cohort of Advocates started their one-year tenure in May 2021 to continue the work and raise awareness of women digital entrepreneurship at a global level. Capacity-building activi-

Our partners in 2020

International Organizations: African Development Bank, ITC, ERIA

Private sector: Endeavor Indonesia, Accenture Interactive, Foodizz, Patricia Amand and Associates, TLCom Capital

Academia: Thunderbird School of Global Management, African Leadership University

ties will continue in 2021 with a new set of Masterclasses planned in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Balkans. The eTrade for Women communities will pursue their development and empower more women digital entrepreneurs through the power of networking. Throughout 2021, the initiative will continue to leverage strategic partnerships with public and private entities, to further the reach and enhance the impact of its activities.

Finally, the initiative will continue to foster a policy dialogue between the different stakeholders of the digital economy, a key tool to promote gender

equality and build a more inclusive ecosystem. Against the backdrop of the continuing COVID-19 pandemic, the first Asia eCommerce Week organized in collaboration with *eTrade for all* partners in October 2021 will provide a timely

opportunity for eTrade for Women to elevate the voice of digital women entrepreneurs in the Asia-Pacific region.



4.3 Building consensus, fostering dialogue

Intergovernmental Group of Experts on E-commerce and the Digital Economy

The Intergovernmental Group of Experts (IGE) on E-commerce and the Digital Economy was established following a decision at the 14th UNCTAD Ministerial Conference in Nairobi in 2016. It provides an opportunity for member States to meet and discuss policy issues of relevance to the evolving digital economy and development every year. Its fourth session was held in October 2020. To accommodate various limitations due to the pandemic, the meeting was held in hybrid format, with some delegates participating physically in the Palais des Nations and most others joining remotely. More than 400 registered participants attended, representing 93 countries, international organizations, the private sector and other stakeholders¹³. The session was chaired by His Excellency, Mr. Alfredo Suescum, Permanent Representative of Panama to the WTO, who was supported by the Vice-Chair, Ms. Hilda Ali Rashid Al-Hinai, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Sultanate of Oman to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations at Geneva.

In his opening remarks, the Secretary-General of UNCTAD emphasized that the importance of the IGE had never been greater, as the pandemic had made the value of digital technologies further evident. He concluded by saying that to realize the development potential of the digital economy, international collaboration and policy dialogue needed to address the unequal gap between producers and consumers, while including signifi-

cant flexibilities to account for variations in digital readiness.

The overall theme of the session, “Digital platforms and value creation in developing countries and the implications for national and international policies”, was inspired by the Digital Economy Report 2019. Many delegates welcomed the choice of topic as timely and relevant, in particular in the context of the pandemic, and emphasized the importance of international policy debate, including at IGE sessions. Several delegates expressed support for continued work by UNCTAD across its three pillars. They also emphasized that IGE offered a valuable forum for sharing international best practices. As most delegates participated remotely, it was agreed that, on an exceptional basis, no agreed policy recommendations would be prepared as an outcome of the fourth session. The IGE did, however, agree on the topics to be discussed at the second meeting of the Working Group on Measuring E-commerce and the Digital Economy (see below).

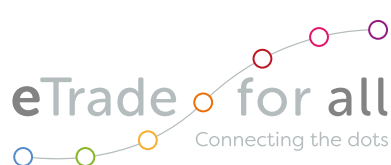
The next session of the IGE is expected to take place only after the 15th UNCTAD Ministerial Conference (3-7 October 2021), most likely in the first half of 2022.

Working Group on Measuring E-commerce and the Digital Economy

The Working Group on Measuring E-Commerce and the Digital Economy was established by the IGE, and its Terms of Reference were approved in April 2019. It met for the first time on 3-4 December 2019. Its objective is to contribute to and advance cooperation on measuring e-commerce and the digital economy and enhance the availability, comparability, quality, relevance, and usability of statistics concerning e-commerce and the digital economy, with a view to supporting evidence-based policy making, especially in developing countries. The Working Group will avoid duplication and consider synergies with other relevant, ongoing work.

Due to the pandemic, there was no meeting of the Working Group in 2020. However, the topics for the second meeting – held on 3-4 May 2021 – were agreed upon by the IGE (see above): a) Progress in measuring electronic commerce (e-commerce) and digital economy work by relevant international organizations; b) Next steps in the implementation of the revised UNCTAD Manual for the Production of Statistics on the Digital Economy; and c) The use of non-survey sources of data to supplement the traditional measurement of e-commerce and the digital economy.

The future is digital but needs to be more inclusive: leveraging eTrade for all



The [eTrade for all](#) initiative was established during the 14th Ministerial Conference of UNCTAD in Nairobi in 2016 to enable

the international community, in partnership with the private sector and other stakeholders, to join forces for a more inclusive digital future.

Since its inception, the initiative has served as a global helpdesk for developing countries to bridge the gap on e-commerce information and knowledge resources through its dedicated platform [etradeforall.org](#), and as catalyzer of partnerships among its members, with a view to improving the efficiency of developing countries and their partners, including international

organizations, civil society and the private sector, in addressing issues and providing assistance on e-commerce and the digital economy for development.

The COVID-19 pandemic has made the *eTrade for all* initiative even more relevant. It has accelerated the uptake of digital services while risking leaving behind those less prepared to join the trend of digitalization of economic and social activities and to take advantage of the opportunities it presents, thus making timely, coordinated, and cost-effective support to developing countries in the area of e-commerce and digital economy even more urgent than before. The pandemic's economic implications have also made funds scarcer, making cost-effective partnerships more important.

Highlights in 2020








In 2020, thanks to several outreach activities to grow the membership of the initiative, the ILO and the Commonwealth Secretariat officially joined, bringing the total number of key institutional partners to 32, up from 14 when the initiative was first started.

a. Bridging the knowledge gap

The core tool of the initiative is its online platform (etradeforall.org), which acts as a global helpdesk and helps countries to navigate more easily the extensive supply of information, resources and services available, across 7 key policy areas.

A number of technical assistance offerings from partners are made available through the platform's Development Solutions, which enable potential beneficiaries to get in touch directly with the *eTrade for all* partners active in each

Table 1. eTrade for all's 7 key policy areas and partners as of December 2020

PARTNERS	ETRADE FOR ALL POLICY AREAS						
	 E-commerce strategy	 ICT infrastructure	 Payment solutions	 Trade logistics and facilitation	 Legal frameworks	 Skills development	 Financing SMEs
ACSIS						✓	
AfDB		✓		✓	✓		
Commonwealth Secretariat	✓				✓	✓	
Consumers International					✓	✓	
CUTS						✓	
DiPLO						✓	
ECA	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
ECLAC	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
EIF	✓	✓					
ESCAP		✓	✓	✓		✓	
ESCWA		✓		✓	✓	✓	
E-Residency			✓		✓		
IAP					✓	✓	
ICAO				✓	✓		
IDB		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
ILO					✓	✓	
ISOC		✓				✓	
ITFC		✓	✓		✓		✓
ITC	✓			✓		✓	✓
ITU		✓			✓	✓	
South Centre					✓	✓	
UNCDF			✓			✓	✓
UNCITRAL			✓		✓		
UNCTAD	✓			✓	✓	✓	
UNECE				✓	✓	✓	
UNIDO				✓	✓	✓	
UPU	✓		✓	✓			
WBG	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
WCO				✓	✓		
WEF						✓	
WIPO					✓		
WTO				✓		✓	

Note: Non-exhaustive list of partners who could assist in the implementation of eT Ready policy recommendations.

policy area. In 2020, the *eTrade for all* platform underwent a face-lift to address users' feedback, offering a modern navigation tool and an improved architecture.

More than 80'000 new visitors accessed the platform (reflecting a user growth of 107% over 1 year), 60% of whom came from developing countries. 34 Development Solutions were made available in English, French and Spanish, and a total of 104 requests for information or support were channeled through the platform in 2020, up from 82 in 2019 (reflecting a growth rate of 27%). 11 monthly newsletters were released to some 2,400 subscribers, up by 660 in 2020 (reflecting a growth rate of 38% on a yearly basis). Daily digests of news, events and publications have also been offered.

b. Catalyzer of partnerships

eTrade for all is a multi-stakeholder initiative and is all about connecting the dots. Therefore, all activities are undertaken in cooperation and consultation with partners. In addition to the continuous support provided by partners to the major spin-offs, the [eTrade Readiness Assessments](#), and the [eTrade for Women initiative](#) (see section 4.2 above), partners joined efforts to address the multi-faced challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The [COVID-19 and E-commerce Global Review](#) is the result of a collective effort, and the first research-oriented project undertaken under the *eTrade for all* umbrella. The work was led by UNCTAD and UNECLAC, drawing also on regional reports prepared by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA).

The [COVID-19 repository](#) launched in the fall of 2020 and the new [COVID-19 and E-commerce Global Review](#), in addition to contributions by several *eTrade for all* partners to the [eWeek 2020](#), the first virtual edition of the eCommerce Week, were major partnership outcomes in 2020. The [COVID-19 repository](#) gathers close to 250 resources specifically addressing the impact of COVID-19 on the various policy areas covered by the *eTrade for all* partners. It offers a weekly update and an optimized search function.

This is a clear illustration of the ability of the initiative to bring together, federate and mobilize relevant partners to address pressing issues requiring attention by developing countries and the international community, in a coordinated and timely fashion.



The eTrade for all has been an excellent platform for promoting digitalization and reducing the digital divide. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) is committed to advancing inclusive digitalization especially for countries with economies in transition in Eastern Europe, the Western Balkan, Southern Caucasus and Central Asia. I am delighted about the excellent collaboration between UNECE and the eTrade for all partners on last year's activities including the study on e-commerce and the impact of COVID-19. I wish the eTrade for all a continued success!"

Olga Algayerova, Executive Secretary, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

Valuable inputs and comments were received from e-Residency of Estonia, ITC, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) and the UPU. The global report was launched in March 2021, and 2 regional reports were published under the leadership of UNECLAC and UNECA. Two more regional reports, under the leadership of

UNESCWA and UNECE respectively, will be published in 2021.

The activities generated and supported by the initiative in 2020 proved that *eTrade for all* is considered a key platform for promoting inclusive dialogue on e-commerce and the digital economy.

New collaborations for greater impact

Other examples of new collaborations include UNCTAD support to the development of two new major ILO publications (launched in early 2021) on the implications of online labour platforms and on how digitalization impacts on small businesses. In addition, during 2020, UNCTAD and UNCDF laid the foundation of a strategic partnership for

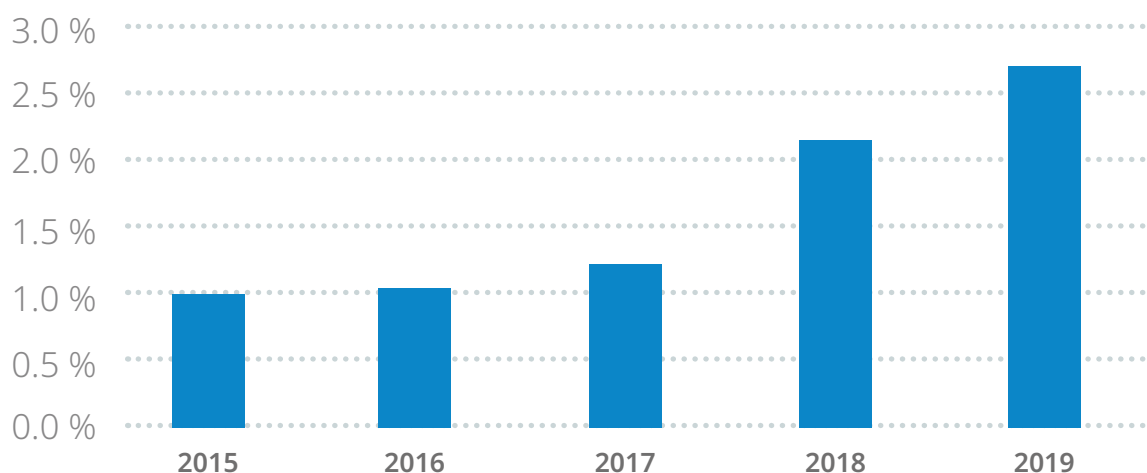
supporting e-commerce and the digital economy in the Pacific, an initiative that will be operationalized in 2021 with funding from Australia in the inception phase. Such collaborative efforts would most likely not have been developed without the *eTrade for all* initiative.

Way forward

Since the launch of the *eTrade for all* initiative, the share of Aid for Trade resources allocated to the ICT sector has slowly begun to increase, from 1.2% in 2017 to 2.7% in 2019 (Figure 8). However, it remains below the level of 3% observed in the period 2002-2005. Preliminary research on development partners and donors' commitment to supporting projects aimed at enhancing country readiness for e-commerce and digital

economy suggests that as of 2018, 21 such partners / donors had explicitly incorporated e-commerce and digital economy in their development assistance plans.¹⁴ It is expected that as the understanding of the importance of digitalization for the SDGs has been boosted by the pandemic, more donors will assign greater attention to the digital dimension in the aid strategies.

Figure 8. Share of Aid for Trade resources for the ICT sector, 2015-2019



Source: UNCTAD analysis, based on data from the OECD.

In terms of digital cooperation, *eTrade for all* has been groundbreaking in several aspects. First, it brings 32 committed partners together to exchange information and resources. Second, it enables sustained synergies for joint projects leveraging the wide expertise available (such as for eTrade Readiness Assessments and eTrade for Women). It also provides a favourable environment for increased multi-stakeholder dialogue (in particular through the eCommerce Weeks, where

70% of the *eTrade for all* members are active), and increases transparency through its digital platform (etradeforall.org) in three languages (English, French, Spanish). Finally, it offers a dedicated space for collaboration on topical issues, like the impact of COVID-19 on e-commerce and digital trade (COVID-19 repository, COVID-19 global and regional studies).

E-commerce Weeks



[The eWeek](#) saw the participation of more than 2,000 participants from 134

countries, 44% of whom were women. Some 14 sessions were organized with the active involvement of 14 *eTrade for all* partners. The eWeek looked in depth at key digital issues in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and its possible economic impacts, including data, gender, trade and logistics, consumer trust, consumer protection, competition and digital entrepreneurship. At the end of each session, participants were

prompted to take a short survey: 90% found that the issues discussed were presented in an effective manner; 87% considered the sessions very relevant to their work; 94% rated the sessions as excellent or (very) good overall.

In October 2021, the first Asia eCommerce Week, organized in collaboration with *eTrade for all* partners, is expected to bring together participants from the Asia-Pacific region and explore how the economies of the region can advance digitalization while adjusting to the impact of the COVID-19 crisis to build more inclusive and resilient societies.

Digital Cooperation for Development

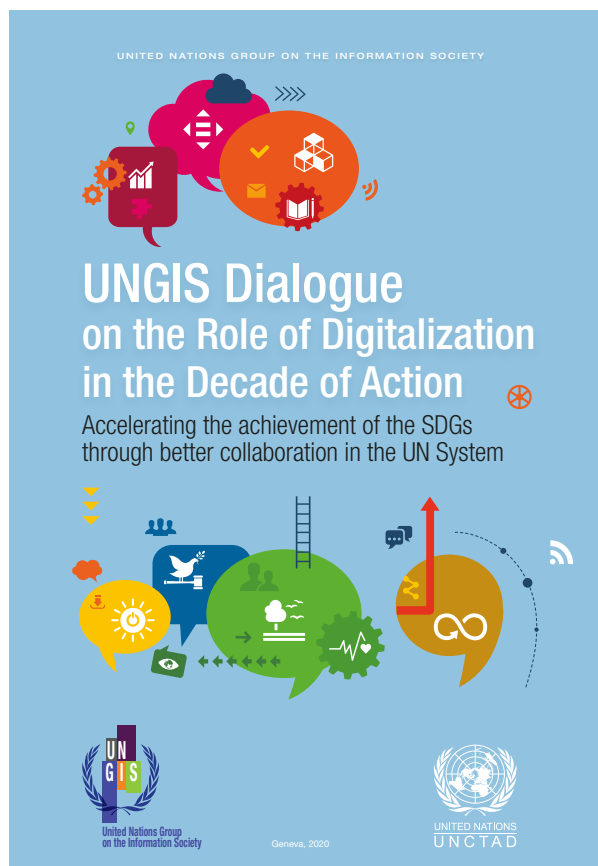
The ECDE Programme contributes to various broader initiatives and mechanisms set up to enhance digital cooperation for development. In 2020, important activities were related to the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) Forum, the UN Group on the Information Society (UNGIS), which in 2020-21 was chaired

by UNCTAD, the G-20 Digital Economy Task Force and the Secretary-General's Roadmap on Digital Cooperation.

UNCTAD is a co-organizer of the annual WSIS Forum in Geneva and a co-facilitator (with ITC and UPU) of the WSIS action line on e-business.

In 2020, the contribution of UNCTAD to the WSIS Forum consisted of substantive contributions to the high-level opening segment and to the high-level policy session on the digital economy and trade. The ECDE Programme also co-

organized the action line meeting on e-business, a session organized by the Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development, and one organized jointly by UNCTAD and the UN regional commissions.



For the period 2020-21, UNCTAD chaired UNGIS. Led by the ECDE Programme, UNGIS organized an [UNGIS Dialogue on the Role of Digitalization in the Decade of Action](#), which compiled 22 contributions from Heads of UNGIS agencies. The outcome of the dialogue will feed into the UN High-Level Political Forum 2021, the WSIS Forum 2021, the 15th UNCTAD Ministerial Conference (3-7 October 2021) and the Asia E-Commerce Week (October 2021). The publication was distributed by the Secretary of the Chief Executives Board to all heads of its member agencies.

During 2020, the ECDE Programme furthermore provided inputs to the G-20 Digital Economy Task Force under the Saudi Arabia Presidency, and to the follow-up work to the Secretary-General's Roadmap on Digital Cooperation, especially with regard to capacity-building, sharing the experience of *eTrade for all*.

5. Goals and objectives for 2021 and beyond

In the second year of the unfading COVID-19 pandemic, the ECDE Programme will continue to offer its support for enhancing the readiness of developing countries, and especially LDCs, to take advantage of e-commerce and the digital economy for development. This section outlines some of the Programme's main goals and objectives for 2021 and beyond, taking into consideration the evolving needs of beneficiary countries during COVID-19.

2021 is an important year for UNCTAD, which will hold its 15th quadrennial Ministerial Conference (UNCTAD XV). In addition to setting the organization's work priorities for the next four years, UNCTAD XV is regarded as a major UN event in the Decade for Action to deliver on the SDGs, and the first opportunity to align the sustainable development agenda with global efforts to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. The ECDE Programme is actively involved in the preparations for this event. An outcome that gives considerable attention to the role of e-commerce and the digital

economy in UNCTAD's overall agenda for the next four years is important to strengthen the ECDE Programme's ability to support member States as they seek to harness digital transformations for sustainable development.

In 2021, UNCTAD, UNCDF and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) will join forces under the Pacific Digital Economy Programme (PDEP), the ECDE Programme's first regional sub-programme. The objective of the PDEP is to support the development of inclusive digital economies in the Pacific. The ECDE Programme will contribute to this goal with several research and technical assistance activities, including a regional Digital Economy Report for the Pacific, assistance with the design of national e-commerce and digital economy strategies, regional training and support on data collection and measuring of e-commerce and the establishment of an eTrade for Women community in the Pacific.



The first Asia eCommerce Week will be held in collaboration with the United Arab Emirates in October 2021 under the theme *Shaping the Digital Economy for all*. It will explore how economies of the Asia-Pacific region can advance digitalization while adjusting to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic to



build more inclusive and resilient economies and societies. The event will coincide with the Expo 2020 Dubai.

Major upcoming research activities include the Digital Economy Report 2021, which will focus on cross-border data flows and development. The Programme will also publish new estimates of Global E-commerce, update the B2C E-commerce Index and further analyze the role of e-commerce and the digital economy in the economic recovery from COVID-19.

The Programme's main goals and objectives in the capacity building domain for 2021 include new eTrade readiness assessments (e.g. for Jordan and Tunisia), new e-commerce strategies (e.g. for Benin, Kenya and ECOWAS), ratcheting up assistance to improve the measurement of e-commerce and the digital economy with training material based on the revised Manual for the Production of Statistics on the Digital Economy. The Programme will also leverage the work conducted under the *eTrade for all* umbrella on COVID-19 and e-commerce and develop a new training course for policy makers on how to strengthen country readiness to engage in and benefit from e-commerce.

The expansion of eTrade for Women communities and recruitment of new eTrade for Women Advocates will help advance the Programme's efforts towards supporting policy formulation in e-commerce and the digital economy that

considers the specific needs, experiences, and perspectives of women digital entrepreneurs.

To ensure effective implementation of its activities in 2021 and beyond, the Programme will continue its efforts to secure long-term funding, for example through solidifying its partnerships with Switzerland and UNCDF. Living up to its commitment to partnership, the Programme aims to deepen its collaboration with the UN Resident Coordinators, new *eTrade for all* members, partners involved in the development of training materials aimed at building the awareness of policy makers on how to harness e-commerce and the digital economy for development.

Last but not least, in 2021 the ECDE Programme will undertake a first independent external evaluation of all its activities and results. The evaluation has been agreed upon with the main donors and will be repeated every three years.

6. Management

6.1 Human resources

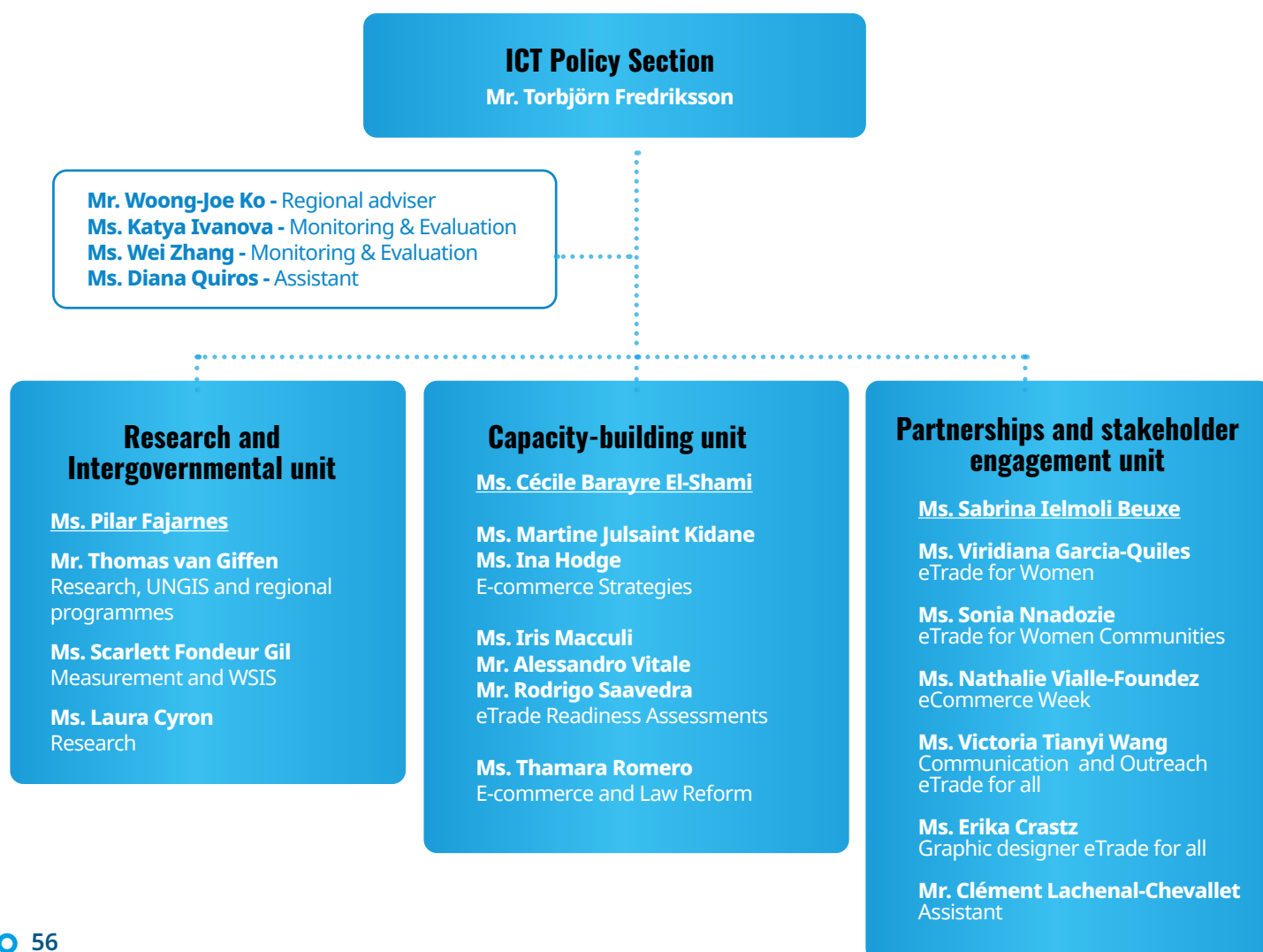
At the time of drafting this report (April 2021), the ECDE Programme had a total of 22 staff members working across its three pillars (i.e. research and analysis, technical cooperation, and consensus-building), with 2 more staff members under recruitment. Only 6 of the Programme's staff members are funded through UNCTAD's regular budget, making the remaining 16 staff members' continued support to the Programme contingent on the availability of extra-budgetary funding. Figure 9 shows an organigram of the Programme's team. A list of key contacts for each

of the Programme's areas of work is provided in the Annex to this report.

In 2020, the Programme also drew on the specific skills and expertise of more than 30 consultants.

Support from the UN's Regular Programme of Technical Cooperation (RPTC) in 2020 funded the salaries of 3 staff members supporting eTrade Readiness Assessments and eTrade for Women and 4 consultants preparing background studies for the Digital Economy Report 2021, for a total of USD 280,000.

Figure 9. ECDE Programme team organigram, April 2021



Due to the UN's liquidity crisis, the UN Secretariat faced a hiring freeze with regard to regular budget staff. Vacant posts could not be filled in 2020, which impacted negatively on the Programme's ability to undertake certain activities – in particular related to its research, analysis and statistical work. Thanks to additional resources committed by donors, the Programme should be able to scale up its efforts in this area from 2021 onwards.

The expansion of the activities related to the ECDE Programme is expected to require an upgrading of the Section to the level of a Branch. This has become even more important in view of the growing demand resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. It is essential to achieve a more effective organization of work and adequate structures

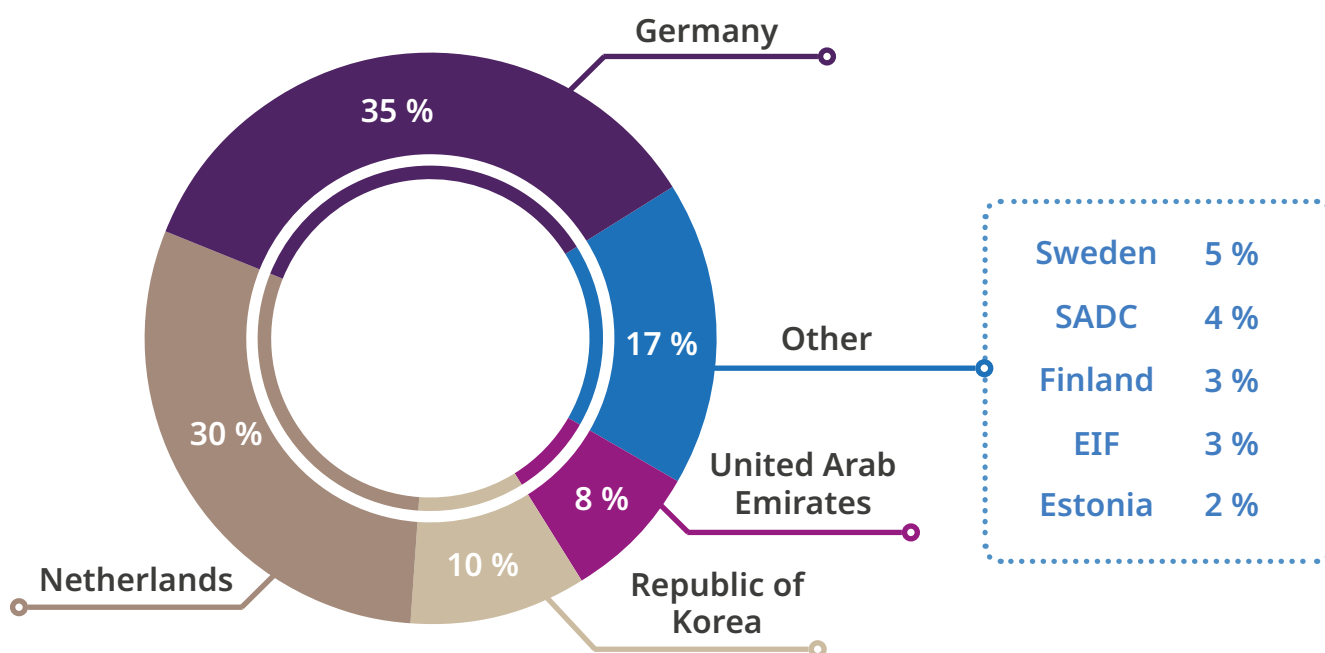
for monitoring and evaluation. To this end, the human resources need to reflect this upgraded organizational structure.

Expanded extra-budgetary funding will allow the Programme to grow its team in 2021. Key recruitments after April 2021 will include a Regional Programme Management Officer, a Regional Project Manager, and a Team Assistant for the Pacific Digital Economy Programme. Additional resources will include 2 Economic Affairs Officers who will work on Measuring E-commerce and the Digital Economy and related technical assistance, and on E-commerce and Law Reform, respectively. A Programme Management Officer will be recruited to work on e-commerce strategies.

6.2 Financial information

In 2020, ECDE Programme interventions were funded by 9 different donors, for a total of USD 2.7 million in extra-budgetary funding. More than half of the Programme's extra-budgetary resources were provided by 2 core donors – namely Germany and the Netherlands. Significant contributions were also received from the Republic of Korea, the United Arab Emirates and five other organizations (Figure 10).

Figure 10. ECDE Programme donors, 2020



In 2020, the ECDE Programme's total expenditures amounted to USD 1'609'383. A breakdown of 2020 expenditures by type and programme component is provided in Figure 11 and Table 2 below.

Figure 11. ECDE Programme expenditures by type, 2020

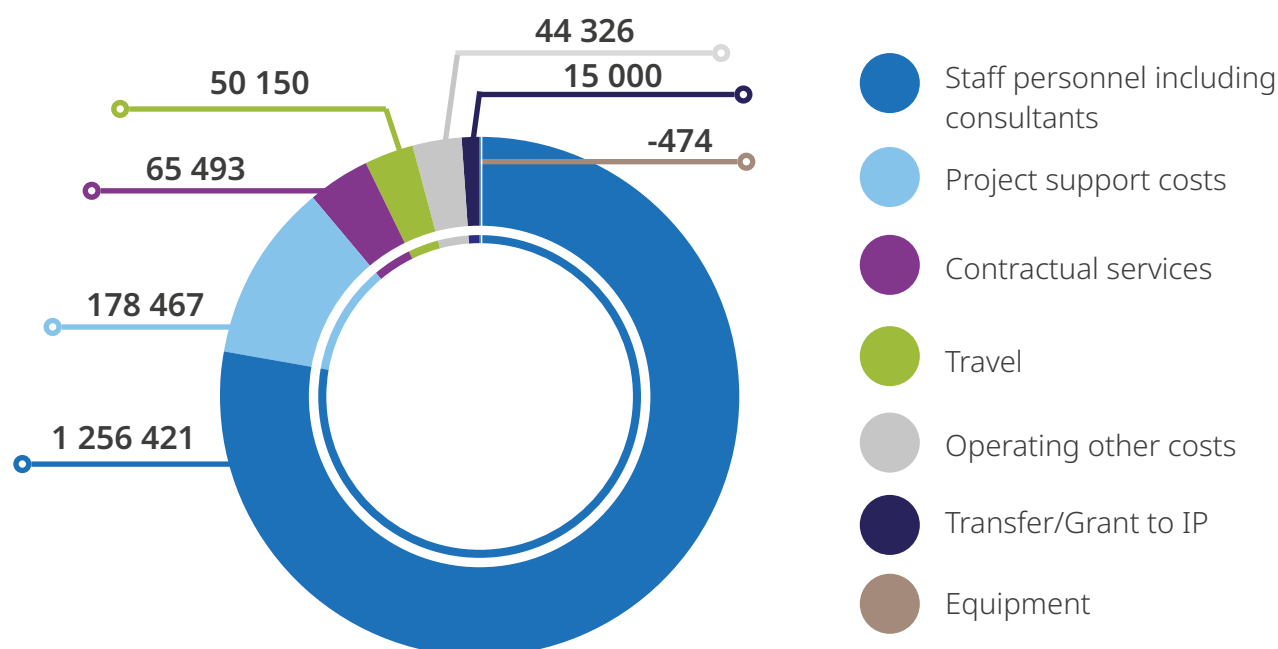


Table 2. ECDE Programme expenditures by programme component and type, 2020

	Staff Personnel including consultants	Contractual Services	Travel	Operating other costs	Transfer/ Grant to IP	Equipment	Project support costs	Grand Total
eTrade Readiness Assessments	25,1%	0,6%	1,8%	1,1%		-0,03%		28,6%
eTrade for all	18,6%	2,6%		0,1%	0,9%			22,3%
eTrade for Women	10,8%	0,6%	1,6%					12,9%
Management	8,1%		0,3%					8,5%
E-commerce Strategies	4,1%	0,9%		0,2%				5,3%
Research	3,4%			0,1%				3,5%
E-commerce Week	2,8%							2,8%
E-commerce and Law Reform	2,7%							2,7%
Measuring	2,1%							2,2%
Project support costs							11,3%	11,3%
Grand Total	77,8%	4,7%	3,7%	1,5%	0,9%	-0,03%	11,3%	100,0%

The committed and anticipated extra-budgetary funding for the 2019-2023 period amounts to USD 19.5 million. Funding in 2021 is expected to increase significantly with the entry of Switzerland as a core donor and through the multi-year partnership with UNCDF. For 2022 and beyond, the Programme will continue to secure additional extra-budgetary funding.

Based on the Programme's current work plan for the next three years (i.e. 2021 – 2023) and projected funding requirements, the anticipated gap of extra-budgetary funding is 27% in 2021 (i.e. 73% covered), 51% in 2022 (i.e. 49% covered), and 65% in 2023 (i.e. 35% covered).

The ECDE programme offers a unique window for donors to fund integrated, relevant and much needed initiatives around issues related to e-commerce and digital economy to the benefit of developing countries, through its three main work pillars (research, technical cooperation and consensus-building). However, the number of countries who support the Programme with extra-budgetary resources is currently limited and a considerable part of the support is project-oriented with short-term horizons. This creates uncertainty and limits the Programme's ability to secure proper staffing and ensure continuity of interventions.

6.3 Risk analysis

In 2020, COVID-19 emerged as a new and unanticipated major risk to the ECDE Programme's ability to deliver on its objectives. The associated lockdown measures and movement restrictions forced programme staff to quickly find creative ways to continue working, as evidenced by the rapid transformation of eCommerce Week into a digital event only weeks after the first lockdown was imposed in Geneva. Several activities planned to take place in 2020 had to be postponed, including the second meeting of the Working Group on Measuring E-commerce and the Digital Economy, the first Asia eCommerce Week, and multiple field missions. In 2021, the Programme continues to rely on virtual avenues to deliver its activities and coordinate with its beneficiaries and partners, not all of whom enjoy the same level of connectivity to and reliability of digital services.

The uncertain political situation in Myanmar poses a risk to the Programme's ability to finalize the national e-commerce strategy which is being

To promote a programmatic approach to funding, in 2021 the Programme intends to establish a Donor Advisory Board among its core donors – Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland – who each contribute more than USD 1 million to the Programme. The Advisory Board will meet once a year and provide a venue for discussions on the performance and priorities of the ECDE Programme. It will also enable the core donors to compare notes on their broader efforts at supporting digitalization and development through their respective work.

developed in line with recommendations made by the rapid e-trade readiness assessment and the country's digital economy roadmap.

The liquidity crisis affecting UN Secretariat recruitment remained a key risk to the Programme's ability to fill vacant posts that are much needed to carry out research and analysis-related work. As a result, no data collection took place in 2020 for the Database on statistics related to e-commerce and the digital economy. Additional resources committed by donors would allow for this risk to be mitigated in 2021 and beyond. The same applies for the risk of staff turnover due to a lack of predictability in extra-budgetary funding.

To help strengthen its results-based management approach and mitigate risks related to ineffective implementation of its Results Framework, in 2021 the Programme recruited a Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) Officer to step up efforts toward operationalizing, streamlining and fine-tuning the M&E

Framework developed over the last few years. The M&E Officer will also play an active role in the mitigation of risks related to the Programme's centralized information management system, as well as in ensuring that donors' queries and reporting requests are addressed in a timely manner.

Other exogenous risks to the achievement of the Programme's intended results include the risk of lack of responsiveness of member States

to assign budgets for the generation of statistics on e-commerce and the digital economy, and the ensuing risk of lack of quality data from member States. To mitigate those risks, UNCTAD with support from the Intergovernmental Group of Experts, will continue its work on strengthening member States' capacity to measure e-commerce, with a view to highlighting the needs to allocate adequate resources to that key function.

6.4 Lessons learned

Lessons learned from the first eT Ready monitoring exercise

Countries' participation in the first structured eT Ready monitoring exercise was very encouraging, both in terms of the quantity and quality of responses received. More than 70 per cent of targeted countries provided a response, showing widespread political and technical leadership committed to the eT Ready process. Still, weak institutional capacities and policy coordination mechanisms are important bottlenecks impeding adequate eT Ready follow-up at the national level. These translate into high staff turnover, limited capacity to identify areas that require priority investments and action, unclear institutional responsibilities and insufficient inter-ministerial coordination to mobilize Government agencies around different policy areas, limited financial resources and coordination with local development partners.

The engagement of *eTrade for all* partners in the monitoring process can be further improved. A concerted holistic approach will enhance trans-

parency and maximize synergies in the support provided to countries to foster eT Ready implementation by making better use of the existing *eTrade for all* platform. Positive feedback has been received by UN Country Teams that are increasingly looking at ways to promote digitalization as part of national development assistance frameworks. The leading role currently ensured by the Lao PDR UN RCO in mainstreaming e-commerce development support into UN country programming framework is a case in point.

Lessons learned from eTrade for all and eTrade for Women

A key assumption for the sustainability of *eTrade for all* is partners' sustained engagement in contributing, updating and participating in *eTrade for all* activities. The initiative is exploring possible synergies with private sector stakeholders to better integrate their voices and views into its activities.

In 2020, key learnings include the need to further integrate the use of digital tools and virtual learning environments in future activities and

expand online capacity-building efforts, with a view to adapting to the pandemic-induced situation and to reaching more policy makers and digital entrepreneurs in developing countries.

As the Programme continues to leverage IT solutions for remote delivery of activities, more resources will be dedicated to accommodating the increasing demand for technical expertise needed to maintain the *eTrade for all* and eTrade for Women digital platform (e.g. web developers, UX experts, designers, cybersecurity experts, and professional conferencing or training platforms, amongst others).

Lessons learned from starting to implement the M&E Framework

In terms of strengthening the Programme's results-based management approach, the further fine-tuning of its M&E Framework has been outlined as a Programme priority for the upcoming period in view of lessons learned from the development of this *Year in Review*.

A number of adjustments have already been made, with a view to better mapping indicators against programme interventions, minimizing overlap between indicators, and positioning indicators at the most appropriate level in the Results Framework to better reflect the Programme's varying ability to exert control and affect change at different levels of results.

Baselines and targets for many of the indicators have been established in the process of drafting this report and are available in the Annex. Work is also currently underway to set up appropriate and realistic data collection methods and tools for a number of indicators where no systematic means of verification have been established yet and streamline existing monitoring mechanisms, while keeping the burden on staff to a minimum. The Programme will expand its efforts in this area in the coming year.

7. Annexes

Annex 1: ECDE Programme results indicators, 2020¹⁵

Expected results	Indicators	Baseline year	Baseline data	Actual data 2020	Target 2023
IMPACT - Enhanced inclusive and sustainable development gains and economic benefits from e-commerce and the digital economy for people and businesses in developing countries, particularly LDCs	0. a) Variation of UNCTAD B2C e-commerce index on a yearly basis (disaggregated by region and development status (developed/transition/developing/LDC), and/or special categories (SIDS/LLDCs))				
	World	2019	55	55	not applicable
	Developed economies	2019	87	86	not applicable
	Transition economies	2019	62	61	not applicable
	Developing - Africa	2019	31	30	not applicable
	Developing - Asia and Oceania	2019	57	57	not applicable
	Developing - Latin America and the Caribbean	2019	48	49	not applicable
	LDCs	2019	24	23	not applicable
	SIDS	2019	54	51	not applicable
	LLDCs	2019	36	35	not applicable
	0. b) Proportion of individuals using the Internet for purchasing or ordering goods or services (latest available year, disaggregated by region and development status (developed/transition/developing/LDC), and/or special categories (SIDS/LLDCs))				
	World	2017	24%	not available*	not applicable
	Developed economies	2017	60%	not available*	not applicable
	Transition economies	2017	19.5%	not available*	not applicable
	Developing - Africa	2017	5.5%	not available*	not applicable
	Developing - Asia and Oceania	2017	20.6%	not available*	not applicable
	Developing - Latin America and the Caribbean	2017	10.6%	not available*	not applicable
	LDCs	2017	2%	not available*	not applicable
	SIDS	2017	14.6%	not available*	not applicable
	LLDCs	2017	2.7%	not available*	not applicable
0. c) Share (%) of enterprises that place orders online, receive orders online and have a web presence (disaggregated by country and size of enterprise)					
	2021	work in progress	not available**	not applicable	

Expected results	Indicators	Baseline year	Baseline data	Actual data 2020	Target 2023
OUTCOME 1: Improved decision-making and policy formulation at the national level on e-commerce and digital economy for development, in a gender sensitive manner	1. a) Share (%) of countries that have adopted laws and regulations related to e-commerce (disaggregated by law area, region and development status (developed/transition/developing/LDC), and/or special categories (SIDS/LLDCs))				
	<i>Developing economies</i>				
	e-transaction	2018	70%	75%	80%
	Protection of consumers online	2018	46%	52%	57%
	Privacy and data protection	2018	42%	54%	59%
	Cybercrime	2018	61%	76%	81%
	<i>LDCs</i>				
	e-transaction	2018	51%	64%	69%
	Protection of consumers online	2018	30%	40%	45%
	Privacy and data protection	2018	34%	43%	48%
	Cybercrime	2018	38%	68%	73%
	<i>World</i>				
	e-transaction	2018	78%	82%	
	Protection of consumers online	2018	52%	56%	
	Privacy and data protection	2018	58%	66%	
	Cybercrime	2018	72%	80%	
	1. b) Number of countries having reported progress in implementing recommendations of eTrade Readiness Assessments and/or e-commerce strategies (disaggregated by transition/developing/LDC), and/or special categories (SIDS/LLDCs))				
	Transition economies	2020	0	0	
	Developing economies	2020	13	13	
	LDCs	2020	12	12	
	SIDS	2020	2	2	
	LLDCs	2020	5	5	
	Total	2020	13 out of 18	13 out of 18 (cumulative)	23 out of 30 (cumulative)
1. c) Number of developing countries and LDCs with a strategy on e-commerce and/or digital economy, disaggregated by UNCTAD-supported vs non UNCTAD-supported strategies, and by strategies that address gender vs. that do not					
<i>UNCTAD supported countries</i>					
Strategies that address gender	2020	1	1		
Strategies that do not explicitly address gender	2020	1	1		
<i>non-UNCTAD supported countries</i>					
Strategies that address gender	2020	1	1		
Strategies that do not explicitly address gender	2020	8	8		
Total	2020	11	11 (cumulative)	20 (cumulative)	

Expected results	Indicators	Baseline year	Baseline data	Actual data 2020	Target 2023
	1. d) Number and % of countries that supply UNCTAD with data related to e-commerce and the digital economy for inclusion within UNCTAD's statistical database (disaggregated by developed/transition/developing/LDC), and/or special categories (SIDS/LLDCs))				
	Developed economies - #	2017	32	not available***	
	Developed economies - %	2017	74%	not available***	
	Transition economies - #	2017	5	not available***	
	Transition economies - %	2017	29%	not available***	
	Developing economies - #	2017	9	not available***	
	Developing economies - %	2017	6.7%	not available***	
	LDCs - #	2017	0	not available***	
	LDCs - %	2017	0%	not available***	
	SIDS - #	2017	0	not available***	
	SIDS - %	2017	0%	not available***	
	1. e) Number of countries measuring international trade in ICT-enabled services (developed/transition/developing/LDC), and/or special categories (SIDS/LLDCs))				
	Developed economies	2020	0	0	
	Transition economies	2020	0	0	
	Developing economies	2020	2	2	4
	LDCs	2020	0	0	
	SIDS	2020	0	0	
	LLDCs	2020	0	0	
	Total	2020	2	2 (cumulative)	4 (cumulative)
	1. f) Number of specific actions taken by developing countries to enhance gender inclusivity in relation to e-commerce and the digital economy with UNCTAD support	2020	7	7 (cumulative)	
	1. g) Number of specific actions taken by countries to implement programmes aimed at enhancing country readiness regarding e-commerce and digital economy, with the assistance of UNCTAD (disaggregated by region and development status (transition/developing/LDC), and/or special categories (SIDS/LLDCs))	2021	work in progress	not available	

Expected results	Indicators	Baseline year	Baseline data	Actual data 2020	Target 2023
OUTPUT 1.1: Research and analysis enhancing the understanding and increasing the awareness of policy makers about policy options and good practices to benefit from e-commerce and the digital economy	1.1 a) Number of media mentions of UNCTAD's work on e-commerce and the digital economy per year	2021	work in progress	not available	
	1.1 b) Number and reach of news items on UNCTAD's work on e-commerce and the digital economy per year	2020	27 news items for a total of 96,138 unique page views	27 (cumulative)	117 news items for a total of 380,000 unique page views (cumulative)
	1.1 c) Number of publication downloads per year (disaggregated by publication category)				
	Digital Economy Report 2019	2019	160,859	400K (cumulative)	
	Technical notes in ICT for development (2017-2020)	2019	52,793	95K (cumulative)	
	Policy Briefs (2017-2020)	2019	6,849	12K (cumulative)	
	ICT Policy Reviews & National E-commerce strategies (2017-2020)	2019	3,964	11K (cumulative)	
	eTrade Readiness Assessments (2017-2020)	2019	35,290	70K (cumulative)	150K (cumulative)
	Other	2020	27,100	27K (cumulative)	
	1.1 d) Number of stakeholders attending launch events/presentations of UNCTAD research work per year (disaggregated by sex, region, type of stakeholders)	2021	work in progress	not available	
	1.2 a) Number and type of technical assistance requests formally received by UNCTAD related to e-commerce and the digital economy (disaggregated by transition / developing / LDC / SIDS, ECDE sub-component)				
	Transition economies	2019	0	1	
	Developing economies	2019	13	21	
	LDCs	2019	5	6	
	SIDS	2019	4	4	
	LLDCs	2019	2	4	
	eTrade Readiness Assessments	2019	6	9	
	E-commerce Strategies	2019	6	10	
	Law Reform	2019	0	2	
	Measuring e-commerce and the digital economy	2019	1	1	
	Total	2019	13	22 (cumulative)	30 (cumulative)

Expected results	Indicators	Baseline year	Baseline data	Actual data 2020	Target 2023
OUTPUT 1.2: Capacity building assistance to policy makers for integrating e-commerce and the digital economy in the national development agenda in dialogue with other stakeholders	1.2 b) Number of countries that benefitted from capacity-building activities by ECDE and its sub-components (disaggregated by region and development status (transition/developing/LDC), and/or special categories (SIDS/LLDCs))				
	Transition economies	2020	0	0	
	Developing - Africa	2020	9	9	
	Developing - Asia and Oceania	2020	3	3	
	Developing - Latin America and the Caribbean	2020	1	1	
	LDCs	2020	6	6	
	SIDS	2020	0	0	
	LLDCs	2020	1	1	
	Total	2020	13	13 (cumulative)	50 (cumulative)
	1.2 c) Share (%) of project beneficiaries rating UNCTAD's technical assistance and other activities as "useful" or "very useful" (disaggregated by UNCTAD activity, development status (transition/developing/LDC), and/or special categories (SIDS/LLDCs), sex)	2020	90% on average for the 3 eTrade for Women Masterclasses in 2020	90% on average for the 3 eTrade for Women Masterclasses in 2020	90% ⁵
1.2 d) Number of empowerment and skill-building activities engaging the eTrade for Women network (Masterclasses, workshops, and other training sessions)	2019	1	5 (cumulative)	19 (cumulative)	
1.2 e) Number of communities established in the region (hubs, associations) to foster women digital entrepreneurship resulting from eTrade for Women empowerment activities	2020	3	3 (cumulative)	6 (cumulative)	
1.2 f) Number of partnerships / actions created / collaborations aimed at increasing business opportunities for the eTrade for Women network (disaggregated by collaboration with public sector/other actors)	2020	4	4 (cumulative)	30 (cumulative)	

Expected results	Indicators	Baseline year	Baseline data	Actual data 2020	Target 2023
OUTCOME 2: Improved efficiency of governments, international organizations, civil society and private sector in addressing issues and providing assistance on e-commerce and the digital economy for development, in a gender sensitive manner	2. a) Number of development partners / donors that incorporate e-commerce and digital economy in their development assistance plans	2018	21	21 (cumulative)	30 (cumulative)
	2. b) Share (%) of resources to support Aid for Trade per year dedicated to ICT or e-commerce and the digital economy (disaggregated by transition/developing/LDC), and/or special categories (SIDS/LLDCs)				
	Bilateral commitments	2017	1.2%	2.9%	
	Transition economies	2017	0.7%	0.4%	
	Developing economies	2017	1.3%	3.2%	
	LDCs	2017	2.2%	3.0%	
	SIDS	2017	4.9%	8.7%	
	LLDCs	2017	2.8%	1.2%	
	Regional commitments	2017	1.7%	1.6%	
	Unallocated commitments	2017	0.8%	1.9%	
Total (bilateral, regional, and unallocated)	2017	1.2%	2.7% †	3.5%	
2. c) Number of partnerships / actions created / implemented with the support of eTrade for all partners to enhance e-trade readiness of developing and LDC countries	2020	10	10 (cumulative)	18 (cumulative)	
2. d) Number of advocacy actions (participation in high-level events, policy dialogues) undertaken by women digital entrepreneurs from the eTrade for Women network, to change perceptions and raise awareness of gender equality in the digital economy at the global level	2020	9	9 (cumulative)	40 (cumulative)	

Expected results	Indicators	Baseline year	Baseline data	Actual data 2020	Target 2023
OUTPUT 2.1: Facilitation of cooperation, exchange of good practices and consensus building among policy makers, as well as research institutions, academic centres, private and public entities at the national, subregional, regional and international levels in the areas of e-commerce and the digital economy for development	2.1 a) Number and satisfaction of participants in UNCTAD eCommerce Week(s) (disaggregated by region and development status (developed/developing/LDC), sex, type of stakeholders)				
	Total number of participants	2020	2,034	2,034	6,000 (cumulative)
	Female	2020	44%	44%	
	Male	2020	56%	56%	
	Developed economies	2020	44%	44%	
	Transition economies	2020	2%	2%	
	Developing - Africa	2020	31%	31%	
	Developing - Asia and Oceania	2020	18%	18%	
	Developing - Latin America and the Caribbean	2020	5%	5%	
	LDCs	2020	14%	14%	
	SIDS	2020	3%	3%	
	LLDCs	2020	11%	11%	
	Average satisfaction rate (%)	2020	94%	94%	90%
	2.1 b) Number of Development Solutions per policy area promoted on the platform by eTrade for all partners in three languages (Fr, Es, En)	2019	24	34 (cumulative)	40 (cumulative)
	2.1 c) Number and type of requests for information or support channeled through eTrade for all	2019	82	186 (cumulative)	400 (cumulative)
2.1 d) Number of visitors on the eTrade for all platform per year (disaggregated by returning/new)	2017	11,964	91,852	100,000	
Returning	2017	1,670 (14%)	9,799 (10.6%)		
New	2017	10,294 (86%)	82,053 (89.4%)		
2.1 e) Number of subscribers to the eTrade for all newsletter	2017	326	2,400 (cumulative)	5,000 (cumulative)	

Notes:

*Data is collected by ITU/ the World Bank for inclusion in the Global Findex database. Latest available year is 2017.

** An annual survey of National Statistical Offices will be conducted in 2021 to collect updated data.

***Data collection in recent years has been negatively affected by the UN's liquidity crisis, which prevented the hiring of dedicated staff.

†2020 data is for 2019; 2023 target is for 2022 data, given the natural time lag in data collection.

§ The 2020 baseline for eTrade for Women Masterclasses is based on a limited number of respondents in an unusual year (COVID-19 pandemic). As the 2023 target was set in line with that baseline, this should be kept in mind for future monitoring and the target reevaluated in line with future, more representative, data.

Annex 2: List of ECDE Programme key contacts

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Notes

¹ SDG targets explicitly stating the importance of ICTs include: 5.b. Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women; 9.8. Significantly increase access to information and communications technology and strive to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet in least developed countries by 2020; and 17.8. Fully operationalize the technology bank and science, technology and innovation capacity-building mechanism for least developed countries by 2017 and enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology.

² SDG 5: Gender equality; SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth; SDG 9: Industry, innovation and infrastructure; SDG 10: Reduced inequalities; and SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals.

³<https://unctad.org/topic/ecommerce-and-digital-economy/ecommerce-law-reform/summary-adoption-e-commerce-legislation-worldwide>.

⁴ Fast-tracking implementation of eTrade Readiness Assessments | UNCTAD (2020)

⁵ The eTrade Readiness Assessments in 2020 were funded by the Governments of Germany and the Netherlands, the EIF and the International Islamic Trade Finance Corporation (ITFC).

⁶ Fast-tracking implementation of eTrade Readiness Assessments | UNCTAD (2020)

⁷ Australia, Belgium (Enabel), Commonwealth Secretariat, CUTS, DIAL, EIF, Estonia, European Union, France (AFD and Expertise France), Germany (BMZ and GIZ), ITC, ITFC, ITU, Korea, Netherlands, OIF, Sweden (Sida), Switzerland, TMEA, UNCDF, UN RC in Lao PDR, UN/CEFACT, UNCTAD, UNESCAP, UNESCWA, UNIDO, United Kingdom, UPU.

⁸ See, in [Cambodia](#), in [Kenya](#), in [Myanmar](#), in [Kiribati](#), in [Uganda](#), in [Senegal](#).

⁹ The findings emerging from the eT Ready monitoring exercise are primarily based on the analytical results and further research conducted by UNCTAD on the basis of filled questionnaires received from 13 countries, which allowed in-depth analysis in the form of a scored performance assessment. Additional information has been gathered through desk research and interviews, covering the whole cohort of 18 countries reviewed in the report. The range of actions that could be taken by countries have been broken down into a total of 26 thematic items that show commonalities across the different countries' eT Readies.

¹⁰ This is based on preliminary research and relates only to e-commerce strategies *stricto sensu*, as there are other countries which have adopted e-commerce policies and/or digital strategies. Further research is needed to understand if some of them could be classified as an e-commerce strategy rather than a policy.

¹¹ Worth noting that countries like Togo and Vanuatu submitted requests for an UNCTAD-supported ECS, in 2019 and 2018 respectively, for which funding is still actively sought.

¹²Évaluation de l'état de préparation au commerce électronique : États membres de l'Union économique et monétaire ouest-africaine (unctad.org)

¹³For a report from the IGE, see https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/tdb_ed4d4_en.pdf.

¹⁴ UNCTAD Technical note on Donor Support to the Digital Economy in Developing Countries (2019)

¹⁵For the purpose of collecting and reporting disaggregated data, the following classifications of world economies were used in this *Year in Review*:

- Developed, developing and transition economies: [World Economic Situation and Prospects 2021 \(UN DESA\)](#). Developing economies are further classified into developing Africa, developing Asia and Oceania, and developing Latin America and the Caribbean. Developing economies also includes LDCs.

From 2021 on, UNCTAD will adopt the M49 standard for the classification of economies by development status, using only the binary “developed regions” and “developing regions”. As a consequence, the category “transition economies” will no longer be used.

- LDCs: [UN List of Least Developed Countries](#). Vanuatu was included in this category as it only graduated from LDC status in December 2020.

- LLDCs: [UN-OHRLLS List of LLDCs](#)

- SIDS: [UN-OHRLLS List of SIDS](#)

