eWeek

UNITED NATIONS UNCTAD

SUMMARY REPORT

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

UNCTAD's eCommerce Week is the leading forum for Ministers, senior government officials, CEOs and other business representatives, international organizations, development banks, academics and civil society to discuss the digital transformations associated with the digital economy. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic situation, UNCTAD had to take the difficult decision to cancel the eCommerce Week 2020 scheduled to take place late April in Geneva.

However, considering the growing importance of digital technologies during the pandemic, with almost two thirds of the world population experiencing some form of lockdown, and many activities (social and business related) shifting online, UNCTAD decided to offer a sized-down, virtual eWeek to its community, in collaboration with **the eTrade for all partners**.

eWeek 2020 in a nutshell

2000+ Participants attended the sessions online

14 eTrade for all Partners actively involved in the **14** online sessions

9 High-Level Speakers

44% Women

134 Countries represented

3 High-Level sessions streamed LIVE on Facebook

eTrade for all
Connecting the dots

Throughout the eWeek (27 April- 01 May), a selected number of **online events** (dialogues, webinars, meetings) took place.

Highlights of the Week included:

- 3 **High Level Sessions**

- 1 **Donor Roundtable** (by invitation only)

- a set of **Webinars** to explore how the COVID-19 pandemic is impacting lives and economies and what policy solutions will be needed to sustain structural changes in the long-run

- Several dedicated sessions addressing **specific issues**, such as:
    - The emergence of digital "real-time economies",
    - Innovation, data ownership and intellectual property, and
    - The role of cybersecurity and privacy in the digital and e-commerce space.

Key facts to take back from the eWeek:

- The event attracted **more than 2000 participants who actively attended the various sessions online,** covering 134 countries and from all backgrounds: public, private, civil society.

- **eTrade for all partners** were instrumental in the organization of these digital events, with **14 out of 30** of them actively participating in the 14 live sessions, showing their commitment by contributing to such platforms for dialogue.

- This first virtual eWeek, although it cannot totally replace the usual platform for interactive dialogue offered by the regular eCommerce Week, had also a **positive impact on the environment**, with 4000 tons of emission of CO2 avoided, which corresponds the carbon sequestered by 5,224 acres of forest land!

- The eWeek looked in depth at **key digital issues in the context of the COIVID-19 pandemic and its economic impact,** including data, gender, trade and logistics, consumer trust, consumer protection, competition and digital entrepreneurship. New data on global e-commerce sales and the state of cyberlaws were also released. Here below is a visual summary of the most used hashtags throughout the eWeek on social media:

#Policy   #UNCTADeWeek
#COVID19
#Women
#eTradeforall   #Data
#Trust
#DigitalEntrepreneurs
#Africa
#ConsumerProtection
#eTradeforWomen
#MSMEs   #DigitalTransformation
#Competition
#DigitalEconomy   #Ecommerce

FROM THE HIGH-LEVEL TRACK

"Digital inclusion is almost a human right, going forward. We can never go back to a non-digital world."

Mukhisa Kituyi
Secretary General
UNCTAD

"By speeding up the global adoption of digital technologies, the coronavirus crisis risks widening the digital gender divide. This is why we need recovery measures that are not gender blind."

Isabelle Durant
Deputy Secretary General
UNCTAD

"With the COVID-19 pandemic, there will be no other challenges like this, but also no other opportunities like this for women in e-commerce."

H.E. Nina Angelovska
Minister of Finance & eTrade for Women Advocate
North Macedonia

"The eTReady of Benin is a key first step in transforming my country into a digital platform for West Africa and to accelerate national growth."

H.E. Shadiya Alimatou Assouman
Minister of Industry and Trade
Benin

"The pandemic shows the important place that digital technology occupies in our daily lives, and the recommendations of Niger's assessment will make it possible to put in place the right measures to improve digitalization in the country."

H.E. Sadou Seydou
Minister of Trade and Promotion of the Private Sector
Niger

"We have to look beyond e-commerce and look at digitization in general, for example in public health, as this crisis has shown."

H.E. Mene Wamkele
Secretary General
African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Secretariat

"There is a real need to establish a regional digital strategy; the numerous points of convergence between ECOWAS countries as demonstrated in the various eTReadies represent important favourable factors for the advent of electronic commerce in the region."

Téi Konzi
Commissioner for Trade
Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)

"Post pandemic, we will need to build better inclusive and sustainable economies. Women are key in recovering 'better' from the COVID-19 . This is why the Netherlands supports programmes like the eTradeforWomen initiative."

H.E. Monique T.G. van Daalen
Ambassador, Permanent Representative
Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the UN in Geneva

" During this crisis many are reliant on the platform economy. The online marketplace needs to be fair, safe and sustainable for all of us."

Helena Leurent
Director-General
Consumers International

"We need digital solutions with a long-term impact to enable small businesses to have more access to digital tools and services."

Clarisse Iribagiza
Founder and CEO, HeHe Labs & eTrade for Women Advocate
Rwanda

MONDAY 27 APRIL

Coping with the economic fallout of the COVID-19 crisis in Africa: What role for trade and digital policies?

Organizer: UNCTAD

The high-level session brought together distinguished panelists to discuss how the COVID-19 pandemic is impacting societies and economies across Africa and what measures governments are putting in place to address these impacts. The session noted the devastating economic impacts of the pandemic including massive capital flights, commodity price collapse (particularly for African oil exporters), and depreciation pressures on local currencies. The scale of the disruptions was described as the worst that the continent had experienced since WWII. Panelists discussed the disruptions to global and regional trade as countries around the world and in Africa have imposed various lockdown measures and other restrictions in their efforts to prioritize the saving of lives. For Africa this has led to declining imports due to halted production in various countries, the blockage of merchandise at borders due to quarantine measures, and the drying out of Africa's export markets as these countries were badly affected. The session also heard how the pandemic had created new opportunities for local digital entrepreneurs a and subsisting challenges for e-commerce to contribute to curtailing negative impacts on the economy. The session offered some reflections on the national, continental and global solutions that could be pursued.

Issues discussed

Given the global nature of the pandemic there was a call for concerted efforts by the international community, including under the auspices of the UN, to mitigate the worst effects. In light of underfunded health services in the majority of African countries a Health Marshall Plan for Africa was proposed. This Plan should allow for urgent public health measures to be taken, such as the delivery of personal protective equipment (PPE), testing kits, and ventilators. It should therefore include measures to address these disruptions, including a moratorium on servicing of debt or the facilitation of market access for produce from the continent.

The importance of Pan-African actions was also highlighted, and the African Union was commended for coordinating public health responses across the continent and for establishing a solidarity fund as part of a broader resource mobilization strategy. The pandemic was occurring at a time where the continent was on the verge of commencing trading within the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) on 1st July 2020. This will now be delayed as governments have turned their immediate focus to fighting the pandemic. However, the political commitment to achieving regional integration and collaboration remains strong. While African countries have temporarily closed their borders for public health reasons, their Heads of State have agreed that corridors must remain open for essential goods (e.g. germ-killing products, PPE, ventilators, soaps, etc.). Other avenues suggested for African countries to combat the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic included revisiting their industrial development strategies with a view to become less reliant on exports of commodities and to create priority value chains on the continent; configuring African IP regimes so as to create and establish a general drug industry for Africa; and building on the success of several African countries in mobile and e-financial services to expand the opportunities for e-commerce, including in relation to health services.

The example of Rwanda served to illustrate how the shift to online platforms and services does not occur automatically even when normal supply chains and trade are disrupted. This was due inter alia to mistrust in online suppliers and the difficulty of changing consumer habits. On the supply side, constraints included a lack of familiarity with e-commerce of many SMEs and persisting challenges in transport and logistics. However, while the various lockdown measures were imposed the Government of Rwanda had also put in place various support measures for SMEs (e.g. tax breaks for essential goods, extension of deadlines for reporting taxes, removal of transactions fees on digital payments) which had enabled digital entrepreneurs and e-commerce players to ramp up their activities. With the widespread availability of e-payments systems, online shopping by individuals had increased by 20 per cent and gross merchandise shopping by 125 per cent. E-commerce suppliers had become essential in enabling the supply chains to continue to function and to get food from farm to table. Examples of positive contributions of digital entrepreneurs appearing across Africa included new services offered for ordering and delivery of food and groceries as well as for the monitoring of the pandemic.

3 main outcomes and/or policy recommendations

➢ In light of its underfunded health services of the majority of African countries a Health Marshall Plan for Africa was needed.

➢ Coordinated public health efforts by African countries should continue under the guidance of the African Union and its Centre for Disease Control. These efforts should be accompanied by continued efforts to promote economic integration through the AfCFTA.

➢ Panelists agreed that the potential for e-commerce to contribute to addressing the current situation is not fully exploited due to pre-existing challenges, including poverty
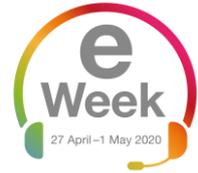
and digital divides. African countries continue to lag in terms of broadband access, consumers' trust in e-commerce, weak support to e-commerce players and persisting challenges in transport and logistics. These challenges should be addressed by governments, the private sector (and particularly digital entrepreneurs) and international partners to enable populations across African to have more access to digital tools and related services. UNCTAD pledged to play its part, including through programmes such as the eTrade Readiness Assessments and support to trade logistics and trade facilitation, including a recently published 10-point action plan to strengthen international trade and transport facilitation in times of pandemic.

Click here for Session Video Replay *(password: 38tCHB3R)*

Empowering women digital entrepreneurs for resilient economies

Organizers: UNCTAD – Kingdom of the Netherlands

The digitalization of the economy is creating new opportunities for women in developing countries. However, this potential is not yet fully exploited for reasons related to gender bias, lack of representation, unequal access to internet and limited digital skills, among others. eTrade for Women is the UNCTAD-led initiative supported by the Government of the Netherlands that aims to inspire, support, connect and give a voice to women digital entrepreneurs in developing countries, and ultimately make them a force for inclusive wealth creation in their region.

Through a network of inspiring eTrade for Women Advocates from 7 countries and the organization of regional masterclasses, the initiative strives to empower the next generation of women entrepreneurs to thrive and to make an impact in the digital economy.

Following the success of the first two editions of eTrade for Women Masterclasses, in the Balkans (North Macedonia) and in French speaking Sub-Saharan Africa (Côte d'Ivoire) respectively, this High-level session tackled the role that women digital entrepreneurs can play to build more resilient businesses and positively impact their economies, in particular in the context of the COVID-19 pandemics.

It aimed in particular at highlighting:

- How women empowerment efforts can contribute to raising the profile and skills of selected women digital entrepreneurs in developing regions.

- How women digital entrepreneurs in these communities are leveraging the challenges and opportunities of a shifting economy in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- What role they could play in building more resilient economies with the support of the international community and other stakeholders.

Issues discussed

The session was organized in the form of a moderated discussion targeting, first, the perspective on the role of the digital economy in dealing with and recovering from the COVID-19 crisis and, second, how women digital entrepreneurs are coping with challenges of the crisis and what opportunities they can see that they can leverage. Discussions were also targeting the lessons learned from the first two eTrade for Women Masterclasses.

During the discussion, participants highlighted the persistent challenges that women face in developing countries. They also agreed that digitalization of the economy is creating new opportunities for women entrepreneurs. At the same time, the current crisis was not gender neutral and posed the risk of reinforcing inequalities. A **strong call for gender-oriented policy solutions** was made.

Participants also shared their views about the importance of women empowerment events, such as the Masterclasses. The selection of already successful entrepreneurs having passed the initial start-up phases, was praised. Indeed, convening with a group of like-minded peers allowed the women to benefit from targeted business support, mentoring and networking and collaboration opportunities to grow and scale, share and learn with women facing similar challenges. The role modelling offered by the 7 eTrade for Women Advocates, was also greatly acknowledged.

The discussion focused in the second part on how the current pandemic is affecting – or in some cases creating additional opportunities - for women digital entrepreneurs. Discussants highlighted that women are in some ways hit harder by the economic fallout of the crisis, in terms of loss of economic activity and unemployment. Unlike more cyclical economic shocks, the lockdowns and mobility restrictions imposed to manage the spread of the coronavirus were affecting primarily the services sector, in which women are overrepresented. This is notably the case for industries such as food, hospitality and tourism. Women working in the informal sector, where safety-nets are scarce were also particularly vulnerable. However, the current pandemic was also seen as a potential catalyst of new opportunities for digital entrepreneurs already active in digital ecosystems, including for women.

Some digital entrepreneurs on the panel highlighted that "it's the right time for e-commerce". Cashless payments are being embraced, supply chains are being restructured, consumers are turning to buy online what they previously bought in brick and mortar stores. For instance, in North Macedonia, only in March 2020, the Chamber of Commerce registered more requests to open online-shops than in the entire 2019. Also, experiences from West

Africa highlighted how jobs in rural areas were being created to support the increased demand in urban areas and how targeted support to women-led start-ups had started to emerge. Another participant reported the steep increase in the request of her company's services offering digital payment solutions across countries.

4 main outcomes and/or policy recommendations

➢ It is important to provide gender-oriented answers and policy solutions to the current crisis.

➢ There are business opportunities stemming from the pandemic, resulting from the change in consumers' behavior and the pivoting to digital solutions. These opportunities are also available to women. If women may have missed out on the industrial revolution, they shouldn't miss the digital one.

➢ Digital women entrepreneurs should look for relevant role models able to support them in their business journey, opening their networks and strengthening their self-confidence.

➢ Women empowerment activities, such as the eTrade for Women Masterclasses, have proven their relevance and usefulness in strengthening business skills and fostering sustainable networking communities and should be encouraged and expanded.

Click here for the Session Video Replay

THURSDAY 30 APRIL

Renforcer le commerce électronique dans la CEDEAO (SESSION IN FRENCH) -

Organisateurs : CNUCED – CEDEAO - UEMOA

NB: As the session was held in French, the following summary is consequently in French.

Le programme de la CNUCED sur l'évaluation de la préparation au commerce électronique - également appelé eTReady- lancé en 2017, a été conçu pour fournir un diagnostic de l'écosystème du commerce électronique dans les pays en développement. Ces évaluations visent à identifier les opportunités et obstacles et à recommander des mesures de politique publique pour développer ce segment de l'économie. Sur les vingt-six évaluations réalisées par la CNUCED, huit ont été menées dans des pays de la CEDEAO: Bénin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire (en cours), Libéria, Mali, Niger, Sénégal et Togo.

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Cette session de haut niveau a réuni des représentants gouvernementaux, des organisations régionales de la CEDEAO et de l'UEMOA ainsi que des experts de la CNUCED, du secteur privé et des bailleurs de fonds. Les discussions ont démontré que la mutualisation des expériences des pays de la CEDEAO permettra de mieux apprécier les opportunités et défis liés à la valorisation du commerce électronique dans l'espace CEDEAO en vue de l'élaboration d'une stratégie régionale de commerce électronique.

Sujets abordés :

•   Lancement des rapports d'évaluation de préparation au commerce électronique ou «eTReadies» du Bénin, du Mali et du Niger, réalisés par la CNUCED : les principales conclusions des rapports mettent en lumière la nécessité de renforcer les aspects suivants: les infrastructures d'accès au numérique, le secteur de la logistique, la dématérialisation des paiements, le tissues entrepreneurial, et la coordination interministérielle.

•   Impact de la crise du COVID19 sur le développement de l'économie numérique et du commerce électronique dans les pays de la CEDEAO : alors que plusieurs pays, tels que le Sénégal ou le Togo, se saisissent des outils numériques pour développer des réponses adaptées à la crise, celle-ci pourrait accroître le fossé digital au détriment des populations peu ou pas connectées.

•   Rôle des instances régionales et des partenariats dans l'accompagnement de la transformation numérique : les institutions régionales ont un rôle clé à jouer pour coordonner les initiatives nationales autour du commerce électronique dans un cadre cohérent. De tels efforts doivent pouvoir s'appuyer sur le soutien des partenaires techniques et financiers, en collaboration avec les acteurs du secteur privé.

Principales conclusions et/ou recommandation en matière de politiques publiques :

➢ Diversité de la région et différentes vitesses dans la mise en place d'un environnement favorable au e-commerce, ainsi que dans la construction d'une offre locale de produits et services, qui nécessite une meilleure coordination des politiques et des acteurs institutionnels, tant au niveau national, qu'entre les CER de la région, autant plus dans la perspective d'une intégration croissante au niveau continental.

➢ Nécessité d'harmonisation et cohérence des politiques et des actions menées par l'UEMOA et la CEDEAO afin de donner une impulsion à la définition d'une stratégie de commerce électronique au niveau régional.

➢ Le Covid19 a accentué l'urgence de mettre en place un écosystème favorable au commerce électronique en mettant en place les recommandations des eTReadies en soutien aux projets innovants de commerce électronique initiés par certains pays dans la région.

Click here for the Session Video Replay

MONDAY 27 APRIL

Trade facilitation and expedited shipments. Lessons learned from the COVID-19 crisis

Organizers: UNCTAD - ITC - UNECE

In the face of the COVID-19 crisis, there has been a large continuous shift to digital trading. E-commerce and emergency shipments of essential goods have increased the need for efficient and speedy delivery without delays. Countries around the world have reacted differently in terms of regulations and restrictions introduced for trade and transport (international and domestic) accompanied by personnel limitations at postal services and couriers to protect employees.

This session highlighted the relevance of the implementation of the provision on Expedited Shipments in the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement. There had been an increased volume of emergency deliveries and goods demanded online and the role of national postal services and other logistics providers in contributing to the facilitation of cross-border trade during and after the COVID-19 pandemic was underlined. The session heard from different experts from government, postal services and ASYCUDA who shared their experiences in different regions of the world, the challenges that they had faced, and how they had adapted and acted to facilitate the clearance and delivery of shipments.

Issues discussed

- Economic trends in e-commerce during the COVID-19 crisis.
- Challenges faced by postal services and express carriers in different regions of the world.
- Risks to developing and least developed countries from problems arising from the crisis.

- The readiness of countries using ASYCUDA software in responding to the emergency.
- How customs and border regulatory agencies adapted to the situation and how regional institutions supported them in terms of facilitating expedited shipments.

- The importance of implementing the WTO TFA measures during the COVID-19 crisis, most especially Art. 7.8 on Expedited Shipments
- UNCTAD's policy brief on a 10-point action plan to strengthen international trade and transport facilitation, which contained a series of recommendations drawn from best practices and UNCTAD's own work in assisting countries during the pandemic.
- The need to immediately consider post Covid-19 policies and implementation measures.

3 main outcomes and/or policy recommendations

➢ The public sector needs to engage with the private sector in dealing with issues arising from the current crisis and in dealing with its long-term consequences. Postal services and other express carriers raised as a challenge the initial unilateral measures and uncoordinated policies placed by their own countries which further delayed clearance of cross-border shipments and even the internal movement of goods. This had resulted in the former finding ways to adapt to continue deliveries and for the latter to loosen certain restrictions. By establishing a coordinating public and private platform for discussion (such as National Trade Facilitation Committee Task-forces), it was possible to identify and address challenges arising during and after the crisis. In this respect, communication and transparency regarding crisis measures and changes in procedures and operations were essential, e.g. by using Trade Information Portals.

➢ Focus must be placed on the implementation of the WTO TFA. Due to the crisis, there has been a need to expedite the entry of critical goods and to prevent the clog up of goods in ports, airports and at borders. By way of example from Rwanda, this could be achieved through the simplification of trade processes and procedures, application of risk-based management, reduction of requirements and digitalization of exchange of documents and forms. All these concern measures mandated under the WTO TFA to facilitate and strengthen international trade.

➢ In order to respond to the needs of the digital economy and better prepare for future emergencies and crisis situations like COVID-19, countries should focus more on ensuring adequate ICT infrastructure and establishing cross-border inter-connectivity. Countries that already have in place an automated system within their customs and other agencies involved in cross-border trade were found to have adapted faster in dealing with clearing goods and ensuring business continuity. ASYCUDA, for example, had developed tools in partnership with UPU that support remote work – from digital exchange of information between parties to optimization of resources in cases of unavailability of personnel. This ultimately minimized the disruptions caused by the crisis in a number of ASYCUDA-user countries.

Click here for the Session Video Replay (password: ZszH23Pw)

Digital for development in times of the COVID-19 Crisis: The role of development cooperation

Organizer: UNCTAD

The spread of the latest strain of the coronavirus (COVID-19) is disrupting economic and social life in multiple ways and dimensions. The third gathering of the donor community presented an opportunity for donor agencies and eTrade for all members to discuss how the present crisis is affecting development co-operation strategies, especially with regard to the digital dimension.

There was strong agreement that the crisis had made attention to digital development even more important. Panelists showcased various promising locally adapted digital initiatives to support the economic recovery, both at the policy and enabling environment levels, and at the business and consumer levels. The discussion highlighted the importance of converging efforts among donors and key stakeholders as many actions are still at the pilot phase, or targeting a specific geographic area, and no individual agency can bring these initiatives to a scale on its own.

Panelists and participants underlined the importance of avoiding duplication and of public-private partnerships to achieve scale. They also emphasized the importance of keeping a human rights-based approach in developing new digital solutions to curb the crisis. As digital readiness is still very low in LDCs and among the most vulnerable populations, there was a high risk for them to fall further behind and miss out on digital opportunities in the recovery phase. There are still many uncertainties regarding the impact of the current recovery measures proposed, so more research is needed to understand the root causes of, for example, low internet uptake and active use of mobile money, in order to devise inclusive solutions.

Issues discussed

The session opened with key remarks from UNCTAD on the importance of finding a multilateral response to this global crisis. There were multiple initiatives across the globe to support the continuity of trade, but unless theywee scaled up in a coordinated effort, with a special focus on underserved communities, their success was likely to be partial or even accentuate inequalities in the world.

Donors and eTrade for all members shared information on their current strategies to enable developing countries to engage in and benefit more from the digital economy. BMZ

and GIZ mentioned it's the Pan-African E-commerce Initiative, which had been launched earlier this year, starting in Kenya and Rwanda. This initiative aims to improve framework conditions for e-commerce in Africa and support B2B digital trade, especially for daily use products and supporting agricultural value chains. Germany also highlighted how Aid for Trade was used to support the adoption of improved trade facilitation tools, such as effective paperless custom clearance systems among others. Germany also highlighted a Hackathon to take place in May to brainstorm on ideas on how to cope with the COVID-19 crisis through digitalization. BMZ and GIZ also recalled the importance of the African Continental Free Trade Area for increasing intra-African trade, including e-commerce.

The Digital Impact Alliance (DIAL) stressed the importance of using this health crisis as an opportunity to enhance donors' and governments' coordination towards digital transformation in every area, not just health. The pandemic had revealed how interconnected all sectors and developmental considerations are. A sector-specific and silo-oriented approach to the crisis would not work. We would still leave people behind, under connected and struggling to move forward. It was therefore important for donors and key stakeholders to agree on what digital transformation is, what metrics to measure progress and what the endpoint should be. This digital transformation operates based on building blocks, which include digital ID, data use policy, and all the elements needed to build the e-governance infrastructure and digital skills. One could also refer to the four "Ps" to enable the digital transformation: Products, People, Policy and Pricing, which were all key elements to consider making it happen.

TradeMark East Africa (TMEA) offered its perspective from East Africa. Millions of small traders were unable pursue their economic activity right now. The paradox was that borders had been closed while imports were necessary to curb the pandemic. Reference was made to the Safe Trade pilot project, which is based on health controls at borders to allow trade to continue. TMEA works with border-control authorities on safeguard protocols, backed up with a digital approach to monitor the health of truckers and to track the cargo. It intends to use thermal and facial recognition technology to reduce human contact at the borders. The initiative links up health services with cargo handlers, in case a positive COVID-19 case is confirmed. In this case, trade and health technologies support each other. For this project to expand, there was a need to strengthen the legal framework around e-commerce, improve the quality and affordability of digital infrastructure and enhance digital inclusion.

During the ensuing roundtable, speakers from other organizations highlighted that this health crisis is an economic and a development crisis too. Several interventions stressed the importance of coordinated actions for developing the digital economy for fast and resilient recovery, and to bridge the digital divide that was growing as a result of the crisis. We needed to find inclusive digital solutions to sustain trade, employment, education and health. Donors were recommended to start devising global strategies to make sure the digital solutions that are increasingly used across the world become and remain accessible to all and adapted to the local context, especially in less developed countries. Attention should be givento make sure these solutions are used in ways that respect human rights. From a short-term perspective, we needed to work with the available digital infrastructure. There are still

millions of people who could technically use the internet or mobile money but still aren't. It was important to understand why and to act accordingly. But there was also a risk of focusing too much on short-term solutions, which would represent a missed opportunity to better align donors' work at supporting the achievement of the SDGs.

It appeared clear that further gatherings of this nature will be helpful to further align donor strategies related to digital for development. Throughout the session, several speakers expressed appreciation to UNCTAD for organizing the gathering and underlined the value of tools such as eTrade Readiness Assessments and the eTrade for all initiative to achieve inclusive digital development goals.

Selected recommendations for action

- ➢ Promote an ecosystem approach and the convergence of actions between donors, public institutions, civil society and the private sector to ensure inclusive development with the use of digital technologies. Stakeholders should join forces and explore partnership models when appropriate.

- ➢ Keep human rights at the core of donors' action in relation to digitalization. While digital technologies may offer important solutions to the current crisis, donors have a mandate to ensure that they are inclusive for the most disadvantaged and vulnerable economic groups, such as women, elderly, migrants, refugees, internally displaced people, informal workers, ethnic minorities and others.

- ➢ Enhance digitalization through a holistic, cross-cutting approach to inclusive development among donors' development strategies, as digitalization has potentially far-reaching implications for access to health and education services, decent and sustainable employment, formalization of work, gender equality, etc. Policy responses should seek to help spread benefits of digitalization more evenly and equitably.

- ➢ Stimulate regional approaches and support local digital solutions based on successful or promising experiences implemented by local/regional digital champions, incubators and accelerators. MSMEs are key players in any successful response to the current pandemic, but they are also vulnerable: this warranted immediate attention from Governments and donors.

- ➢ Explore further the causes of low internet uptake, between issues of connectivity, affordability, social norms, trust and other potential barriers to access and use internet, especially in developing countries and LDCs. More tangible evidence should be gathered to guide policy making in this area and propose adequate solutions adapted to each country. UNCTAD's eTrade Readiness Assessments should be used to assess these challenges.

- ➢ Foster the capacity of governments to go digital in offering their services. E-government can support inclusive access to health, education and other services.

TUESDAY 28 APRIL

Real-time economy: a boost to e-commerce?

Organizer: Permanent Mission of Estonia to the UN and other International Organizations

This session, organized by the Republic of Estonia, focused on the concept of Real Time Economy (RTE) and discussed how governments and businesses can enable this cross-sectoral and borderless approach in the benefit of e-commerce.

Although digitalization and automatization are key areas countries are dealing with around the world, the collaboration between various partners and sectors is still weak or somewhat missing. Too often entrepreneurs, government officials and citizens are piled up with routine, time-consuming activities, for example it is still common to issue PDF invoices via e-mail, visit state institutions by foot to fill in and manage the paperwork.

Real-time economy (RTE) is a digital ecosystem that helps to simplify business processes in order to help companies to focus on their main activities and save resources on various maintenance and support activities. In the center of such ecosystem is the data movement occurring real time or with a minimal delay between various information systems, organizations, sectors and even countries in a digital, structures and standardized format.

Issues discussed

- What are the potential benefits of RTE for entrepreneurs and businesses active in e-commerce?

- How does RTE maximize the benefits of value creation in the digital economy?

- How should one approach the potential risks linked to RTE concerning data security, leakage and privacy?

- How to bring about a shift in both governments' and entrepreneurs' mindset to enable RTE development?

- Where are joint international efforts necessary?

Summary of proceedings

UNCTAD highlighted the importance of access to affordable and quality broadband connectivity, fast transactions and data management. These prerequisites enable the real-time economy to flourish, bringing growth and sustainability to SMEs in developed and developing countries.

The Estonian government, which has extensive experience in e-governance through its e-residency programme, explained the extent to which RTE is present in the entire e-commerce ecosystem through digital payments and real-time solutions. As far as the current ecosystem is concerned, there is a need to continue and deepen the adoption of these technologies in order to allow all stakeholders to exploit their full potential. There are many sectors in which RTE can make a positive contribution, such as accounting, reporting, customs, taxation, logistics, and agriculture. Furthermore, it is by improving more efficient services and the fast processing that the RTE can stimulate e-commerce and its implementation. Governments could also beneficiate from this system, since the implementation of such technology increases public revenues and governance transparency.

Finland presented the Nordic Smart Government 3.0 project launched in 2018 in partnership with several Nordic countries, which aims to create value for businesses, public authorities and society by sharing data across the region in an automatic, intelligent and secured way. It achieves this goal by simplifying the administration of small and medium-sized enterprises in the region and creating growth through efficient and innovative use of data. The rationale for launching this project was to halve transaction and administration costs, focusing on how Nordic countries could use the free trade pan-European mindset to integrate digital payment, e-invoicing, e-receipts and standardized format into their national economies.

The African Union shared its vision of the RTE by presenting its digital transition strategy based on four pillars:
1) The creation of an enabling environment through policies and regulations;
2) Accessibility to digital infrastructure;
3) The strengthening of digital and human capacities; and
4) Empowerment of innovation and entrepreneurship within ecosystems.

To draft this strategy, assessing the specific environment and identifying factors that could enable the RTE adoption in Africa was crucial. Programmes like the eTrade Readiness Assessments which have been conducted in many African countries have been instrumental to that end.

The Universal Postal Union (UPU) offered its perspective as a user and a key contributor to the RTE. Millions of products are sent throughout its postal network every day, therefore the necessity for tracking and tracing has never been greater. The UPU operates data-based supply chain systems backed up by artificial intelligence and a wide range of intermediaries

who both rely on information about the merchandise. Applications in use process a large amount of data in real time and analyze it using standardized data inputs, allowing all links of the chain - from seller to buyer – to obtain the same information. The system provides better visibility, simple returns, good customer service, improved service reliability and more effective management of delays.

Main outcomes and takeaways:

➢ Real-time economy (RTE) means automating and digitizing business transactions and administrative procedures by replacing paper-based physical human-to-human communication procedures with machine-to-machine data exchange.

➢ RTE is a concept encompassing all participants of the ecosystem: governments, businesses and consumers. For users of RTE, it brings less paperwork, adds transparency and increases efficiency. It abolishes need for data migration from paper.

➢ Sectors where RTE can contribute the most are accounting, reporting, customs, taxation, logistics, but also agriculture. RTE makes accounting and reporting processes swifter and more efficient and can therefore give a significant boost to (e)-commerce, but also increase government revenue and transparency. In countries, such as Estonia, where RTE principles have been put to use, the gains are undeniable.

➢ More public-private-partnerships and cooperation both locally and internationally are necessary to increase the uptake of RTE. Companies and countries that have RTE systems ready, tested and available, should make them available and encourage their uptake. Work needs to continue on several fronts to encourage RTE uptake.

➢ For developing countries RTE uptake requires building infrastructure and connectivity, but also creating an enabling legal framework, building trust and capacity. The free movement of data is a key factor in enabling RTE. However, difference here has to be made between personal and business data.

➢ International organizations such as UPU have set an example in RTE uptake: EDI networks; use of postal big data; API integration possibilities.

➢ In the years to come RTE is set to gain in significance and its uptake by companies, as well as countries is bound to increase. RTE is here to stay and replace paper-based tasks with automated and real-time functionalities.

Tech Startups in Africa: How to fuel growth for scale and job creation after COVID-19?

Organizer: ITC

In the age of social distancing and quarantine, the digital economy in Africa offers opportunities at scale to generate jobs, contribute to economic growth, and realize productivity gains even during these difficult times. Despite some promising developments, there are significant gaps in terms of funding, a frozen marketplace, and capacity support. The panel discussed the funding landscape prior to COVID-19, the impact the pandemic has had, and where the sector might be headed. Panelists brainstormed on what changes could be made by various ecosystem actors to support the growth of early-stage startups, especially in the dynamic e-commerce space, and the related job creation opportunity in this trying time. Panelists represented a broad selection from across the ecosystem including venture capital firms, grant-funding organizations, startup founders and entrepreneurs, and seasoned startup coaches and accelerators. The session concluded with a Q&A session where the 100+ audience members had the chance to ask the panelists questions through the chat-function.

Issues discussed

- What does the startup-funding landscape in Africa look like? Who are the key players, what are their objectives, and how can startups access the financing they need?

- How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted this landscape? What are the struggles startups now face, and what are some examples of successful adaptation to these conditions?

- Where is the sector headed into a future after COVID-19? What will the "new normal" look like once the pandemic itself has died down? Will the funding ecosystem return to normal? Will the pandemic introduce long-lasting changes in terms of use of digital technologies?

3 main outcomes and/or policy recommendations

➢ E-commerce is an important business vertical for young entrepreneurs in the African tech sector, with low entry barriers, and mainly focused on B2C, which can be supported by investment from business angels, grants and venture capital.

➢ E-commerce ventures are part of the solution in the current crisis, with domestic e-commerce reducing the effects of the lockdown and (partial) retail shut-down – with the
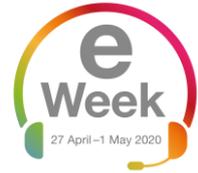
opportunity also leading to pivots (Ugandan agritech Famunera for instance extending into e-commerce)

➢ E-commerce is a digitization driver and supports the development of related services: digital financial services, e-logistics. Therefore, it is time to act: there is a need to support existing ventures to survive the crisis through corporate acceleration and access to public and private funding/loans. There is also a need to advocate for digitally friendly business environments post-COVID-19.

Digital payments and trade for MSMEs: Encouraging inclusion and growth through digital transformation

Organizers: WEF – UNCDF - UNESCWA

Quarantine orders pose significant challenges to MSMEs that do not have access to e-commerce platforms. With people unable to conduct transactions face-to-face, COVID-19 has further accelerated digitization of global trade. Digital payments are a key enabling factor in digital trade and an important driver of global economic growth. However, even as the global economy becomes more interconnected and digitized, many challenges still exist for enabling inclusive, efficient and secure digital payments for MSMEs. Challenges include but are not limited to a lack of basic infrastructures (identity/internet access etc) to enable digital payments in developing and least developed countries, limited access to digital payments among vulnerable populations and high costs associated with cross-border payments due to the lack of interoperability between systems and across nations and fraud and cybersecurity issues. Further, current trade commitments governing digital payments are insufficient at meeting the needs of global cross-border commerce.

In order to address these challenges, many forward-looking countries are looking to support growth in the digital economy by reducing barriers and expanding access to digital payments. Bringing first-hand experiences from public and private sectors, this session will discuss best practices for promoting inclusive access to digital payments and growth through digital transformation.

Issues discussed

COVID-19 has created both opportunities and challenges for digital payments.

Opportunities

Data from Philippines has shown a strong demand for and adoption of digital payments as evidenced by the surge in the volume of cardless, ATM cash withdrawn and online peer-to-peer transfers.

In West Asia , there is a wide adoption of legal framework among countries that enables digital payments and digital transactions. The broad coverage of mobile services, rapidly growing number of smart phones and high mobile-cellular subscription rate provide a foundation for the adoption of mobile payments. Governments also put forth a set of initiatives to promote digital payments, including by creating e-wallets with stimulus packages through ICT ministries and the post offices, leveraging postal services to conduct KYC and AML and providing financial services and waiving fees associated with mobile and electronic transfers.

Challenges

MSMEs that lack access to e-commerce face the risk of going out of business as quarantine measures are extended, with more unemployment and social unrest as possible results. Even though digital payments are the core engine behind e-commerce, there are still 1.7 billion unbanked populations globally and most are located in developing and least developed countries. Without access to digital payments, it is more difficult to carry out e-commerce. Key obstacles facing the growth and expansion of e-payments service providers include:

- Quality and cost of internet and mobile phone services
- Competition with incumbent banks
- Legislative and regulatory hurdles
- Difficulties in obtaining funding and investments
- Lack of digital literacy that result in lack of skilled workers and prevent wide adopt by consumers
- Cybersecurity concerns that result in little trust from consumers
- Entry barriers specific to digital industry: data localization requirements

COVID-19 has different effects on different industries. Even for MSMEs that adopt e-commerce, depending on the type of products they sell, they may face financial difficulties in the short run. Providing financial support to MSMEs during this period through either traditional banks or fintech is therefore crucial to help MSMEs stay in business.

Policy recommendations to address the challenges

In order to enable digital payments for financial inclusion, more investment is needed in the area of ICT networks. Governments should, at a minimum, pass laws and regulations to provide a legal ground for digital transactions (such as e-transactions laws). A conducive regulatory environment (such as opening banking guidelines, tiered KYC requirements) would encourage access and competition, promote innovation and encourage existing incumbent financial institutions to work with newcomers. Governments should also provide financial incentives (such as lowering fees) to encourage the adoption of digital payments.

To reduce costs for cross-border payments and help fintech achieve economies of scale, there was a call for new trade commitment to provide for national treatment of foreign payments companies and free flow of data. More information sharing and regulatory coordination among governments and between public and private sectors are encouraged to promote interoperability and standardize licensing requirements to allow payments to scale globally more easily. Given different technologies and the entry of different new players into payments market, governments should coordinate with each other in building global standards for new technologies.

Recommendations to MSMEs on how they may expand their digital presence

For MSMEs to build up their digital presence for cross-border business, it is important for them to leverage big data for market research and focus on reaching economies of scale to reduce costs. Managing foreign exchange risk, using trade finance tools to provide cash flow and focusing on customer experiences were also important.

3 main outcomes and/or policy recommendations

➤ Improving the ICT infrastructure is important as an initial step to enable digital payments.

➤ Regulatory reform is required to provide legal grounds for digital transactions and promote competition.

➤ New trade commitments, inter-governmental coordination and public and private collaboration are needed to lower barriers for cross border digital payments and to form standards and promote interoperability.

Click here for the Session Video Replay (password: Fj9cXMch)

WEDNESDAY 29 APRIL

Competition and consumer protection in times of COVID-19

Organizer: UNCTAD

Consumer protection and competition authorities are closely monitoring digital markets and fighting unfair, misleading, abusive and anticompetitive practices. On the consumer protection front, authorities are fighting online scams and misleading claims regarding miracle products to cure COVID-19 (Italy, Colombia). They also reach out to platforms to combat price gouging, for example Jumia Nigeria delisted 390 products of 168 sellers of hand sanitizers and face masks from its platform, following a warning letter from Nigeria's authority. Also, the Republic of Korea and Colombia have implemented apps and online portals to lodge COVID-19 related complaints in real time.

As the pandemic evolves from a health crisis to an economic one, competition authorities are reacting. The COVID-19 crisis has shown our dependence on digital platforms, whose growing market power raises concerns for consumer and competition law enforcers. Competition authorities are issuing guidance to businesses on how competition laws will be enforced regarding collaboration agreements between competitors if they serve the public interest.

This session assessed digital challenges and solutions by consumer and competition agencies and civil society organizations to protect consumers from unfair, abusive and anti-competitive practices in digital markets in the context of COVID-19 crisis.

Issues discussed

- Fight against price gouging on essential consumer goods (such as masks or hand sanitizer) or misleading claims (such as miracle products to cure COVID-19): authorities approached online platforms to tackle price gouging and misleading advertising and begun law enforcement (such as interim measures, shutdown of websites and suspending marketing) when adequate action was not taken. They also conducted market monitoring through online sweeps and mystery shopping.

- Competition law in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis: in order to focus on public interest, authorities allowed collaboration between competitors (as exemptions to competition law) in key sectors (retail; SMEs) and issued guidance on collaboration procurement and distribution channels.

- Ensuring consumers can report unfair commercial practices: authorities launched apps and other digital tools for consumers file complaints online related to COVID-19 (more than 10,000 in one month in Colombia).

- Consequences of deficiencies in refunds, right of withdrawal and chargebacks during COVID-19: as some e-commerce providers fail to honor their own refund, withdrawal and chargeback policies (air travel, holidays, concert and events) consumer trust in digital markets suffers. This requires enforcement action, including against those online platforms who are responsible for these policies, as well as a continuous dialogue with business to adopt good practices.

- UNCTAD's role in enhancing competition and consumer protection online in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis: as the focal point for competition and consumer protection within the United Nations system, UNCTAD is catalyzing the exchange of experience among member States. It disseminated COVID-19 related measures taken by competition and consumer protection authorities around the world and issued a call for action on competition policies and another on consumer protection.

3 main outcomes and/or policy recommendations

The COVID-19 pandemic will aggravate the situation of vulnerable and disadvantaged consumers, particularly online. Vibrant competition and consumer protection policies and enforcement in the digital economy can avoid serious threats to consumer welfare. Consumers need to be at the heart of the economic response to the crisis in order to minimize a social crisis. Experience sharing and international cooperation among competition and consumer protection authorities and other stakeholders are of essence to fight unfair, abusive and anti-competitive practices and restore competition in digital markets.

UNCTAD's call for action:

- Monitor online markets for essential consumer goods, undertake enforcement action against online misleading and false claims, hoarding and price gouging and evaluate the viability of imposing price caps on those that help curb infection (such as masks and hand sanitizers). Take full advantage of digital tools for information campaigns, consumer complaints and redress, and urge major online platforms and all online business to implement good practices and cooperate with respective authorities.

- Vigorously enforce competition law against companies that take advantage of their dominant position in digital markets to ensure there are no abuses during the COVID-19 crisis. Establish criteria for exemptions of competition law for restrictive collaboration of procurement and distribution channels, if appropriate.

- Cooperate with competition and consumer protection authorities and stakeholders by exchanging information on COVID-19 related national, regional and international policies and initiatives.

Click here for the Session Video Replay (password: wAjcyk8T)

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Understanding e-commerce in Africa: Launch of the Africa Marketplace Explorer

Organizer: ITC

This session discussed major findings about e-commerce marketplaces in Africa and explored how this may be used to further research and enable inclusive trade and entrepreneurial opportunity in Africa.

The session was divided into three parts:

(i) the launch of the Africa Marketplace Explorer

(ii) a presentation of major findings about the landscape of online marketplaces in Africa

(iii) a dialogue aimed at discussing the contribution of online marketplaces to the development of African small e-commerce businesses and the role or marketplaces in economic recovery after the COVID-19 outbreak.

The Africa Marketplace Explorer, developed by the International Trade Centre and the Centre for Market Insights of the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences, is the first Africa-wide analysis of B2C marketplaces. The tool enables an exploration of trends in marketplace usage, relative adoption of marketplaces across 58 countries and country-by-country benchmarking. Over 630 marketplaces and 1,900 marketplace websites active in Africa have been identified and their characteristics tabulated. A publication accompanying the new tool analyzes the data and cross-references it with external information to produce the first comprehensive analysis of its kind.

The tool and publication can be accessed here and on ITC ecomConnect, the first e-commerce online community platform with a special focus on developing and least-developed countries.

Issues discussed

Discussions particularly focused on three main issues: (i) exploration of major findings about the landscape of online marketplaces in Africa; (ii) the contribution of online marketplaces to the development of African e-commerce ecosystem; and (iii) the role or marketplaces in facilitating inclusive online trade for small businesses and economic recovery after the COVID-19 outbreak.

Big international marketplaces are not very present in Africa, so even if the way is difficult, the situation shows opportunity for local online marketplaces. To understand how

online marketplaces could support African businesses, the panel launched the Africa Marketplace Explorer as a free and innovative tool that analyzes characteristics and trends of marketplaces in Africa.

The analysis reveals that Africa is home to 630 marketplaces that SMEs can use for trading, but only 1% of marketplaces is responsible for 60% of marketplace traffic in the whole continent. The consequence is that there are a few very big marketplaces and many very tiny non-efficient ones.

Despite the high number of marketplaces in the continent, the size of marketplace activity in Africa is still low. Data shows that in the whole continent, the marketplace web traffic (2.2 billion visitors) is much lower than those of major marketplace players around the world (i.e. only Amazon.com has 26.7 billion of visitors).

The study evidences other interesting data: the difficulty of marketplaces to achieve success (in the last two years, there has been a 5% decline in the number of visitors); the need for transactional marketplaces (nearly 25% of all African countries have zero transactional marketplaces); the possibilities to directly sell internationally via African marketplaces are relatively limited. For marketplaces to thrive, a strong economy and a good infrastructure are needed.

After the presentation of the tool and its findings, panelists highlighted the urgency of the Government to take a role in Africa in promoting homegrown platforms. They noted that other leading countries had received subsidies for development of marketplaces and acknowledged the importance of fiscal policies to encourage SMEs and consumers to go online. For instance, Chinese platforms had received funds directly in the form of government-built logistics platforms and the United States had introduced sales tax advantages indirectly.

The panel also suggested that African marketplaces need to partner together to create stronger presence and consolidate a powerful international brand image of high-quality products and services to foster demand.

The panel further stressed the importance of investing in the development and use of digital identity. This will allow markets to capture valuable data that would be impossible otherwise. Another initiative to gain momentum would be to develop an organization that works on a common certificate for website trust – and product standards- as an initiative that could make a big difference.

Panelists highlighted the importance of partnering with safe online payment providers and having a cost-effective system of delivery, at least within the country, to boost e-commerce. They proposed the creation of shared facilities to provide training and affordable basic infrastructure, such as shared warehousing, good access to Internet or minimum transport services.

Finally, the panel acknowledged the necessity of governments and private players to join forces and create an inclusive e-commerce ecosystem for sustainable growth. Panelists expressed the difficult process of educating small businesses to switch from an offline approach to a digital one and encouraged for a higher investment in SMEs capacity building for e-commerce. A proposed solution was to create clusters of SMEs where businesses could access training.

3 main outcomes and/or policy recommendations

➢ African governments need to promote homegrown platforms and consolidate the African brand as a powerful high-quality image. There is an urgent need of fiscal policies that encourage SMEs and consumers to go online.

➢ For African marketplaces to gain momentum, a strong economy and a good e-commerce infrastructure are needed. Countries need to work in the development of safe payment solutions, a cost-effective logistics system and digital identity.

➢ Countries need to invest in SMEs capacity building in digital skills. SMEs need to be able to access online training that allows them to sell on e-commerce platforms.

Click here for the Session Video Replay (password: QpaVtxc3)

Who owns our data? What is the role of intellectual property?

Organizer: UNCTAD

As the importance of data for innovation, productivity and talking global challenges, such as in food and agriculture, climate change and industrialization, grows, the governance of the control, access and sharing of data becomes crucial. The webinar featured international experts on data and intellectual property rights who addressed the key bottlenecks for data sharing and the role of intellectual property rights.

Issues discussed

• How do we encourage the sharing of data from business to business and business to government to promote data pools and data mining? What is the role of IP regimes in promoting the sharing of data?

- What is the role of international cooperation and what are the essential issues for policy elaboration?

3 main outcomes and/or policy recommendations:

➢ **The role and types of relevant IP rights for the protection and facilitation of data sharing are still contentious and not clearly defined**

Existing IP frameworks with respect to data to certain extent reflect differences on the applicability of copyright (and, in the context of the European Union, sui generis database protection) and the option to utilize protection against unfair competition with some success and limitations. Similarly, national laws and jurisprudence provide some insight into the protection of data. The multilateral standards under the WTO Trade-Related Aspects on Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Agreement provide much flexibility in this regard and will hardly result in convergence and unified national approaches. In addition to IP frameworks, competition law has been employed to address market distorting practices by big data players. Reflecting the difficulties in applying the traditional IP framework to data, there are ongoing efforts at WIPO to examine the pros and cons of designing a new, data-specific sui generis right, based on an understanding that such right would incentivize investment into data collection and sharing.

Most experts expressed the view that the current, multilateral IP system as designed under the TRIPS Agreement provides ample space for data sharing incentives. The idea of creating new IP rights for data was received with caution. For instance, there is still a question to what extent the European experience on sui generis database protection rules has a meaningful impact on the database industry in Europe, considering the limited reliance by parties on this right in the context of data-related disputes. Moreover, in defining the subject matter for protection, data can take several forms, ranging from personal and commercial data, anonymized data, environmental data, data generated by machines etc. In all cases, data is created through interactions creating complications on defining ownership, rights and obligations, between personal users, collecting entities, compilers, devise manufactures, service providers etc. In sum, what appears clear is the need for increased sharing of data. It is controversial, however, what role the IP system can play in that regard.

➢ **Non-IP initiatives to remove barriers to sharing of and access to data have picked up in national government initiatives /industry initiatives**

Outside the realm of IP rights there have been growing efforts and adoption of policies that favor open data governance, at least as concerns the data collected by the public sector. It was emphasized that open data governance can address both the question of removal of access barriers and ensuring quality and reliability of data. In addition to open data, the discussion focused on the implications of individual rights that users may hold, in certain jurisdictions, in the data created by them (data privacy). While all acknowledged the importance of privacy rights, it was also mentioned that these can constitute barriers to the

sharing of data, especially in light of the obligation, in some jurisdictions, to limit data sharing to the very purpose for which it has been collected. Referring again to the IP framework, some concern was voiced in this respect that additional ownership rights would add a layer of complication for data sharing. Instead, it was suggested to focus more on the possibilities offered by technological protection measures such as electronic encryption to protect data from misappropriation.

➢ Although there are complex issues for international cooperation due to the digital divide, developing countries can benefit from **technical cooperation in awareness raising and the development of national policies and laws**. UNCTAD and other agencies should play a role in addressing the potential role of open data approaches for the creation of artificial intelligence capacity.

Developing countries may lag in defining their priorities and needs and may not feel comfortable with the development of new international norms and standards on e-commerce in general and data and IP rights prior to the conclusion of their internal needs' assessments. However, many countries are examining policy options for building domestic capabilities. This is an area where technical cooperation may add value to domestic reflections. While all experts agreed that development partners should not be prescriptive, it was felt that raising awareness and capacity building of stakeholders on the IP and data interface could be useful. This is especially true to the extent it would help closing the digital divide. Experts considered that UN agencies like UNCTAD should play a role in leading continued discussions with stakeholders from developing and developed countries on how to make better use of open data strategies to address the building of capacity in artificial intelligence.

Additional Comments

Responding to questions from participants, the need to distinguish between privacy issues and claims to economic value of data was stressed. In addition, a question of localization of data, enabling domestic companies to make use of nationally generated data, was identified as critically important for any future discussion of the subject.

Click here for the Session Video Replay (password: yGKARHH4)

THURSDAY 30 APRIL

Building a measurement tool that drives the development of an inclusive digital economy

Organizer: UNCDF

As part of its "Leaving no one behind in the digital era" strategy, the UNCDF is developing the **Inclusive Digital Economy Scorecard (IDES)**. The scorecard is a policy tool to help governments set priorities that drive the digital transformation while reducing the digital divide. UNCDF organized this roundtable session to present the key findings of a reference group of international organizations involved in measuring different aspects of the digital economy, the experience of Uganda in testing the IDES framework, and the next steps for further roll-out in Africa, Asia and the Pacific. The roundtable included speakers representing the Global System for Mobile Communications Association (GSMA), the European Union's Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology (DGConnect), UNCTAD, and the Uganda Country Team of UNCDF. Along with several other organizations (UNDP Human Development Index and UN-DESA), these agencies are part of the IDES reference group and are also involved in developing improved measurements of different aspects of the digital economy.

Issues discussed

The IDES aims to measure the following "building blocks" of an inclusive digital economy: enabling policy and regulation, an open digital payment ecosystem, inclusive innovation, and empowered customers. The indicators to measure the building blocks range from the existence of digital economy policies and regulations, to the availability of ICT infrastructure and digital skills. Inclusiveness may be gauged through affordability measures, universality of access and use of digital services, and how different groups benefit from the digital economy. For example, are micro entrepreneurs in urban and rural areas connected to broadband, do they have websites, or what do they use the Internet for? Are women-owned businesses producing and retaining value in the digital economy? While these types of measurement are now available in many developed countries, the IDES framework attempts to fill the gaps from least-developed countries.

The objective is that governments use the IDES to measure the effectiveness of their programmes to grow the digital economy and make it more inclusive, helping them to identify gaps and set priorities for policy implementation. In developing the IDES, the definition of the

"customer segments" that should be considered is a challenge. The current iteration of the IDES includes women, youth, refugees, migrants, MSMEs and rural populations, but it aspires to eventually include elders, the disabled, and ethnic groups. All these breakdowns have cost implications and increase the complexity of measurement exercise. However, the IDES reference group emphasized that it is crucial to properly identify the "have" and the "have not" in the digital economy.

The session discussed the experience of Uganda in testing the IDES framework. The IDES is part of a larger effort to mainstream the digital dimension in the national development plan and helps with monitoring inclusiveness, which is a key component of the effort. The pilot application of the IDES was successful because of the alignment with the strategic goals of the government, and because it sought to understand what data and tools were already available and relevant locally. For Uganda, the inclusiveness dimension involved being able to measure (and improve) the access of refugee populations to SIM cards and highlighted a key priority to expand digital literacy in the school curriculum to the whole country. The collection of data disaggregated by gender and age groups, such as on ownership of phones and of digital finance accounts, allowed Uganda to focus their policies towards women and youth.

Current initiatives to measure the digital economy, including the IDES, have similar challenges with regards to data collection in developing and low-income economies. These include the cost of data collection, which makes it difficult to produce statistics periodically and sustainably, as well as to extend coverage to include marginalized and remote demographic groups. Measuring the digital economy and its inclusiveness should be seen as a journey, during which there should be scope for evolving methodology, using different data sources, and adapting proxy and actual indicators. Evolving methodology could entail, for example, changes in weighing the different elements of the IDES. The IDES will also consider data sources other than official statistics in order to measure inclusiveness, such as demand side (survey and non-survey) data on access to and use of digital technology from research entities, or data from service providers.

In the future, it could be very relevant to developing countries to look at a more granular indicators related to connectivity, cybersecurity, data flows, e-commerce digital identity, digital payments, or privacy. Indicators related to legal and regulatory frameworks, availability of finance for digital ventures, or investment in ICT research and development, also help to measure the broader readiness of countries for developing a digital economy.

To ensure that the IDES remains an effective tool for countries in the long term, the UNCDF must continue discussing with governments, businesses, and donors on the data gaps that need to be addressed and prioritized. There must be consensus on the indicators to be collected and how to define them. To achieve these things, development partners should continue to support working groups that allow practitioners to share best practices and lessons learned.
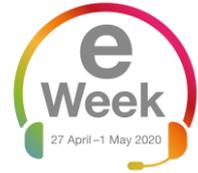
Going forward the IDES will be tested in Uganda, Burkina Faso, Nepal and the Solomon Islands, with the aim to be implemented in 20 countries in Africa and Asia Pacific by the end of 2020.

For more information visit the IDES website https://ides.uncdf.org/homepage

3 main outcomes and/or policy recommendations

➢ The IDES can be used as a policy tool for countries to monitor progress in the inclusiveness of their digital economies, and to prioritize areas of action to reduce the digital divides.

➢ The measurement of an inclusive digital economy is a journey; an evolving digital economy requires evolving measurement tools.

➢ The digital divide has many dimensions, with an impact on the inclusiveness of the digital economy. Collaboration between multiple stakeholders is essential to ensure that all segments of society are considered.

Click here for the Session Video Replay (password: kGGsiGv2)

FRIDAY 1 MAY

Digital economy and continental integration: Creating value for Africa

Organizers: CUTS International – GIZ (Germany)

This session explored the opportunity created by the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) to lift Africa in the digital era through a concerted digital policy for the continent. Panelists presented the dimensions that need to be factored in by African policymakers to make sure states are ready to engage in e-commerce and that digital trade leaves no one behind and contributes to the SDGs. AfCFTA is presented as a platform for consolidating e-commerce rules and regulations across the continent. Speakers shared lessons learned from various countries or initiatives that could inspire policy makers as they negotiate and implement this regional trade agreement provisions on e-commerce.

Key lessons and learnings include using a bottom up approach to make sure businesses' -and especially SMEs'- needs, challenges and levels of readiness are considered in shaping the e-commerce provisions. Policy makers need to understand the local culture to unlock the potential of e-commerce and digital trade. Countries also need to make the right investments in infrastructure to increase coverage. The private sector cannot operate the digital transformation alone; governments will need to be deeply involved to secure inclusive development of digital trade. Cross-border e-commerce should be at the heart of this regulatory framework to ensure scaling up SMEs' platform businesses. Finally, the e-commerce provisions of AfCFTA should promote a digital economy ecosystem which will remove trade barriers, manage risks and place the interests of consumers and SMEs, which provide 80% of employment in the continent, at the heart of its priorities.

Issues discussed

CUTS, with the financial support of GIZ, conducted a research project on e-commerce and African integration, with a focus on analyzing measures to ensure African e-commerce policy agenda is inclusive. CUTS released a first study on the effects of specific e-commerce provisions in trade agreements, and relevant lessons for small developing countries. The second will look at mainstreaming gender measures in the digital trade agenda for inclusive development. The third study, the findings of which were presented in the session, explored approaches for African countries to tap into opportunities for e-commerce within the AfCFTA framework and present user-friendly information for policymakers among the complex and new world related to the digital economy. Among key findings, CUTS explained that the AfCFTA offers a unique opportunity to mobilize African leaders and policy makers to create an enabling environment for e-commerce, given its inevitable global rise.

While Africa is called to expand its exports outside of the continent, CUTS reiterated that intra-African trade is key for the continental development, as this is where African countries could benefit from the most growth and value addition. This is why the AfCFTA e-commerce protocol must support SMEs to adopt the right business models to promote intra-African trade. CUTS exposed the components that could be included within strong regulatory frameworks that would allow SMEs to navigate cross border e-commerce process chains successfully, such as infrastructure, e-government, e-finance, e-payment, customs, trade agreements, customers rights protection, dispute settlement, trust issues, cybersecurity, data protection, etc.

The World Food Programme (WFP) offered another perspective on the role of the AfCFTA and the digital economy to help fighting hunger and support food supply chains in Africa. WFP shared three findings: the first is that regional trade integration can play an important role to support SDG 2 and achieve the zero-hunger objective. More resilient rural livelihoods have a direct effect on curbing the need for humanitarian operations. The second finding is that AfCFTA offers a great opportunity to support WFP procurement efforts to buy food from smallholders and promote rural development. The agreement can also support B2B e-commerce trade with smallholders and hence reinforce the food supply chain. China used a similar strategy to lift its smallholders' farmers and Africa needs to learn from that experience.

The agreement can also be a catalyst for youth employment in rural areas. For this, digital access and skills will need to be reinforced. The third finding is around current challenges. One of these challenges relates to investments in infrastructure, such as warehouses and storage but also digital infrastructure, which is currently lacking in various degrees across the continent. Buying platforms need to consider the supply chain component, with smallholder farmers often being in isolated zones.

The UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) outlined what should be the priorities of AfCFTA policy makers when devising a continent-wide protocol for e-commerce. It recalled the importance of learning from previous attempts, using the case of the WTO. According to the speaker, WTO members failed to negotiate a global mandate on e-commerce, because the proposals presented were designed for large markets and big digital companies. Small countries did not see their interest in such global protocols. AfCFTA is an opportunity to use a bottom up approach that will put emphasis on the processes needed to allow SMEs scaling up their business.

The last panelist, sharing the perspective of African trade negotiators to the WTO, elaborated on what the negotiators for the AfCFTA will need to adequately address the digital economy and e-commerce components of the agreement. An effective collaboration between WTO and AfCFTA negotiators will offer the latter an opportunity to tap into very relevant experiences in relation to the digital economy. On the other hand, African negotiators to the WTO would be able to safeguard their interests as being pronounced in AfCFTA.

In conclusion, panelists and participants acknowledge the important challenges ahead that need to be tackled for Africa to reap the benefits of the digital economy and e-commerce. E-commerce started in developed countries and created a steep digital divide with the rest of the world. Currently, only 1.3% of e-commerce worldwide is done in Africa. The current pandemic also forced governments to review the effectiveness of their domestic and regional supply chains, in a world where international trade has been highly disrupted. Digital economy and e-commerce are a key component to strengthen both regional integration and national security and resilience in face of upcoming similar threats. This should involve creating one market for goods and services in Africa, along with African-based digital infrastructures and data governance systems. AfCFTA must be the platform for consolidating e-commerce rules and regulations across the continent and discuss openly disagreements. This is an opportunity for Africa to become a global player in trade and have the voice of the continent heard.

Main outcomes and/or policy recommendations

➢ AfCFTA efforts in the area should emphasize digital trade policies that will enable cross border e-commerce, especially to SMEs that need to scale up their business, using a bottom up approach.

- AfCFTA needs to promote a digital economy ecosystem that will encompass supply chain issues, remove trade barriers and manage risks. This would mean looking at both the second (that includes issues of competition, intellectual property etc.) and the third phase (for e-commerce Protocol) negotiations holistically.

- Each country may approach the digital economy and e-commerce differently. Hence, it is of utmost importance that policy makers assess the local culture and specific domestic issues related to e-commerce when devising and implementing the AfCFTA global digital trade protocol.

- The success of future e-commerce across the continent will be highly dependent on the trust consumers and businesses will put into the platforms. Policy makers should put into place all the necessary measures to build that trust.

- African governments must deploy all efforts to make the right investments in terms of technology and digital infrastructure.

Click here for the Session Video Replay (password: uA7hzxwU)

Value of cyber security and privacy in digital and e-commerce space

Organizers: CUTS International – UNIDO

The session discussed the impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic on e-commerce and its interplay with cybersecurity and privacy in the digital space. E-commerce is the fastest growing business activity in the world. However, an immediate and fundamental challenge for the industry includes the lack of trust in doing business since cyber threats and cybercrimes are increasing substantially.

Issues discussed

- The importance of privacy and cybersecurity in the e-commerce sector

- The relevance of international standards for e-commerce business continuity, supply chains and data management

- A case example of how e-commerce has helped MSMEs address specific challenges resulting from COVID-19

Summary of proceedings

In an increasingly digital world, the importance of privacy/data protection and cyber security frameworks become more import to guarantee functional and reliable implementation of digital technologies and platforms – especially e-commerce. The current COVID-19 situation has resulted in growing use of e-commerce and home-based business continuity for enterprises to sustain themselves. This shifts the focus on cyber-security across the whole e-commerce value chain. As the Covid-19 pandemic is spreading across the globe, the internet is proving to be vital. However, people with no internet connectivity are being left behind. At the same time, while certain parts of the economy are disrupted, there have been some elements of protectionism that are becoming evident.

E-commerce will play a fundamental role in establishing a new normal due to the pandemic. Hence, with e-commerce gaining prevalence, data protection becomes increasingly important. To this end, a balance between public ownership of data and privacy is necessary. The EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is emerging as a template on data privacy issues and borrowing the principles such as the 'right to be forgotten' and 'consent' can be thought of. Citizens in all situations should have the freedom to decide which data should be retained about them. However, countries should also be cautious about increasing compliance cost that particularly affect small businesses. Therefore, over-regulation in the digital space needs to be avoided.

UNIDO works on developing standards and good governance guidelines in the space of cyber-security and data privacy. It has already developed a "Good Governance Framework" to support digital enterprises, with an emphasis on e-commerce.

UNCTAD's research shows that only two-thirds of countries have adopted data protection regimes and less than half of all least developed countries (LDCs). The situation is much less desirable with respect to cyber-security laws. Even where laws are in place, many countries are lacking adequate resources and skills for their efficient enforcement. Weak legal and regulatory frameworks expose consumers and businesses to cybercrime and privacy breaches. Cybersecurity and privacy protection are global issues, and hence require global cooperation. There is need for a UN framework that can provide guiding principles, which in turn can shape domestic regimes.

The quick deployment of an e-commerce platform builder (RedShift) in South Africa was presented. The initiative was launched as lockdown started. This platform allows MSMEs to quickly take their business online and thereby maintain the link to the local market through fulfilling orders at reduced risk. RedShift recognizes that data protection and cyber security are important facets for any e-commerce platform to grow. To gain trust among its stakeholders, RedShift adopted a security-by-design approach by weaving the best and most

secured e-payment gateway available in South Africa into its platform. Additionally, RedShift uses consumer data only for in-house research purposes and does not sell them on.

With an increase in data-driven services and Internet of Things, there will be an increased risk of cybersecurity. With more people working from home, teleworkers do not have the same security settings as they have in their offices. To this end, there is evidence of increasing coronavirus-related phishing attacks. Growing cybersecurity risk is specifically true for developing countries and LDCs in the absence of robust regulatory frameworks to address such threats.

In India, the Aarogya Setu app, launched by the Government for COVID-19 tracing, is the most widely downloaded such app in the world. However, there is a lot of uncertainty regarding its privacy policies and the government's future use of the collected data. Awareness of data privacy may not be uniform across individuals. In a non-monolithic society such as India with a lot of different income levels, data privacy is usually found to be a major concern among those in the upper levels. Lower income groups prioritize the safety of transaction over how their data are collected and used. There is an increasing trend where governments wish to integrate technologies to monitor every facet of an individual's life and the debate on the level of control states can have over their citizens is fiercely contested among people with different views.

International conversations on Internet governance and e-commerce are ongoing in various international fora, such as ITU, IGF, WTO etc. However, there has been consistent criticism that international law only applies to states and hence it is difficult to put standards and obligations on private companies.

There are multiple outstanding issues within the domain of internet governance such as:

- Security of critical infrastructures and financial infrastructures. The precise cost of cybercrimes is uncertain, but to remedy the damages done can impose a huge cost.
- Cyber conflicts: security loopholes expose vulnerabilities which can be exploited from a military standpoint.
- Economic espionage has a large impact on the digital economy.

Ensuring cyber-security and trust is an important pre-requisite for the efficient functioning of e-commerce. Around 80 percent of people consider cybersecurity a major concern while conducting business online. Cybersecurity also affects e-commerce between countries. For example, Nigeria faced acute cybersecurity risks in the past, which deterred companies and other countries from partnering with Nigeria on e-commerce.

To date a multilateral framework on cybersecurity and data privacy remains outstanding. Regional frameworks like the Budapest Convention (Council of Europe Convention on Cybersecurity), which is open to other countries outside of Europe, is a good template to follow. At present it has 108 countries as its members. Additionally, Russia has put forward a
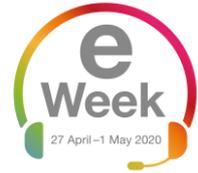
proposal and in the WTO e-commerce plurilateral negotiations there are proposals on cybersecurity and privacy protection, but none that applies globally to diverse stakeholders.

Consequently, there is a need for a concerted effort by the international community to craft a multilateral regulatory framework to deal with cybersecurity and privacy. This is necessary to engender trust in the cross-border e-commerce ecosystem. In the past there have been situations where international commitments made by countries have shaped their domestic regimes for good. Thus, countries without domestic cybersecurity regimes can also benefit from such international agreements.

3 main outcomes and/or policy recommendations:

➢ Cybersecurity, data privacy and protection are global issues and thus require global cooperation and multilateral frameworks. There is an immediate need to address and create trust among the people towards using online services such as e-commerce.

➢ E-commerce has an immense opportunity to grow. Thus, there is a need to ensure integration and robust technical frameworks which can ensure security in the whole ecosystem.

➢ Global decision makers will need to heavily invest in norm, governance and regulation development in collaboration with all stakeholders to ensure that frameworks can be implemented successfully and to create an ecosystem where data is collected and used in an ethical fashion.

Click here for the Session Video Replay (password: qTm6pyhC)

FEEDBACK FROM THE SURVEY - KEY HIGHLIGHTS

At the end of each session, participants were prompted to take a short survey on the eWeek.

90%
found that the issues discussed were presented in an
EFFICIENT MANNER

87%
found the sessions
VERY RELEVANT FOR THEIR WORK

94%
felt that, overall, the sessions of the eWeek were
EXCELLENT AND GOOD

66 Aside minute internet disruptions, I would say it was perfect. We the audiences interacted effectively amongst ourselves while following the discussions. Kudos!

66 This webinar was very helpful and encouraging. As an afghan woman migrant organization in Germany we want to start in e-commerce. This webinar showed us we should move on. Thanks!

66 Great Session. Interesting to get a wide range of delegates from almost all the Continents.

66 The panelists provided valuable insights and the moderator led the session to enable us, the attendees, to receive rich information at a perfect pace. Thank you to the moderator and the panelists for a great session. All the very best in your initiatives.

66 Thank you to UNCTAD for the initiative and to all the panelists for the quality of the interventions. Manager of the online sales platform of the Burkina Faso Post, this webinar was very useful to me. Thank you

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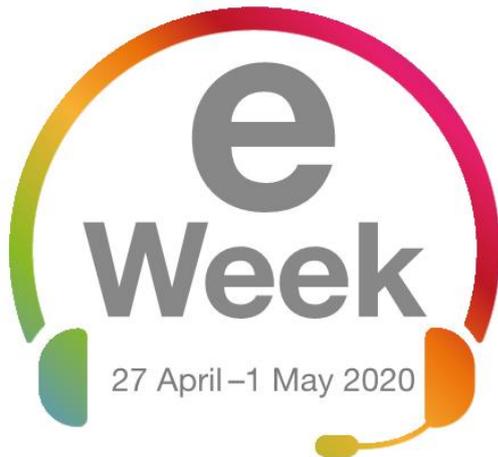
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