

Developing Countries Launch Roadmap for International Trade and Development Policy

- Ministers from developing countries gathered during UNCTAD's E-Commerce Week in Geneva, acknowledging the relevance of E-Commerce as a tool to narrow the digital divide.
- This is the first time a diverse group of developing economies, globally represented in UNCTAD and the WTO, present a comprehensive, long-term digital policy agenda.

April 25, 2017. Geneva, Switzerland. On the sidelines of UNCTAD's E-Commerce Week, the Group of Friends of E-Commerce for Development (FED), gathered for their first Ministerial Meeting to discuss what they foresee as the future of the conversation regarding E-Commerce and particularly its role as a tool to drive growth, narrow the digital divide and generate development solutions for developing and least-developed countries. In their first gathering, Ministers from FED member countries agreed to put forward a roadmap with seven key issues that they believe are the foundation for sustainable economic development and paved the way for the conversations held in Geneva, not only at UNCTAD but also at the WTO and this year's 11th Ministerial Meeting. *"The roadmap marks an important milestone on the road to the 11th WTO Ministerial in Buenos Aires in December and it will certainly help shape the debate on outcomes for the meeting – and beyond,"* said Susana Malcorra, Minister of Foreign Trade of Argentina. This roadmap includes the identification of strategies for e-commerce readiness; access to ICT infrastructure and services; trade logistics and trade facilitation; e-payment solutions; legal certainty and regulatory frameworks; capacity building and technical assistance; and access to financing.

Invited Ministers from other developing economies, not currently members of the group, supported the discussions and applauded the efforts that the FED Group has been engaged in to create awareness by sharing national experiences, listening to the concerns of least-developed countries and organizing seminars and technical activities to approach those concerns and translate them into opportunities.

The FEDs are a diverse, non-negotiating, group of WTO Members and UN Member States at different levels of development, with a common understanding and acceptance of the positive impact of E-Commerce and its versatility to create sustainable economic opportunities for all. The FEDs came together to build an inclusive and open space for discussion of e-commerce viewed from the development perspective. FEDs view e-commerce as an instrument that brings the digital, development and trade agendas together and as a tool for inclusive and sustainable economic growth. The FEDs membership currently consists of: Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Kenya, Nigeria, Mexico, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Uruguay.

"We are a diverse group of countries, and we all recognize that digitally-enabled trade is the present and the future of all economies as an essential foundation for sustainable economic development," Minister Malcorra added. *"We are committed to a forward-looking trade agenda with digitally-enabled trade at its heart,"* said Khurram-Dastgir Khan, Minister of Commerce of Pakistan. *"Pakistan knows that a comprehensive approach to leveraging digital technology for poverty alleviation and economic and social development is essential, and FEDs is an important element of our national commitment,"* Khan continued. *"Nigeria is implementing a bold plan for structural transformation to industrialize, diversify and modernize its economy, and we see digital technologies as the foundation for making that happen,"* said the Federal Minister for Industry, Trade and Investment of Nigeria, Mr. Okechukwu Enelamah. *"Ensuring that trade policy contributes to narrowing the digital divide and enabling MSMEs to succeed is an agenda that Africa increasingly embraces, and Nigeria is implementing this through the Smart Nigeria Digital Economy Project"* Enelamah concluded.