E-commerce, digital economy & policymaking support for sustainable development

by ICTSD for eTrade for all
Q. Would you like to tell us how ICTSD's work and activities to advance sustainable development through trade-related policymaking support touch upon e-commerce and the digital economy?

R. ICTSD acts as a catalyst in policy development: convening policymakers and stakeholders to better assess and advocate for policies that advance sustainable development through digital transformation.

ICTSD seeks to create change within the international trading system by identifying and addressing problems, bottlenecks, and relevant policy discussions with actual or potential impact on sustainable development, and convening relevant stakeholders and experts, and introducing policy-relevant research to advance policy solutions to these challenges.

ICTSD's methodology empowers stakeholders to build the critical links between emerging research, peer learning, expert input, and the development of national, regional and multilateral policies.

Q. According to ICTSD, what are the key challenges that developing countries will have to tackle in order to fully reap the benefits of e-commerce for sustainable development?

R. Developing trade policy frameworks that respond to sustainable development objectives at multiple levels is a major challenge for all countries.

The potential gains for developing countries in the e-commerce domain are significant. It is not just digitisation and the increasingly dense value chains, but the need of making those realities compatible with sustainable development challenges that pose a challenge.

A key element in facing this challenge is catching up on knowledge, and implementing structural-regulatory reforms that allow for the creation of sustainable enabling environments.

These complicated challenges can no longer be addressed exclusively at the national level or in isolation. They require international cooperation frameworks, political will and an overall sense of purpose and direction that can strengthen domestic, regional, and international policies. In doing so, developing countries may engage in domestic reform, and international trade negotiations consistent with their policy objectives.
Q. What prompted your organisation to join a multi-stakeholder partnership such as “eTrade for all” and what are your expectations out of it?

R. eTrade for all is an opportunity to share experiences with other like-minded organisations and individuals who believe in the power of economic transformation for development. The collaborative problem solving approach of eTrade for all dialogues facilitates experience sharing and provides a powerful platform for policy discussion.

Q. Is there something else you would like to share with the “eTrade for all” family?

R. Our work takes place on three levels:

- the global leadership level through bodies such as the G20 (Trade and Investment Working Group activities). In the past few years we have worked intensively in each of these areas to build global focus and capacity on the transformative power of e-commerce for sustainable development and we invite other members and stakeholders to join us in these efforts.

- national and regional level multis-stakeholder dialogues in Africa and Asia (East Africa, Southern Africa, Southeast Asia);

- work at the WTO (E15 Initiative and WTO Paths Forward initiatives) and in regional trade agreements (RTA Exchange);