

Fifteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development Pre-Event

High-level policy dialogue South–South sharing of policy experiences for digital transformation

Webinar, 1 September 2021

10–11.30 a.m. (CEST)

Organized by UNCTAD, Information and Communication Technology Agency (Sri Lanka)
and Institute for Development of Economics and Finance (Indonesia)

Background information

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the existing global digital divide and highlighted the importance of building the digital economy, especially in the global South. Many developing countries and most least developed countries lag behind even in basic information and communications technology infrastructure, specifically Internet access for their populations. There is a need for developing countries to design a comprehensive national digital policy for building their digital economy with targeted strategies at the subnational and sectoral levels. Both demand- and supply-side constraints need to be addressed. Many developing countries have started the process of designing digital policies, particularly focusing on building their digital infrastructure.

While developing countries are facing common challenges for digital transformation in terms of lack of adequate digital infrastructure, digital skills and capacities, some developing countries have been able to successfully design digital policies for their structural transformation. It may not be possible for developing countries to replicate other countries' experiences, though there are many policy lessons which can help in rapid digital transformation and assist developing countries to recover better from the pandemic with more sustainable and inclusive growth.

Objectives of the webinar

The main objective of the webinar is to facilitate peer learning by sharing digital policies which are being designed in the global South. The webinar will bring together high-level policymakers and other experts from developing countries to share their policy experiences on building digital infrastructure and digital skills. A wide audience will be invited, including policymakers, think tanks, civil society, academia and other stakeholders, to have fruitful discussions on the way forward for developing countries in bridging the digital divide.

Three key issues will be discussed:

- ❖ What are the key policies which can help in digital transformation?
- ❖ What policies have been adopted to build data infrastructure for structural transformation?
- ❖ What strategies are being used to promote digital innovations?

Programme Timetable

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1 September 2021 (CEST)

10–11 a.m.

Welcome and introductory remarks

Ms. Isabelle Durant, Acting Secretary-General, UNCTAD

High-level segment

Speakers:

- ❖ H.E. Mr. Suharso Monoarfa, Minister of National Development Planning, Indonesia
- ❖ H.E. Mr. Namal Rajapaksa, State Minister of Digital Technology and Entrepreneur Development, Sri Lanka
- ❖ H.E. Mr. Shri Rajeev Chandrasekhar, Minister of State, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, India

11–11.30 a.m.

Questions and answers

Moderator:

Ms. Anastasia Nesvetailova, Head, Macroeconomic and Development Policies Branch, Division on Globalization and Development Strategies, UNCTAD