

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

27-29 April 2022
Geneva

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What is the role of digitalization during the coronavirus disease pandemic and during recovery in countries at different levels of development.

Digitalisation has been crucial during the coronavirus disease pandemic. The Trade Division is in fact equipped with the Single Window (Tradelink), which is an online system/platform for the submission and processing of applications and issue of import and export permits. During the confinement period in Mauritius from 20 March 2020 to 31 May 2020, some 937 import permits, and 117 export permits have been approved through the online system. Moreover, as regards import permits of essential goods, some 47 import permits were issued for the importation of flour while some 593 import permits have been issued for the importation of rice. This has contributed to ensure that those foodstuffs were available to the general public during the confinement period.

What have been the challenges faced in harnessing digital solutions to cope with the pandemic?

The challenges faced in harnessing digital solutions is without doubt the availability of hardware (laptop, printer) and proper internet connectivity. Another challenge is the ability of officers to use those digitalised system.

What are the lessons to be learned from policy responses?

We must ensure that our level of preparedness is at its highest for any situation that may occur in the future, hence it is a must to find out all work and process that can be digitalised across the whole government so that in case of other unforeseen circumstances, we will still be able to operate either at full capacity or ensure a minimum business continuity.

Moving forward, what is the role of international cooperation?

International cooperation will help us to deal with any unforeseen situation. Mauritius is a small island economy and heavily rely on many countries for imports and exports. As a matter of fact, Mauritius has received many donations from other countries such as medical equipment and vaccines, in a bid to fight the COVID-19 outbreak.