



Draft as of 27 April 2022

**Statement by His Excellency Mr. Chad Blackman
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Barbados on behalf of the
Group of 77 and China at the Fifth Session of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on
E-commerce and the Digital Economy
27 April 2022**

Chair of the 5th Session of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Ecommerce and the Digital Economy, Ambassador Febrian Ruddyard of Indonesia and Vice-Chair Ambassador Mathias Francke of Chile,
Secretary-General of UNCTAD, Ms. Rebeca Grynspan,
Director, Division on Technology and Logistics, Ms. Shamika N. Sirimanne,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

1. At the outset, the Group of 77 and China wishes to congratulate you Mr. Chair, and the Vice Chair on your assumption of the chairmanship of this important meeting. We allocate a high degree of importance to UNCTAD intergovernmental groups of experts and are committed to ensuring a strong outcome from this meeting and to UNCTAD's continued support for developing countries in this area.
2. The Group of 77 and China welcomes the organisation of this fifth session of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on E-commerce and the Digital Economy. The topic, ***“Recovering from COVID-19 in an increasingly digital economy: implications for sustainable development”*** is set against a backdrop of challenges and crises, not only as it relates to the human and social impacts of the COVID 19 pandemic, but also its economic impacts which have driven many of our countries to readjust their development prospects. The pandemic has been a reminder of how vulnerable we are to unexpected shocks and has also highlighted significant differences among countries at different levels of development both in terms macroeconomic policy space for responding to the negative effects of the pandemic, and in terms of our ability to make use of digital solutions to maintain economic and social activities.
3. The health and economic crises brought on by the pandemic are still very much affecting our economies, and have had a strain on already limited public resources needed for the achievement of our development aspirations and for recovery. The pandemic has led to an acceleration in the speed of digital transformation, increasing the risk of a further widening of the already vast digital and data divides that persist, resulting in greater overall inequalities and the marginalisation of millions of our citizens. Indeed, as documented by UNCTAD, during the pandemic the largest digital platforms have seen their market positions strengthen further and their revenues and valuation surge. While it has created opportunities for new export potential, growth and development, the ease in doing business and facilitate trade, our individual ability to harness such opportunities remains uneven across countries.

4. The rapid pace of digital transformation, budget constraints and the limited evidence based on the best policy steps to take in order to harness digitalization for a better future, add to the complexity of the challenge facing our governments.
5. The IGE on E-commerce and the Digital Economy represents a rare platform on which all member States are able to come together and look for constructive responses to common challenges. Our ability to seek collaborative solutions with a view to reaching the full social and economic potential of digital technologies, bridge digital and data divides, while avoiding unintended consequences, is critical to our work in this forum.
6. The G77 and China therefore underlines the importance of looking for policy responses at all levels. At the national level, we need to look for good practices that can be leveraged by many countries, to avoid inventing the wheel. At the international level, we need to consider how improved governance of digital technologies, data and digital platforms can help secure more inclusive development outcomes. And in view of the huge digital divides, we need to pay attention to international efforts – North-South as well as South-South – to supporting the building of capacity in countries that are trailing behind the most in terms of readiness to harness digitalization and data for sustainable development.
7. Such digital cooperation needs to be based on inclusivity, equity, international law, multilateralism, complemented by a multi-stakeholder approach and putting people at the centre with an aim of leaving no one behind.
8. Our Group would like to congratulate UNCTAD on its work on fostering the direction of a multilateral dialogue on Digital Economy issues, through this IGE and others, and by providing valuable insights through evidence-based research.
9. In closing Mr Chair, the Group of 77 wishes you a productive fifth session of the IGE on Ecommerce and the Digital Economy. You have the full support of the Group during this session.