

## Working Group on Measuring E-commerce and the Digital Economy

### Terms of reference

#### I. Background and Mandate

1. The establishment of a Working Group on Measuring E-commerce and the Digital Economy was one of the agreed policy recommendations from the first session of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts (IGE) on E-commerce and the Digital Economy (TD/B/EDE/1/3), specifically recommendations (11 and 12) that directly concerned statistics and in which the IGE:

*11. Encourages initiatives that improve the availability of statistics for developing countries, including the joint initiative of UNCTAD, United Nations regional commissions, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the Universal Postal Union, the World Bank, the World Customs Organization and the World Trade Organization to improve the measurement of cross-border e-commerce; and invites development partners to contribute by supporting capacity-building in this area;*

*12. Recommends the establishment of a Working Group on Measuring E-commerce and the Digital Economy in a format that aligns with available resources; and invites the secretariat to prepare a concept note on the working group and explore interest among development partners to financially support its operations;*

2. The sixty-sixth executive session of the TDB took note of the report of the first session of the IGE, took into consideration the agreed policy recommendations contained therein, and recommended the submission of these outcomes to the appropriate forums.

3. The second session of the IGE, in its plenary meeting 20 April 2018, subsequently took the following decision (TD/B/EDE/2/4), which was endorsed by the sixty-fifth session of the TDB:

*The Intergovernmental Group of Experts on E-commerce and the Digital Economy, in view of the need for enhancing the availability of official statistics on e-commerce and the digital economy, especially in developing countries, in support of evidence-based policymaking:*

*1. Recommends to the Trade and Development Board the establishment of a Working Group on Measuring E-commerce and the Digital Economy, as described in document TD/B/EDE/2/3;*

*2. Requests that the UNCTAD secretariat prepare terms of reference for the new Working Group, based on the information contained in document TD/B/EDE/2/3, clarifying that its objective is to contribute to and advance cooperation on measuring e-commerce and the digital economy and that it will avoid duplication with other relevant, ongoing work.*

4. This present document outlines the requested terms of reference for the Working Group on Measuring E-commerce and the Digital Economy (henceforth referred to as the WG).

#### II. Objective of the Working Group

5. The objective of the WG is to contribute to and advance cooperation on measuring e-commerce and the digital economy and enhance the availability, quality, comparability, usability and relevance of statistics concerning e-commerce and the digital economy, with a view to supporting evidence-based policymaking, especially in developing countries. The WG shall avoid duplication with other relevant, ongoing work.

### **III. Participation in the Working Group**

6. In order to ensure that the work of the WG reflects the needs of member States; and that it contributes to and advances cooperation on measuring e-commerce and the digital economy and avoids duplication with other relevant, ongoing work, the WG will welcome the participation by the following groups:

1. Government representatives, with relevant expertise (for example from National Statistical Offices, or from Government Ministries);
2. Relevant international organizations, who shall be invited to participate, including ILO, IMF, ITU, OECD, UNOSSC, UN Regional Commissions, UNSD, WCO, World Bank and WTO;
3. Relevant expert organizations and research networks (such as DIODE, LinneAsia, Research ICT Africa, NIC.br/Cetic.br and DIRSI);
4. Specialists from civil society, the private sector and academia may be invited, as appropriate, for consultative purposes and according to specific topics and themes.

### **IV. Activities**

7. The WG will provide a forum that:

- Supports the exchange of experience and institutional cooperation among its participants;
- Showcases new relevant developments in statistics (e.g., production of statistics through novel methods, use of new technologies or sources);
- Encourages member States to produce relevant statistics, and if needed to make recommendations concerning their dissemination;
- Reviews relevant statistical definitions, methodologies and guidelines, and proposes new ones where necessary;
- Identifies areas where methodological improvement should be undertaken;
- Reviews progress in the implementation of definitions, methodologies and guidelines if needed, along with any obstacles to their implementation;
- Identifies needs for statistical capacity building in developing countries, especially LDCs;
- Explores new avenues for South-South cooperation, including to share knowledge and lessons learned on measuring e-commerce and the digital economy ; and
- Undertakes further activities concerning the measurement of e-commerce and the digital economy as requested by the IGE.

### **V. Organizational considerations**

#### **a) Frequency, length and timing**

8. The WG will convene once a year, for 2-3 days, starting in the fall of 2019. Given the need for reporting between the IGE and the WG, it is convenient for the latter to meet in the fall each year as the IGE will normally take place in March-April (in conjunction with the UNCTAD E-commerce Week).

9. To maximize the possibility for developing country experts to participate, when possible the dates will be selected with the timing of other relevant statistical meeting in mind, notably the OECD Working Party on Measurement and Analysis in the Digital Economy (WP-MADE), or ITU meetings of the Expert Group on ICT Household Indicators (EGH) or Expert Group on Telecommunication/ICT Indicators (EGTI).

**b) Documentation**

10. Documentation for each meeting of the WG will consist of a provisional agenda, issues notes (maximum 1 per substantive agenda item) and a report of the session, prepared by the Secretariat. Issues notes will be produced before each annual session, outlining the key issues to be examined by the experts, and responding to the guiding questions.

**c) Working modalities and Servicing of the Working Group**

11. Each member State will be asked to nominate a focal point for liaison with the Secretariat (for example, from within their National Statistical Office, or whichever Ministry is deemed responsible for statistics related to e-commerce and the digital economy). The Secretariat shall liaise directly with these focal points in relation to the participation in the WG and its work.

12. The programme of work for each session of the Working Group will be determined by the preceding IGE.

13. Once the IGE has assigned a task to the WG, the Secretariat shall prepare the issues note to support deliberations in the WG as well as identify experts who may contribute additional expertise to these deliberations.

14. At beginning of each meeting, the WG will elect a Chairperson and a Vice Chair for that meeting. The WG will decide on appropriate organizational and working modalities at its first meeting, and as needed thereafter. The WG will review the work programme, and any achievements and problems met since the preceding meeting, and take stock of other relevant international activities, to ensure that its work is coordinated with that of other organizations, and to avoid duplication of efforts.

15. The WG will strive to make recommendations for the considerations by the IGE at its next session. These recommendations should focus on the tasks assigned by the IGE but may also concern other aspects of the measurement of e-commerce and the digital economy as appropriate. This may include proposals for topics that could be considered at future WG meetings.

16. The meetings of the WG would be serviced jointly by the Division on Technology and Logistics and the Division on Globalization and Development Strategies, by providing logistical support and preparing documentation as relevant.

**d) Outcomes**

17. The outcomes of each meeting of the WG shall comprise:
- Proposals and/or recommendations for the consideration by the IGE in relation to the topics identified by the IGE.
  - Other proposals to the IGE concerning the measurement of e-commerce and the digital economy, including for topics that could be considered at future WG meetings.
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