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Contribution by

Zambia

The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of UNCTAD.



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REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA
OFFICE OF THE PERMANENT SECRETARY
MINISTRY OF COMMERCE, TRADE AND INDUSTRY

**P.O. BOX 31968
LUSAKA**

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Mr. Torbjörn Fredriksson
Head -E-Commerce and Digital Economy Branch
United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)
GENEVA

WRITTEN CONTRIBUTION ON ZAMBIA'S EXPERIENCE, GOOD PRACTICES AND FORWARD-LOOKING SUGGESTIONS ON HOW TO BUILD DIGITAL READINESS, TO INFORM THE DISCUSSIONS OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL GROUP OF EXPERTS (IGE)

Reference is made to the above.

Kindy find below the written contribution that was requested for in the invitation letter for Mrs. Michelo Makwembo Chongwe who will be in attendance during 7th Session of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts (IGE) on Ecommerce and Digital Economy and eTrade Capacity Building Workshop to be held in Geneva, Switzerland, from 6th -10th May 2024.

To build Digital reediness, at the National level, the Government of the Republic of Zambia in its 8th National Development Plan has prioritised to boost Digital Capacity through integration of digital technologies into business processes to enhance efficiency and productivity for economic transformation. To advance the digitalisation agenda, the Government has continued with the roll-out of digital communications infrastructure, including the launch of a satellite. This has ensured that citizens in rural areas are connected to socio-economic services through mobile phones and other electronic devices, thereby bridging the digital divide between urban areas and rural Areas.

Further, the Government of the Republic of Zambia has facilitated additional investments in building digital skills, especially among the youth to provide a sound foundation for innovation, including in science and technology. In this regard, internet penetration is targeted to increase to 80 percent by 2026 from 52.9 percent in 2020.

In an era characterized by rapid technological advancements, the integration of digital technologies into economic frameworks has become paramount for nations striving to stay competitive and foster sustainable growth. To this end, and as a result of recognizing the transformative potential of electronic commerce (e-commerce), Zambia, through a consultative process with academia, private and public sectors developed and launched a National E-Commerce Strategy. The primary objective of this Strategy is to clearly set out Government's approach towards the development of Zambia's e-Commerce and digital economy.

The strategy spells out the specific policy interventions that Government will put in place to increase Zambia's competitiveness in domestic and international trade and its participation in global e-Commerce innovations and digital economy. By strategically deploying e-Commerce solutions, the goal is to create a dynamic and competitive business environment. The strategy places a strong emphasis on improving ICT infrastructure development, increasing local retailer participation on e-commerce platforms, reviewing regulatory and legal frameworks, Payment solutions, enhancing E-Commerce skills development, and promoting export through e-commerce.

Zambia has made significant strides on its path to digital transformation over the past few years. Progress is particularly evident in digital infrastructure, digital financial services, and digital platforms. With respect to digital infrastructure, all provincial centers are now linked to the fiber backbone, and the country has a data center that can be leveraged for government and commercial use. International benchmarks for affordability of broadband have also been met, and the use of mobile phones has increased significantly. Zambia has increased the use of online payment systems to increase the efficiency of government services through the Government Service Bus (GSB) as well as the uptake of digital financial services (DFS). Currently they are over 287 services on GSB.

Additionally, the Government of the Republic of Zambia has reviewed and enacted a number of legislations to provide for a conducive business environment for electronic transactions and these include: the Electronic Communications and Transactions Act No. 4 of 2021 to broadly support the growth of the digital economy and e-Commerce, Data Protection Act, No. 3 of 2021; Cyber Security and Cyber - Crime Act No. 2 of 2021 and the Electronic Government Act No. 41 of 2021 among them.

At the regional level, to promote digital trade, and promote free movement of goods and services across borders, Zambia is part of the Digital Trade Corridor aimed at implementation of Non – Stop Border Posts linking Botswana, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe, this is in line with Africa's aspiration to be a Single Digital Market.

At the Continental level, Zambia party to the AfCFTA and participates in the review of the Digital Trade Protocol and Zambia will co-host the AfCFTA Digital Trade Forum in June 2024.

At the Global Level, to enhance Digital Trade, Zambia collaborates with a number of agencies and among them is the collaboration with a UNCTAD. UNCTAD facilitated the eTrade Readiness Assessments (eT Ready), to support the implementation of recommendations aimed at assessing progress and gaps, highlighting best practices in order to identify priorities to fast-track implementation of the eT Ready recommendations for an inclusive development of e-commerce and digital economy.

The Implementation Review done in 2021 captured the progress made by 14 eT Ready beneficiary countries and Zambia was part of the beneficiary. After the assessment Zambia was rated 69% in terms of the implementation of the 7 thematic areas. Zambia has continued to receive Technical Assistance from UNCTAD through the various capacity building workshops and trainings.

Zambia also has been collaborating with the International Trade Centre (ITC) who has been facilitating public-private dialogue in order to consult and obtain private sector perspectives on e-commerce regulatory issues and provided feedback on the then draft National E-Commerce Strategy as well as the AfCFTA Digital Trade Protocol.

Submitted for your information.



Nalituba C. Mwale (Mrs)
Director – Human Resource and Administration
For/Permanent Secretary – Trade and Commerce
MINISTRY OF COMMERCE, TRADE AND INDUSTRY