

**Intergovernmental Group of Experts on  
E-Commerce and the Digital Economy**

*First session*

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**Contribution by**

**THE DATA STRATEGY LAB**

**The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of UNCTAD.**

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Dear Chairperson,

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**Sub: Written Contribution for Intergovernmental Group of Experts on E-commerce and the Digital Economy**

**Firstly, thank you for providing me with an opportunity to serve on this group on E-commerce and the Digital Economy.**

**Secondly, please excuse the delay in submitting his write up. This submission is late by a day and I am hoping that this can be excused.**

**Thirdly, please find my inputs in the following pages, which I trust would be of value to the group. This is primarily based on my experiences in both developing as well as developed countries.**

Sincerely,

*Justhy Deva Prasad*

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### **What do developing countries need in order to build competitive advantages through e-commerce and the digital economy?**

- 1) A developing country that aspires to build competitive advantages through e-commerce and the digital economy must ensure the following:
  - a) An **aware, motivated and a trained** population.
    - Adequate percentage of population must be made aware, motivated and then trained for competency in all matters related to e-commerce and the digital economy
    - Most developing countries which will have cultural barriers which could potentially inhibit or dissuade digital entrepreneurship.
  - b) A **supportive economic eco-system** that is conducive for digital entrepreneurship and e-commerce. This includes:
    - **expert advisory** on matters related to business setup such as – legal, commercial, financial in addition to matters related to technologies
    - simple and accessible **business operations capabilities** that includes, business support systems, technology capabilities and banking capabilities, including access to capital
    - **basic utilities** that are adequate enough to support a fair standard of business operation(s). This includes basics such as water, electricity and workstations
    - **enabling technology infrastructure** including fast and reliable broadband connectivity, appropriate cloud services and other software as a service capabilities
    - **continuous training and development** of both the entrepreneurs and other partners in the eco-system
    - Any **regulations should be less hindering** of profitability and growth
- 2) A **stable world** order that supports a profitable global supply chain
- 3) A world that has a **climate that supports** life and a sustainable environment
- 4) **Culturally sustainable development** models for enabling adapting populations
  - a) It's important to acknowledge that there is a high level of social impact when technological developments set in, in certain culture. Adequate measures need to be taken to educate the communities through local means

### **What can developing countries do in order to strengthen their physical and technology infrastructure?**

- 1) **Ensure a congruent vision** that leads to a successful digital economy through e-commerce
- 2) **Be aware & participate** in developments related to physical and technology infrastructure with specific focus on the following:
  - a) Agricultural & environmental use of promising digital solutions such as:

- i) Drones
- ii) Sensors
- iii) Smartphones
- iv) Data Analytics
- v) 3D Printing
- b) Development and adoption of items in (a) on the following matters in local and national impacts, not limited to but including:
  - i) Public Health and Hygiene Management
  - ii) Water Resource Management
  - iii) Environmental including Disaster Responses & Early Warning Systems
  - iv) Education, Training Development of People for both public and private organisations
- 3) **Collaborate with relevant, more mature parties (private & public) & INVEST** in local physical and technology infrastructure
- 4) **Govern, Monitor & Continuously** improve local physical and technology infrastructure
  - a) Establish a progressive model to ensure that goals and objectives are met within the aspired timelines

**How can developed countries partner with developing countries, in the most impactful way, to maximize opportunities and address challenges relating to e-commerce and the digital economy?**

- 1) **Collaborate in 'LEARNING BY DOING' programs**
  - a) It important to recognize that technology is constantly evolving. The technology landscape is dynamic
  - b) For enterprises to succeed in developing countries there should be sufficient resilience to failures. Failure of people, processes and technologies.
  - c) Training & development programs that enable traditional local businesses to extend their markets through the internet is a certain first step. This, combined with a controlled extension of supply chain(s) will help entrepreneurs explore growth options – 'safely'.
  - d) Developed countries must commit to providing the necessary knowledge base for developing skills in the developing countries
- 2) **Invest in a Coaching & Mentoring Culture** This is key to success. There is no exception to this rule. As such, mechanisms need to be established to enable experienced coaches and mentors from developed countries to be available to the entrepreneurs in the developing countries.
  - a) Enable workshops, seminars, conferences and events for community members to gain access to world class coaches and mentors. These could also be virtual in nature and could be as effective as a physical event
- 3) **Licensing of business models** from more developed countries serves as an 'insurance' for entrepreneurs in developing countries. The risk would already have been reduced and the business model

would be ready for re-purposing in a difference geography.  
Developed countries should be able to ***create mechanisms that serve as incentives*** to the business model owners.