

Committee on Trade and Development Committee

DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME ON ELECTRONIC-COMMERCE IN THE COMMITTEE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT¹

1. Delegations have requested the Committee on Trade and Development (CTD) to continue its work on e-commerce. The suggested future work outlined below is an attempt to respond to that request. Any future work on e-commerce in the CTD should focus on development-specific issues. Issues that appear to fall under the mandates of the other subsidiary bodies of the WTO work programme on electronic commerce have therefore not been included in this list.² This programme of work is without prejudice to any decision taken at the 4th Ministerial Conference or in the General Council.

A. REGULAR MEETINGS OF THE CTD

2. First, in order to ensure continuity, electronic commerce could be a standing item on the agenda of each of the regular meetings of the CTD. Delegations would thereby know that issues with respect to e-commerce would be raised at each meeting.

3. Second, as the CTD has been designated as one of the four subsidiary bodies to carry out work on e-commerce under the WTO work programme on e-commerce, the Committee would continue to respond to requests from the General Council. The Committee would also continue to report back to the General Council on its work in the area of electronic commerce and development.

4. Third, the utility of seminars increases if their results are fed back into the regular work of the WTO. It would therefore be natural to report to the CTD from the various seminars held under its auspices. These reports could for example take the form of reports by the Chairman of the particular seminar or a report by the Chairman of the CTD on his own responsibility. The report would give brief overviews of the main subjects discussed at the seminars and the main conclusions drawn and could constitute a basis for further formal discussions on the topic in the CTD.

¹ This programme of work aims to consolidate:

- a) the illustrative list of points for which further study in the CTD has been proposed (Annex to document WT/COMTD/26),
- b) the cross-cutting issues identified by delegations at the General Council meeting on 8 May 2001 with respect to development,
- c) the sectoral issues identified by delegations at the General Council meeting on 8 May 2001 for the Committee on Trade and Development,
- d) issues raised in the seminar on e-commerce held under the auspices of the CTD on 14 June 2001,
- e) development-related issues raised in the dedicated discussion on cross-cutting issues of electronic commerce held under the auspices of the General Council on 15 June 2001, and
- f) issues raised at the informal consultation of the CTD held on 17 July 2001.

² The other subsidiary bodies being the Council for Trade in Goods, the Council for Trade in Services and the Council for Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights according to the WTO Work Programme on Electronic Commerce adopted by the General Council on 25 September 1998 (document WT/L/274).

5. Fourth, the show-casing of country experiences, including success-stories, have been called for and could be tied to a follow-up to the seminar on "Government Facilitation of E-commerce for Development"³. In order to continue to share country experiences, the CTD could invite one or several delegations (developing and/or developed) to present their experiences, either with respect to a particular aspect of e-commerce, or their general approach to e-commerce.

6. The CTD could also be a forum where delegations receive information on activities related to e-commerce and development in other agencies. The CTD could invite other international organizations and bilateral agencies to present what they are doing with respect to e-commerce in general and if they have any technical cooperation projects in the area in particular. Agencies could also be asked to indicate how they cooperate and coordinate with each other.

B. SEMINARS UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE CTD

7. In order to allow for a more thorough analytical and educational process, delegations have asked for additional seminars on e-commerce and development. Approximately one seminar a year could be envisaged under the auspices of the CTD. Possible themes for seminars include:

- **Revenue implications.** A seminar could be organized dealing with the question of the revenue implications of e-commerce. For example, people and agencies who have done work on the likely effects of electronic commerce on customs revenue in developing countries could be invited to present their work and reply to questions.
- **Effects on competitiveness.** A seminar could be organized to respond to the questions of: How can developing country enterprises compete in e-commerce? What will be the impact of e-commerce on domestic producers in specific sectors, in particular on the development of small- and medium-sized enterprises in developing countries? How will supply and demand for particular goods and services be affected by electronic commerce on a disaggregated level? What are the substitution effects of e-commerce in trade?
- **Physical infrastructure needs and development.** A seminar could be organized on physical infrastructure for e-commerce dealing with the questions of: What are developing countries doing and what should they do with respect to infrastructure development? What needs and possibilities exist for technical assistance in the area of infrastructure development? How can developing countries ensure access to infrastructure and technology, including transfer of technology?
- **Human infrastructure needs and development.** A seminar could be organized on human infrastructure for e-commerce dealing with the questions of: What are the human resource requirements to address the needs of developing countries in e-commerce? How can e-sources be used to address these needs, for example in education?

8. The above-mentioned themes are not necessarily topics for complete one-day seminars. For example, two might be combined into one seminar. In organizing the seminars, cooperation and cost-sharing could be sought from other related agencies as appropriate.

³ Held at the WTO under the auspices of the CTD on 14 June 2001. Most of the Power-Point presentations made at the seminar and some additional material are available on the development part of the WTO Website.