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TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT BOARD  
Commission on Enterprise, Business  
Facilitation and Development  
Expert Meeting on Capacity-Building in the Area of  
Electronic Commerce: Human Resource Development  
Geneva, 29 June-1 July 1998  
Agenda item 3

CAPACITY-BUILDING IN THE AREA OF ELECTRONIC COMMERCE:  
HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

Agreed recommendations by the Expert Meeting \*

A. Background

1. Experts recognize the importance of electronic commerce for trade and development, and the significance of UNCTAD's contribution to current and future activities affecting electronic commerce. They consider in particular that UNCTAD has a comparative advantage in its ability to combine an analytical and an operational approach to the issues related to electronic commerce. It also has the comparative advantage of being able to offer a cross-sectoral approach to electronic commerce, benefitting from its mandate and expertise in a large array of trade supporting sectors and activities, including trade facilitation, customs, banking, insurance and transport. These comparative advantages are especially important in addressing the training needs of developing countries, particularly those of the least developed countries (LDCs)

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\* As agreed at the second (closing) plenary meeting on Wednesday, 1 July 1998.

**B. Importance of human resources development for electronic commerce**

2. Considering the fast pace of technological change, as well as the specificity of the legal, regulatory, social and economic challenges raised by the emergence of electronic commerce, it is of primary importance that all countries benefit from adequate tools for the development of the necessary human resources in this area. Particular importance should be given to enhancing the capacity of smaller firms (SMEs) to participate in electronic commerce.

3. Experts consider that much effort is needed to enhance developing countries' capabilities to better grasp the meaning and possible impact of electronic commerce. The provision of definitions, analyses and economic studies of the trade and development impact of electronic commerce (as well as of existing proposals related to electronic commerce) will be critically important in this respect.

4. Experts underline that enhanced knowledge, experience and awareness in the area of electronic commerce will contribute to increase the level of interest and the quality of participation of developing countries in international discussions relevant to electronic commerce, including on standards. Such collective efforts will thus contribute to the setting of a framework for global electronic commerce with positive benefits for all participants.

**C. Recommendations to UNCTAD**

5. In cooperation with the relevant institutions, UNCTAD should pursue its technical cooperation activities in the area of human resources development for electronic commerce in particular through the training of trainers. Three main targets should benefit from UNCTAD's assistance in this area, namely:

- policy makers and negotiators
- SMEs managers and trade practitioners
- technicians (including EDI and Internet specialists)

6. UNCTAD is called upon to pursue its work in the following areas:

- Conceptual and quantitative analyses of the impact of electronic commerce on trade and development

- organization of regional seminars to raise the level of awareness of member countries about the possibilities and challenges of electronic commerce, as well as about the current state of specific debates (proposals for a global framework for electronic commerce, international negotiations and discussions being held in various institutions)
- production and dissemination of training packages for electronic commerce, in particular through its TRAINFORTRADE/e-trade initiatives undertaken in cooperation with other organizations and financed by UNDP; the use of modern interactive techniques, including CD-ROM and Internet-based, as well as of distance-learning packages, should be encouraged, taking into account local cultural and language specificities
- use of the Global Trade Point Network (GTPNet) as an instrument for the dissemination of training tools for electronic commerce, as well as an instrument for the continuous exchange of information and experiences among the practitioners of electronic commerce. In this respect, specific attention should be given to monographic training courses on contemporary software trends and the application of advanced technologies to electronic commerce.

7. In order to provide the most timely and relevant tools for human resources development in electronic commerce, UNCTAD should actively pursue its policy of inter-institutional cooperation, and mobilize substantive contributions from other institutions such as WTO, ILO, ITU, ITC, WIPO, UNCITRAL, UNDP, UNITAR, IBRD, IMF, OECD, ICC and ISOC, United Nations Regional Commissions and other regional organizations. In the context of such cooperation, UNCTAD could play a significant role in sensitizing such institutions to the importance of addressing electronic commerce in their own training activities.

8. Experts pointed to the need for potential donors and contributing partners to support financially and technically UNCTAD's efforts in this important area.

9. Experts encourage UNCTAD to pursue its efforts in building partnerships with civil society to offer proper training tools in the area of electronic commerce. It was considered that the holding of the first meeting of Partners for Development (Lyon, France, 9-12 November 1998) offers a historical opportunity to intensify these efforts. The Lyon Summit, following both the WTO Ministerial meeting of May 1998, and the OECD Ministerial meeting (to be held in Ottawa, Canada, October 1998), provides an opportunity to stimulate positive contributions from all countries towards creating a global framework for electronic commerce.