



United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

Distr.: General
26 July 2017

Original: English

Trade and Development Board
Intergovernmental Group of Experts
on E-commerce and the Digital Economy
First session
Geneva, 4–6 October 2017
Item 2 of the provisional agenda
Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

Provisional agenda and annotations

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II. Annotations

Item 1 Election of officers

1. The Intergovernmental Group of Experts on E-commerce and the Digital Economy will elect a Chair and a Vice-Chair-cum-Rapporteur.

Item 2 Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

2. The Intergovernmental Group of Experts may wish to adopt the provisional agenda contained in chapter I of the provisional agenda and annotations.
3. It is proposed that the first plenary meeting, which will start at 10 a.m. on Wednesday, 4 October 2017, should be devoted to procedural matters (items 1 and 2 of



the provisional agenda) and introductory statements. The closing plenary meeting, on Friday, 6 October, will be devoted to the adoption of the report and the provisional agenda of the second session of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts to be held in April 2018 (item 4 of the provisional agenda). In view of the short duration of the session, the Vice-Chair-cum-Rapporteur will be authorized to complete the final report after closure of the session.

4. The remaining meetings, from 4 October (after the election of officers and general statements) to the morning of 6 October, can be devoted to substantive item 3 of the provisional agenda. If necessary, the adoption of the report may be postponed until the late afternoon of 6 October to allow for an informal working session to be held that afternoon.

Documentation

TD/B/EDE/1/1

Provisional agenda and annotations

Item 3

Discussion regarding the development dimension of e-commerce and the digital economy, addressing associated opportunities and challenges

5. The rapid development of the digital economy is creating opportunities, as well as challenges, for developing countries to engage in and benefit from e-commerce.

6. Opportunities that may arise for developing countries include reduced transaction costs; better access to customers at home and abroad; participation in global value chains; enhanced productivity, entrepreneurship, innovation and job creation in the digital sector; possibilities to connect rural and urban markets; benefits for consumers; and new ways to overcome barriers to business development.

7. Developing countries may face some of the following challenges: inadequate information and communications technology and industrial infrastructure and use; limited access to energy and unreliable and costly power supply; limited access to credit and lack of appropriate payment solutions; limited access to technology; lack of purchasing power and underdeveloped financial systems; concerns about job losses due to crowding out or automation; deteriorating trade balances; risk of market dominance by some firms; revenue losses; widening digital divides as the digital economy evolves; inadequate legal and regulatory frameworks; reliance on cash in society; and low levels of information and communications technology literacy, awareness and knowledge related to e-commerce among consumers, enterprises and Governments. Barriers can be particularly high for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises.

8. More comprehensive assistance is needed in support of capacity-building aimed at overcoming the aforementioned challenges. The eTrade for All initiative should have an important role to play in this regard.

9. In accordance with the terms of reference adopted by member States, the Intergovernmental Group of Experts will consider the following guiding questions at this first session:

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

(b) What can developing countries do to strengthen their physical and technology infrastructure?

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

10. To facilitate the round-table discussion, the Information Economy Report 2017: Digitalization, Trade and Development (forthcoming), as well as selected eTrade readiness assessments of the least developed countries, will be made available.

11. The Intergovernmental Group of Experts is expected to identify practical outcomes of the discussions.

Documentation

TD/B/EDE/1/2

Maximizing the development gains from e-commerce and the digital economy

Item 4

Provisional agenda for the second session of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on E-commerce and the Digital Economy

12. Acting in its capacity as the preparatory body for the second session, the Intergovernmental Group of Experts is expected to agree on the provisional agenda for its next session, which should be an outcome of the discussion on item 3 above.

Item 5

Adoption of the report of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on E-commerce and the Digital Economy

13. The Intergovernmental Group of Experts will adopt its report to the Trade and Development Commission.

Experts are requested to submit papers to the UNCTAD secretariat as soon as possible. For further information, please contact Torbjörn Fredriksson (torbjorn.fredriksson@unctad.org), Chief, Information and Communications Technology Analysis Section, Division of Technology and Logistics.