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A unified voice is needed for progress on digital trade

As the UN's E-Commerce Week Geneva and the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting 2018 commence, the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) United Kingdom calls for a cohesive voice from across the developed and emerging markets.

To make progress on digital trade over the next two weeks, governments from both developed and emerging markets should work together on digital trade *and* development priorities.

The barriers to digital trade are well known; mis-aligned national regulations, poor infrastructure, low use of electronic payments, undeveloped legal systems, low purchasing power, lack of enforcement capability and low levels of digital skills. Many of these issues can be solved by better aligning development assistance with digital trade priorities. The policies, frameworks and resources exist to address all of these issues if governments can work together to mobilise them. This would be a pragmatic solution to the issues that have stalled progress for the last 20 years.

The prize for doing so is enormous:

- Intra-African trade is one of the lowest of any region at 10%, yet by 2030 Africa will have 1 billion people under 25 years old.
- It's estimated that digital trade could add \$1 trillion to collective Commonwealth GDP, lifting millions out of poverty across 53 countries.
- 4 of 5 digital businesses are run by women – digital trade fosters gender equality in trade; we need to accelerate take-up.
- At a fraction of its global potential, an additional 47% of the global population – currently not online - could have access to global markets via the internet – further expanding digital trade worth \$25 trillion.

Digital trade increases financial inclusion, tackles gender inequality and enables SMEs to access global markets and export opportunities. These are all national trade and development priorities and UN Sustainable Development Goals. As discussions on digital platforms take place at the UN this week, governments that have blocked progress on digital trade in the past will be tested.

Chris Southworth, ICC United Kingdom states: *"Businesses want platforms where they can buy and sell without limitation. Government action is critical to removing impediments to electronic commerce. The ICC United Kingdom advocates updated frameworks for cross-border consumer protection, data privacy, and cyber security, as well as measures for ensuring cross-border data flows such as those proposed at the WTO last December."*

Olubunmi Osuntuyi, Secretary General, ICC Nigeria states: *"Digital trade platforms are an important part of the jigsaw to improve the digital trade environment in*

Africa, governments can align e-commerce policies so businesses can trade more easily across borders.”

Emmanuel Doni-Kwame, Secretary General, ICC Ghana states: *“Regional integration is a fundamental pillar for Africa to realize her development aspirations as articulated in the SDGs and the African Union Agenda 2063.*

ICC Ghana commends the African Union on its drive for a Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA), free movement, and single air transport market.

Digital trade can also be a tool for boosting intra-regional trade, as demonstrated by MercadoLibre – the largest online marketplace in Latin America –, which helps foster intra-regional trade by connecting buyers and sellers in this region, and providing online payment services for the regional businesses that do not have bank accounts.”

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About the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) United Kingdom

ICC is the world's largest business organisation representing 6.5 million companies from all sectors and company sizes in over 130 countries. We are the only business organisation with UN Observer Status. ICC United Kingdom works with British business groups worldwide to represent the voice of British business at inter-governmental level - the United Nations, G20 and World Trade Organization.
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