

**UNCTAD Regional Conference on
ICT Strategies for Competitiveness and Development: Promoting E-business,
Trade Facilitation and Logistics in Latin America and the Caribbean**

Rio de Janeiro, 25-27 November 2003

**Rio Declaration
on ICT Strategies for Competitiveness and Development**

We, the Government representatives of Latin America and the Caribbean concerned with the development and implementation of policies in the field of information and communication technologies (ICT), on the occasion of the conference organized by UNCTAD on these matters in Rio de Janeiro on 27 November 2003,

Aware of the importance of realizing the full potential of ICT to enhance the productivity of our enterprises, to facilitate international trade and investment flows, to enhance the effectiveness of trade and transport facilitation, and, in general, to act as an engine of economic development and social progress,

Noting that while some countries in our region have been able to make progress in the adoption of ICT and e-business policies and practices, wide gaps exist both inside our societies and between them and the more advanced regions of the world in terms of access to and usage of ICT, and that efforts should be undertaken to reduce these gaps and to facilitate the participation of our societies and enterprises in the emerging information economy,

Recognizing that in order for our economies to fully benefit from ICT, existing national, regional and international development strategies and policies should take into account ICT-related issues, and that these should imply actions addressing a wide range of economic, social, technological, infrastructural, legal and educational issues,

Acknowledging that ICT strategies for development should be firmly grounded in national economic realities and interests while at the same time drawing on regional experiences and international best practices and respect and promoting international standards,

Realizing that Governments have a central role to play in addressing public-policy issues such as the development of a legal and regulatory environment facilitating e-business and ensuring that the opportunities of the information economy are equally accessible to all, particularly to underprivileged and vulnerable groups and communities,

Recognizing the leading role that the private sector can play in the development of ICT and e-business and that the adoption of ICT and e-business across our economies will be rendered more effective through an approach that relies on partnerships with all relevant stakeholders in civil society, academia and the public and private sectors,

Considering that the international aspects of the development of the information economy should be addressed in a manner that is consistent with the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations, including the sovereign equality of States,

Considering that policies aimed at promoting the adoption of ICT and e-business by the enterprises of Latin America and the Caribbean could be a major factor in achieving the objective of putting ICT at the service of development and that they should therefore receive particular attention in international and regional cooperation efforts,

Aware of the importance of international cooperation in this area and appreciating the work being carried out in UNCTAD and in other global and regional forums to promote ICT and e-business for economic and social development,

We hereby express our commitment to enhancing our cooperation in the area of ICT for development and to taking action to:

- (1) Include in our national economic and social development strategies measures to promote the development of ICT and e-business. Such ICT for development strategies should be established through a process involving all relevant stakeholders, while at the same time generating an environment of effective competition among the private-sector players involved.
- (2) Actively participate in international initiatives and processes related to the development of the information economy, in order to ensure that the interests of all countries are taken into account and that the principles of legality, equality, interoperability, non-discrimination and transparency are respected in the definition of the technical and regulatory framework of operation of the global information economy – for, example in aspects such as international interconnection costs.
- (3) Optimize connectivity among major information networks by encouraging the creation and development of regional ICT backbones and Internet exchange points, so as to reduce interconnection costs and broaden network access.
- (4) Take the necessary actions to eliminate any unilateral and discriminatory restrictions contrary to international law that are applied to the acquisition and free use of technologies and equipments available in the market, as an essential pre-requisite for the promotion of investment, the creation of technological and logistical infrastructure and the economic growth of developing countries, particularly the least developed countries. These restrictions limit the full integration of these countries, the development of global e-business and the application of national strategies and policies for development.
- (5) Pay particular attention to the needs of developing countries, least developed countries, small island developing States, landlocked countries and highly indebted poor countries so that viable solutions can be found to ensure the effective participation of these countries in the information economy,
- (6) Work towards the achievement of an outcome for the World Summit on the Information Society that gives adequate treatment to the implications of ICT and e-business for the economic prospects of developing countries.
- (7) Put in place measures to facilitate affordable access to ICT for all citizens, particularly underprivileged and vulnerable groups and communities, facilitating the development of local capacities through, inter alia, free, open-source, and

proprietary software, encouraging the adoption of open standards and, whenever feasible, establishing a competitive environment for the provision of ICT and e-business-related goods and services.

- (8) Support small and medium-sized enterprises in their adoption of ICT and e-business practices. Specific incentives and support should be considered in areas such as financial support to ICT and e-business projects and training. The needs of SMEs should also be particularly considered when developing the on-line delivery of government services for businesses.
- (9) Adapt our legal and regulatory frameworks in order to accommodate e-commerce and e-business practices, to protect privacy, address security concerns and generate trust in the practice of e-business among enterprises and consumers, and to prevent the use of information resources and technologies for criminal or terrorist purposes that could affect both e-commerce and the overall trade of any country; create a legal framework conducive to the application of modern ICT-based trade and transport procedures, particularly with regard to the introduction and promotion of the use of electronic transport documents.
- (10) Promote the benefits of international trade and the use of e-business, and promote the use of e-business models in developing countries.
- (11) Promote the use of ICT in the relationship between citizens and Governments as a means of improving transparency and facilitating their democratic participation.
- (12) Provide incentives and assistance to aid the growth of SMEs in the ICT industry, as well as SME-entry into e-business, to stimulate economic growth and job creation as an element of a strategy for poverty eradication through wealth creation.
- (13) Work to ensure that the international discussions and decision-making processes regarding Internet governance take place in a framework that respects the sovereignty of all States and that is fully representative of their interests and those of other relevant stakeholders.
- (14) Enhance public awareness of the relevance of ICT and e-business for economic development and increase human capacity in the field of ICT through education and training.
- (15) Leverage ICT to improve trade and transport facilitation in areas such as Customs administration and other trade-related government services; to enhance the connection between national, regional and international transport and information networks; and to promote the establishment of e-portals in the logistics sector and regional initiatives in the area of technology, transport and related infrastructures, so as to ensure connectivity and competitiveness in globalized trade and production processes.
- (16) Ensure compliance with international security requirements through the use of available and affordable ICT and promote the establishment of partnerships between shippers, carriers and national and international organizations to this end.

- (17) Create the necessary conditions for the development and application of ICT-based management information systems in national and regional transport and logistics companies, as part of the strategy to ensure their competitiveness and development in international markets.
- (18) Develop basic statistical indicators of ICT usage by businesses and households and participate in international initiatives to ensure their comparability, so that progress in the development of ICT and e-business can be monitored and performance benchmarked.
- (19) Facilitate the development of a dynamic information economy by encouraging international cooperation. In this regard, concrete proposals to facilitate the participation of all developing countries in the global information society and economy could be considered at UNCTAD XI.
- (20) Encourage cooperation among Latin American and Caribbean countries and with other developing countries in order to facilitate South-South technology transfer and the exchange of information and experiences regarding the development of ICT and e-business.