

Supporting the Involvement of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises in E-commerce

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E-commerce offers tremendous potential for small firms to access global markets, and many have already capitalized on the opportunity.

This success is far from universal: this session seeks to identify practical initiatives that can be taken to address the limited involvement of SMEs from developing countries in particular.

For small firms to be successful in e-commerce they must be able to "connect the dots" so that the product or service can find its way to the customer and payments can flow in the opposite direction. This simple equation works well in developed countries: firms generally do not have difficulty arranging for online payment solutions and have a range of delivery options available.

This is not the case in the majority of developing countries, where online payment solutions are practically unavailable and logistics services unreliable and expensive. Poor infrastructure and a lack of supporting business services are additional handicaps.

Small firms all face greater difficulty with e-commerce across borders: handling taxes and duties and returned goods can create major problems. And doing business with foreign customers poses additional challenges to create awareness and trust.

In this session we contrast the experience of SMEs in developed countries with those from elsewhere and we explore what initiatives can be taken to improve the use of e-commerce as a channel for economic development.

Questions to be addressed:

- How has e-commerce changed the nature of trade for small firms in developed countries?
- What conditions have helped to drive adoption of e-commerce by SMEs in developed countries?
- What difficulties in relation to e-commerce are shared equally by small firms wherever they are based?
- What parts of the e-commerce ecosystem are missing or highly under-developed or costly in developing countries?
- In what way can stakeholders work together to provide solutions?

Moderator: Ms. Arancha Gonzalez, Executive Director, ITC

Keynote Address:

H.E. Mr. Liam Fox, Secretary of State for International Trade, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Speakers:

- Ms. Angela Steen, EU Public Policy & Government Relations Director, Etsy
- Ms. Hanne Melin Olbe, Director Global Public Policy, eBay
- Ms. Berna Ozsar, Secretary General, World SME Forum
- Ms. Colette van der Ven, Associate, Sidley-Austin LLP
- Ms. Susan F. Stone, Director, Trade, Investment and Innovation Division, UN ESCAP
- Ms. Victoria Saue, Head of Legal and Compliance, e-Residency, Estonia