

U.S. Statement

**UNCTAD E-commerce Week**  
**Aid for eTrade Open Consultation Meeting**  
21 April 2016

Mr. President  
Excellencies  
Distinguished Delegates

On behalf of the United States, I would like to express our support for the Aid for eTrade initiative. The digital revolution presents development opportunities unlike any other scientific or engineering advancement we have ever experienced. The pace of change can, however, be overwhelming to consumers and governments.

Whether it's Alibaba, M-pesa, or Whatsapp, the digital revolution has spawned an alphabet soup of technologies and services. There is also an alphabet soup of international e-commerce actors from the OECD to the ITC to the WTO. Among other functions, UNCTAD can help countries identify where to turn for help when they get lost in the soup bowl.

We commend the secretariat's early engagement with government and the private sector in developing the call for action. We also endorse the creation of a private sector advisory council to help guide UNCTAD's work. Private sector innovations and technologies change so quickly that many governments struggle to keep up with the changes. As pointed out in the recent World Bank Digital Dividends report, the "analog complements" to the digital revolution, such as competition law, worker skills training, and accountable institutions are essential to realizing the benefits of enhanced connectivity. Enabling a public-private dialogue will help governments and the private sector respond to each other's needs.

While the United States supports the initiative, we would like to make it clear that our position is that the work proposed in the call to action should be done within existing resources. That being said, the United States is committing substantial time and resources to helping countries reap the benefits of digital dividends.

Shortly after the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals were launched, the United States government introduced a program called Global Connect that seeks to bring 1.5 billion people online by 2020. As part of this initiative, U.S. development agencies will prioritize Internet access in projects around the world. Moreover, we will champion Internet policies that ensure these new connections provide an open platform to innovate, learn, organize, and express ideas free from undue interference or censorship.

For Global Connect to be successful, we will work with all development stakeholder groups including national governments, development agencies, NGOs and the private sector, to mainstream the view that Internet connectivity is as fundamental to economic development as roads, ports, electricity and other traditional infrastructure. Global Connect has three goals:

- (1) All countries integrate Internet connectivity as a key part of their own national development strategies;
- (2) International development institutions, such as multilateral development banks and development agencies, prioritize digital access; and
- (3) Innovative industry-driven solutions to extend connectivity are catalyzed and supported.

Many of you may have heard about the first meeting on Global Connect that was held on April 14 on the sidelines of the World Bank/IMF meetings. This high-level event brought together for the first time finance ministers, heads of the international financial institutions, industry, and civil society to focus on the sustainable economic impact of digital connectivity. The meeting called to action multilateral organizations and ministers of finance from developing and developed countries alike to make digital connectivity a central component of their planning and development strategies and encouraged public and private sector institutions to create cross-cutting partnerships and leverage innovative solutions to help bridge the digital divide. We encourage UNCTAD, and everyone in this room, to become supporters of the Global Connect Initiative. More specifically, we encourage the Aid for eTrade initiative to adopt the principles of the Global Connect Initiative. These principles making internet connectivity an integral part of national development strategies, encouraging industry to extend connectivity to remote areas, and encouraging public access to the internet. I will provide the secretariat the complete set of principles for consideration along with the other Aid for eTrade suggestions we have heard today.

The United States government looks forward to working with UNCTAD to help bring internet access to 1.5 billion more people by 2020 and helping countries leverage the development benefits of more connected economies.

Thank you.

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#### Global Connect Initiative Principles:

- Internet connectivity should be an integral part of all national development strategies;
- All stakeholders, including governments, industry, civil society, the technical community, international financial institutions and international development organizations, should accelerate efforts towards universal connectivity;
- Innovative industry-driven solutions to extend connectivity to remote areas should be encouraged;

- We should foster digital literacy, enable and promote the development of locally relevant content, applications, and services as they are essential to widespread adoption of the Internet and increase its social and economic value to people, families, and communities;
- We should encourage public access, as for example in public libraries and community centers, among others;
- We should help create enabling environments by adopting policies and strategies that focus not only on spurring connectivity, but also entrepreneurship, cross-border information flows, and open and competitive marketplaces; and
- We should make Internet connectivity more available, accessible, and affordable around the world, as that helps us achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.