

## Electronic Commerce for Developing Countries: A Special ITU Development Initiative

a report by

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### Introduction

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Electronic Commerce for Developing Countries (EC-DC) Project addresses one of the challenges faced by developing countries in the application of new technologies. In collaboration with partners from both developed and developing countries from the public and private sectors, the ITU is assisting developing countries to acquire and use electronic commerce technologies.

Launched in March 1998 at the ITU World Telecommunication Development Conference in Valletta, Malta, EC-DC became an activity of the ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) in September 1998 and now forms the framework of the BDT strategy in electronic commerce. With seed funds provided by revenues generated by ITU World and Regional TELECOM events, EC-DC enables developing countries to participate in electronic commerce.

### Objectives

As an executing agency for implementing projects under the United Nations (UN) development system or other funding arrangements, the ITU is assisting developing countries through activities carried out within the following objectives of the EC-DC Project.

#### Infrastructure Development

This is intended to provide assistance in building the soft and hard infrastructure for the provision of secure electronic payment, secure transactions and trust services to multiple independent businesses in the community, region or country (EC-DC Center). Through EC-DC pilot projects, the ITU provides technical assistance in:

- co-ordinating the planning, design, development and implementation of electronic commerce projects;
- performing feasibility studies to determine the technical and financial requirements and

specifications for building the electronic commerce infrastructure; and

- developing approaches to enable a cost-effective integration of electronic commerce into available information and communication technology infrastructure.

#### Capacity Building and Technology Transfer

This is to provide mechanisms for developing skills in electronic commerce to facilitate the transfer of this technology. Thus, developing countries can acquire the skills needed to run and operate electronic commerce services. Through the organisation of training workshops, the ITU:

- provides an overview of electronic commerce issues and how they are related to the use of this technology;
- identifies and explains the technology requirements for providing trust, network payment, transaction and security services; and
- discusses electronic commerce technology components and how they can be integrated in to the available information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure and services in developing countries.

#### National Policies and Raising Awareness

Even though technology plays an important role in the development of electronic commerce, the environment and legal framework needs to support these types of activities. Within the framework of the EC-DC project, the ITU:

- assists decision-makers to understand the need for adopting policies that will enhance the development of electronic commerce infrastructure and services;
- recommends the adoption of policies that will enable electronic commerce to have an important role in the national infrastructure and economic development strategy; and
- Raises public awareness on electronic commerce issues and technology.