

# **COMMISSION ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT (CSTD)**

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## **Submissions from entities in the United Nations system, international organizations and other stakeholders on their efforts in 2025 to implement the outcomes of the WSIS**

### **Submission by**

International Trade Centre, UN Trade & Development and Universal Postal Union

This submission was prepared as an input to the report of the UN Secretary-General on "Progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society at the regional and international levels" (to the 29<sup>th</sup> session of the CSTD), in response to the request by the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2006/46, to the UN Secretary-General to inform the Commission on Science and Technology for Development on the implementation of the outcomes of the WSIS as part of his annual reporting to the Commission.

<p><b>DISCLAIMER:</b> The views presented here are the contributors' and do not necessarily reflect the views and position of the United Nations or the UN Trade and Development.</p>
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## **WSIS Action Line**

### **C7 e-business**

**Co-facilitators: ITC, UNCTAD, UPU**

#### **Input for the CSTD report on WSIS follow-up**

*For the CSTD twenty-ninth session in April 2026*

#### **Part 1: Executive Summary**

Action line C7 (e-business) in 2025 was implemented against the backdrop of growing but uneven investment in the digital economy, mounting geoeconomic tensions, and breakthroughs in artificial intelligence (AI) that are reshaping all industries. Large disparities persist in countries' readiness to engage in and benefit from the data-driven digital economy, including digital trade.

Developing countries need increased international support to bridge gaps in digital infrastructure, skills, and the legal and regulatory environment. Evidence-based policy analysis, effective technical cooperation and capacity development, and multi-stakeholder dialogue and partnerships remain key to enabling an inclusive and sustainable digital future. Policymakers, industry leaders and consumers must take bold actions to harness the development power of digitalization while mitigating its negative environmental and other impacts. Moreover, an "inclusion by design" approach will ensure that digital transformation strategies address the needs of all citizens, for example by combining online and in-person service options ("multi-channel service delivery") – an approach that supports e-commerce by MSMEs, women entrepreneurs and artisans.

ITC, UNCTAD and UPU continued to deliver support to member States and foster collaboration among policymakers, regulators, the private sector, and development partners, to create an environment that enables equitable participation of developing countries in the global digital economy and supports sustainable development. The focus of the e-business action line is furthermore closely aligned with Objective 2 under the Global Digital Compact as it seeks to foster more inclusive digital economies.

#### **Part 2: Analytical overview of trends and experiences in implementation at the national, regional and international levels**

- For the first time, developing economies crossed the trillion-dollar mark in their exports of digitally deliverable services in 2023. But while such services accounted for 56% of services exports worldwide, that share was just 20% in least developed countries (LDCs). Despite a 43% increase between 2015 and 2023, in value terms, LDCs' share of global digitally deliverable services exports steadily declined.
- Since the COVID-19 pandemic, small businesses struggle to compete internationally due to the fragmentation of international logistics, which increased operational complexity, costs,

and delivery delays. In addition, the proliferation of non-standardized data formats in shipments complicates customs processes<sup>1</sup>.

- Despite global growth in digital economy investment, infrastructure gaps, high investment risks, policy barriers and weak regulatory frameworks deter capital flows to many low-income countries. In the last five years, 80% of greenfield projects in digital sectors in the Global South went to just 10 countries, mostly in mainland Asia.<sup>2</sup>
- In the Pacific, the *Digital Economy Report: Pacific Edition 2024* cast a spotlight on the progress, challenges, and opportunities in fostering a resilient and inclusive digital economy across the region. A new policy review titled “*Gap analysis of Cyberlaws in Pacific Small Island Developing States (SIDS)*” highlighted the pressing need for continued capacity-building efforts and technical assistance to support Pacific SIDS in revising their legal frameworks.
- UNCTAD [eTrade Readiness Assessments](#) (eT Ready) continued to support developing countries in enhancing their preparedness to benefit from the digital economy through new e-commerce strategies and assistance for their implementation.<sup>3</sup> The e-business co-facilitators and other eTrade for all partners also contributed to the development of e-commerce strategies.
- A 2025 review of the Implementation Support Mechanism for eTrade policy reforms, with inputs from 23 developing countries and 3 regional organizations in Africa, Asia- Pacific, and Latin America, found that meaningful progress is more likely when e-commerce and digital trade are prioritized at the national level, efforts are well coordinated and policies are supported through inclusive, multistakeholder collaboration.
- Several countries requested the UNCTAD [eTrade Reform Tracker](#), with deployment and training activities underway.<sup>4</sup>
- Digital Transformation Assessments were carried out by the UPU, with a view to enabling posts to provide digital services, including e-commerce, particularly in underserved areas.<sup>5</sup>
- The ITC *SME Competitiveness Outlook 2025: A digital transformation roadmap* provided evidence and practical recommendations on how MSMEs can adopt digital tools, and how policy, skills and ecosystem collaboration lead to competitiveness gains. Its findings were discussed at the Global SME Ministerial in Johannesburg. ITC also supported ASEAN countries through the Sustainable Connectivity Package (SCOPE) project in advancing MSME participation in regional e-commerce, focusing on trade policy alignment, digital connectivity, and sustainable value chains.
- An ITC project in South-East Asia and China to improve e-commerce competitiveness and market access leveraged platforms such as the Global Digital Trade Expo and the ITC–Hangzhou Centre for Digital Innovation. ITC also launched the *Global Digital Trade*

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<sup>1</sup> State of the Postal Sector 2025, UPU.

<sup>2</sup> World Investment Report 2025, UNCTAD.

<sup>3</sup> eT Readies concluded or started in 2024-25: Algeria, Indonesia, and Zimbabwe. National e-commerce strategies developed following an eT Ready: Ghana, Mauritania, Samoa, Timor-Leste, and Trinidad and Tobago.

<sup>4</sup> In Fiji, Ghana, Jordan, Kenya, Mauritania, Peru, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Trinidad and Tobago, Zimbabwe and ECOWAS member countries.

<sup>5</sup> UPU assessments concluded or started in 2025 included Belize, Eswatini, Grenada, and Kyrgyzstan.

*Development Report 2025*, which examines shifts in markets, technology (including AI) and inclusion relevant to e-business development.

- UNCTAD's [eTrade for Women](#) initiative delivered masterclasses for female digital entrepreneurs and established a new regional community in South Asia.<sup>6</sup> The network now counts more than 450 women-led digital businesses across 65 countries, committed to shaping a more inclusive digital economy globally.
- The 8<sup>th</sup> session of the UNCTAD Intergovernmental Group of Experts on E-commerce and the Digital Economy in May 2025 agreed on a set of policy recommendations to make digitalization work for inclusive and sustainable development, based on the analysis of UNCTAD's Digital Economy Report 2024.
- To help improve the availability of robust, comparable, and timely digital economy and digital trade statistics in developing countries, UNCTAD delivered workshops to producers of official statistics in Pacific Island States (27 participants from 10 countries), the Caribbean (37 participants from 15 countries, delivered with the WTO and Caribbean Development Bank), and Latin America (37 participants from 15 countries, delivered with the Inter-American Development Bank, IMF, OECD, WTO and UNECLAC). UNCTAD also delivered an online course on statistics on the digital economy, e-commerce, and digital trade for SIDS.<sup>7</sup> UNCTAD also supported digital economy statistics in developing countries through the discussion of the latest methodological progress in an annual Working Group and in its Task Group on Measuring E-commerce Value.
- *eTrade for all* partners continued to actively contribute to advancing e-commerce and the digital economy in and for developing countries. New dynamic country profiles on the [eTrade for all online platform](#) offer improved access to data in key digital economy policy areas for all UN member States.
- The UPU's flagship [Digital Panorama Report 2025](#) maps digital services provided by postal operators worldwide, including e-commerce. The report showcases examples of post offices acting as affordable digital hubs, leveraging their extensive reach and multi-channel service delivery to foster digital and trade inclusion for MSMEs, women, and populations in rural and remote areas.
- Following its Trade Post Forum in 2024, the UPU engaged with member states and other stakeholders in 2025 on how a digital postal network can enhance inclusive economic growth and empower MSMEs to participate in global trade. These exchanges focused on the key role of postal data in trade facilitation, areas for infrastructure upgrades, and the development of innovative services. A UPU policy brief on [Growth in trade logistics and e-commerce through enhanced data management](#) explored opportunities of greater multilateral data sharing and flexible standards for strengthened cross-border collaboration, interoperability and equitable access to data.

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<sup>6</sup> The South Asia Masterclass (New Delhi, December 2024) for 21 women from four countries; and the Latin America and Caribbean Masterclass (Bogota, April 2025) for 24 women from 9 countries.

<sup>7</sup> The course was delivered in collaboration with UNCTAD's TrainForTrade Programme. Over 200 participants (59% women) from 40 countries registered.

- Finally, the e-business session at the WSIS+20 high-level event discussed how UN agencies can improve digital cooperation and the alignment of implementation of the WSIS action lines and commitments related to e-business, e-commerce and the digital economy in the Global Digital Compact. Such cooperation should also support progress towards the sustainable development goals and digital inclusion.

### Part 3: Innovations and Future Initiatives

- a) Innovative policies, programmes and projects which have been undertaken by stakeholders to implement the outcomes. Where specific targets or strategies have been set, please report progress in achieving those targets.
- In recognition of the importance of improving the participation of SMEs for building an inclusive digital future, the co-facilitators gathered diverse stakeholders to implement the e-business action line. For example, in November 2024, UNCTAD co-organized with the Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China and its Academy for International Business Officials (AIBO), a study tour of China's leading digital players for 31 women digital entrepreneurs from 12 developing countries. Also, UNCTAD research in partnership with ESCP Business School (France) and GIBS Business School – University of Pretoria (South Africa) highlights unique experiences, challenges, and success factors that define the journeys of women digital entrepreneurs in Africa.
  - In a similar multi-stakeholder spirit, and in terms of innovations and future initiatives, the UPU 3<sup>rd</sup> Innovation Challenge brought together data scientists, industry professionals and academia from 40 countries to work on innovative solutions that would enhance the postal sector's contribution to the digital economy and e-business practices, including an interoperable postal-enabled digital wallet, and a universal service obligation fit for the digital age.
  - ITC launched a two-year Digital Innovation Accelerator for African SMEs to help firms land online deals and scale on platforms, targeting 100+ SMEs through coaching and market linkage activities. In addition, the WTO–ITC WEIDE Fund started activities in Nigeria, Mongolia, and the Dominican Republic, to help women-led MSMEs scale up.
  - The UPU Heya project (Post4Women) in Cote d'Ivoire and Belize will enhance access for women entrepreneurs and women artisans to e-commerce markets using the postal network.
  - Finally, a new UPU Unified Data Platform aims to harness data generated through the e-commerce supply chain to obtain insights on, for example, what's moving across borders, emerging trends, bottlenecks in international transportation, delivery networks etc. Powered by AI agents, the platform should allow users to improve planning and policy design, target analysis, and make decisions related to the logistics of cross-border e-commerce.

b) Future actions or initiatives foreseen by stakeholders (regional/international) to facilitate the action line; new commitments.

- The e-business action line facilitators will continue collaborating through the eTrade for all initiative. In addition, UNCTAD will play an active role in implementing the Global Digital Compact - as a member of the Working Group on Digital Technologies (WGDT), as well as co-lead with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) of the sub-group responsible for Objective 2 of the GDC, which focuses on expanding inclusion in and benefits from the digital economy, and Objective 4 (with United Nations University), which focuses on advancing responsible, equitable and interoperable data governance approaches.