



UNCTAD E-Commerce Week

WSF Remarks on the Aid for eTrade Initiative

21 April 2016

On behalf of the World SME Forum (WSF), I would like to thank UNCTAD for inviting us to participate in the open consultations on the “Aid for eTrade” initiative. WSF believes that this is a very important and at the same time timely initiative as eTrade represents one of the biggest opportunities SMEs have had in recent years. We very much look forward to see this initiative coming into life.

Before taking a closer look at the initiative from an SME angle, I would first like to provide the audience with some background information on WSF.

World SME Forum

WSF was established in May 2015, by the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) and the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB).

WSF is a private sector-led initiative that supports SME development worldwide, by providing representation in international bodies, facilitating access to finance, access to global value chains and markets and improving the overall growth and impact of SMEs.

WSF has, to date, secured partnerships with three prominent international bodies: the World Bank, the International Trade Center, and the OECD. WSF is also a Member of the World Trade Board, amongst other initiatives.

The G20 leaders welcomed the creation of WSF in their Antalya Summit Communique and WSF is the Business Network Partner for the 2016 China Business 20 (B20) SME Development Taskforce (SDTF).

WSF’s 2016 work program is designed in full alignment with the recommendations of the China B20 SDTF, and it is arranged around two areas identified as key impediments to SME Development: Access to Finance, and Access to Markets and GVCs.

WSF is tackling these two issue areas through advocacy and research initiatives, advisory and technical assistance activities, and ePlatforms. In particular, WSF is taking a leadership role in country specific pilots aimed at experimenting innovative approaches to tackle these challenges, drawing lessons and then scaling-up.

Within this context, WSF has recently started working on a cross-border e-commerce experimental zone project based on a Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Ministry



of Transport, Maritime and Communications of Turkey and National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) of China. This MoU was signed on November 14, 2015 in Antalya at the margins of the G20 Summit. This project is highly symbolic as it represents continuity in the SME development agenda across two consecutive G20 Presidencies. WSF has been appointed as one of the implementing partners of this initiative.

This project allows WSF to pilot at country level a set of initiatives which are fully consistent with the Aid for eTrade policy framework, and with current B20 discussions on boosting eTrade and digital commerce as one of the most effective channels for SMEs development.

The role WSF could play going forward

Given our focus on SMEs, and our growing involvement in eplatforms and cross-border ecommerce, we see ourselves both as potential heavy users of this initiative, and as contributors.

Knowledge sharing is one of the most important aspects where we see a particular value from the initiative as there's a strong need to have access to best practices. As an immediate example, our China-Turkey pilot would benefit from additional expertise from agencies and companies – being it on the M&E side, the ecommerce readiness survey, implementation support, capacity building; and of course it would benefit from additional resources, which could breathe life into the project's knowledge codification efforts. At the same time, this could become one of the first pilots to test the overall framework for engagements on Aid for eTrade, and could provide valuable hands-on lessons for other countries going forward.

Additionally, we could play an active role in liaising Aid for eTrade with other coordinating bodies such as the B20, where we play an official role in its taskforces: as an example, the B20 SME Development Taskforce is currently discussing how to create an e-platform which would gather eTrade experts and formulate policy guidance to governments to foster eTrade development. It would be important to make sure that there is an open channel of communication and coordination between the two initiatives, so that synergies are leveraged and overlaps are reduced to the minimum, and WSF is ready and willing to facilitate that.

We're also open for collaboration within the joint programs and organizational bodies that will be established in the course of the Aid for eTrade initiative.

In conclusion, we look forward to engaging in this important endeavor and on behalf of SMEs and WSF, I would like to thank UNCTAD once again for this opportunity.

Thank you.