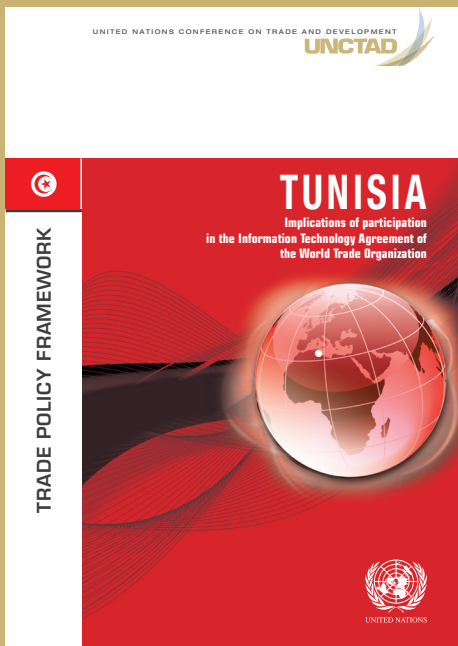




Trade Policy Framework: Tunisia



The twenty-first century has been, to date, the era of information and communications technology (ICT), and the Ministerial Declaration on Trade in Information Technology Products, or Information Technology Agreement (ITA), of the World Trade Organization (WTO), has played a vital role in promoting affordable access to such technology.

The use of information technology (IT) is pervasive in almost every aspect of modern life. Consumer electronics, medical technology, informatics, digital hardware and software, telecommunications and all ICTs embody this catalytic technology, which helps enhance productivity, drive innovation and boost economic expansion and growth.

According to the WTO, global exports of IT products have almost tripled in value since the ITA was concluded in 1996. In 2010, global exports of IT products were valued at an estimated \$1.4 trillion, or 9.5 per cent of world merchandise trade. Together, ITA participants account for 96 per cent of world trade in IT products. As they provide duty-free treatment to imports on a most-favoured nation basis, they have created opportunities for exporters in all WTO member countries, including those in least developed countries.

Global value-added by ICT industries has more than doubled, from \$1.2 trillion in 1995 to \$2.8 trillion in 2010, while their share of global gross domestic product has increased to 6 per cent. Similarly, the employment

share of ICT industries increased from 5.1 per cent in 1995 to 5.8 per cent in 2010 in economies of member countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. Yet the impacts of ICTs on the global economy reach beyond direct contributions of the industries to gross domestic product and employment: ICTs are the strongest drivers of productivity and innovation in non-ICT industries in the global economy.

Developing countries have consistently increased their participation in world trade of IT products since 1996, and accounted for approximately 64 per cent of exports and 51 per cent of imports in 2010. There is growing potential for ICTs to contribute to the social and economic progress of developing countries. For the first time, it is possible for many entrepreneurs in developing countries to benefit from ICTs in their activities and thereby enhance productivity. By improving communications along the value chain, both domestically and internationally, application of relevant ICTs can greatly enhance the competitiveness of the enterprise sector as a whole.

