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TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT BOARD  
Commission on Enterprise, Business Facilitation and Development  
Expert Meeting on Electronic Commerce and Tourism  
Geneva, 18-20 September 2000  
Agenda item 3

**ELECTRONIC COMMERCE AND TOURISM**

Recommendations of the Expert Meeting

1. Individual experts expressed their views on policies and strategies to be adopted by developing countries in order to increase their participation in electronic commerce in tourism and on the possible role of UNCTAD and other international organizations in realizing the development benefits of those policies and strategies. The following is a summary of recommendations made by various experts. Not all the views were necessarily shared by all the experts; consequently, the summary reflects a wide diversity of views.

**A. Recommendations to Governments and enterprises**

2. Solutions for e-commerce in tourism should also address broader issues of electronic commerce in general, and their effects and benefits for development.

3. Ensure that e-tourism is considered alongside an appropriate multisectoral strategy for improved Internet access and telecommunications infrastructure, and use this strategy to influence investment in telecommunications.

4. Liberalize telecommunications and Internet services in order to attract new investment, reduce prices and improve the quality of service.
5. Create and continually update local content on the Internet in local languages and languages of the most important tourism consumers in order to provide information and databases on tourism experiences and attractions and general information about destinations.
6. Review available research, and conduct additional research when necessary, on e-commerce in tourism in order to provide information on market trends, consumer needs, website use, demographic profiles and the impact of non-availability of on-line payments and other information that may support the development of a sustainable tourism industry.
7. Implement appropriate mechanisms in developing countries for the safer use of electronic payments in tourism transactions at the local, regional and global levels.
8. Promote tourism that is sustainable in a social, cultural, environmental and economic sense. To this end, develop partnerships and links among all parties in the tourism supply chain, including government, destination management organizations (DMOs), local tourism service providers, travel agents and other intermediaries, global distribution systems (GDSs), travel portals and the information and communication technology (ICT) sector, as well as the local community and foreign suppliers.
9. Integrate new e-tourism channels into traditional and non-traditional distribution channels and foster the development of special-interest tourism websites, for example for eco-tourism and cultural tourism. These channels could be supported by the development of a common product database to share development costs and provide impartial information.
10. Develop a national vision, plans and policy guidelines on e-tourism and involve industry players and local communities in developing tourism strategies and products within the context of overall tourism marketing and development strategies.

11. Establish appropriate laws and regulations and service standards in order to build trust and consumer confidence and to ensure privacy and the protection of consumers and intellectual property rights. Also, cooperate in setting up an international framework to protect travellers conducting transactions on the Internet.
12. Call upon Governments to make joint efforts to ascertain whether the international e-tourism market is working in a way that does not promote unfair or anti-competitive practices which constitute barriers to the tourist industry for developing countries.
13. DMOs at all levels should be strengthened in order to be in a better position to coordinate the relevant public and private actors and thus be enabled to play a broader role. They will be essential for positioning developing countries to be able to take advantage of new ICTs. In order to be effective, DMOs have to be representative of relevant stakeholders at the local level, institutionally established and provided with the necessary human, financial and logistical resources. Ultimately, this could allow developing countries to benefit from vertical cooperation and integration.
14. With respect to e-commerce, DMOs should play a broader role. They should promote destination markets in key tourism portals, search engines and gateways and also list destinations under as many links as possible so that descriptors are not limited to, for example, tourism or names of the country alone.
15. Build and enhance destination brand image in order to improve consumer awareness and confidence, and reflect this in any web strategy.
16. Develop capacity building through training and basic education in relevant fields, for example informatics and telecommunications, and conduct awareness campaigns about e-tourism.
17. Governments and donor agencies should stimulate activities in e-commerce through grants, tax incentives, special credit lines and other seed funding arrangements, and empower DMOs with technology and financial resources.

18. On-line transactions must be combined with the development of physical tourist attractions, satisfactory product fulfilment and supply of support services, such as banking, insurance, transport and customs. Since not all suppliers will be ready for on-line transactions, destination strategy should include off-line transactions support, local call centres and use of local knowledge.

19. Traditional travel agents and other intermediaries should transform themselves by adopting new information technologies and enhancing their expertise and creativity, so as to improve their efficiency and ensure their continuity.

## **B. Recommendations to UNCTAD**

In cooperation with other appropriate bodies UNCTAD should:

20. Analyse the effect that tourism-related e-commerce has had or will have on development, and development policies. The objectives of this analysis should include identification of positive, negative or indifferent effects, as well as their causes, and formulation of recommendations for maximizing the development benefits of e-commerce.

21. Disseminate information to developing countries on approaches and elements of government policies on e-tourism, taking into account successful experiences in the developing and developed countries.

22. Give priority attention and support to the development of sustainable e-tourism in developing countries.

23. Stimulate exchanges of experiences among Governments and tourism enterprises of developing countries on the one hand, and Governments and enterprises of other countries on the other hand, and disseminate to developing countries information on experiences in e-tourism through website and periodic publications, inter-organizational cooperation, etc.

24. Signpost and carry out case studies and analysis of e-commerce in tourism, including problems of on-line payments, trust-building issues such as encryption and electronic certificates or signatures, and new technologies such as interactive television and cellphones that can support e-commerce; and collaborate with tourism research centres and academic institutions in order to promote capacity building and knowledge in e-tourism in developing countries.
25. Encourage the adoption of open data standards, e-signatures and new Internet developments (e.g. new top-level domains such as .geo) where these would assist in opening up the e-tourism market place, taking into account in particular the development dimensions of the sector, and ensure that e-commerce serves equitably the needs of developed and developing nations, and can contribute to social and environmental accountability within the tourism industry.
26. Promote exchanges on how to increase the effectiveness of DMOs.
27. Suggest possible arrangements for UNCTAD to act as an incubator for e-commerce and e-tourism small and medium-sized enterprises through appropriate United Nations programmes.
28. Examine ways to promote the visibility of tourism portals in developing countries and possible arrangements for the establishment of a global, central tourism portal for the benefit of developing countries.
29. Assist in the promotion of partnerships between DMOs in developing countries on the one hand, and intermediaries and origin country DMOs on the other hand, and encourage joint marketing within DMOs in developing countries.
30. Develop capacity building through training and basic education in relevant fields, for example informatics and telecommunications, and conduct awareness campaigns about e-tourism.