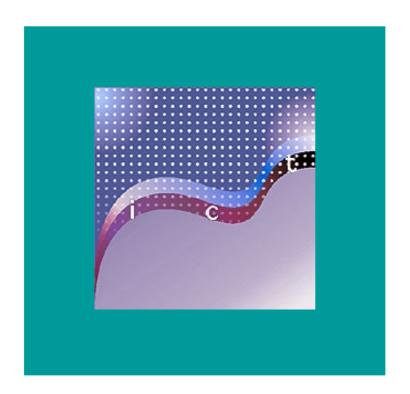
United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

E-COMMERCE AND DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2003

Internet edition prepared by the UNCTAD secretariat

COMPLETE VERSION

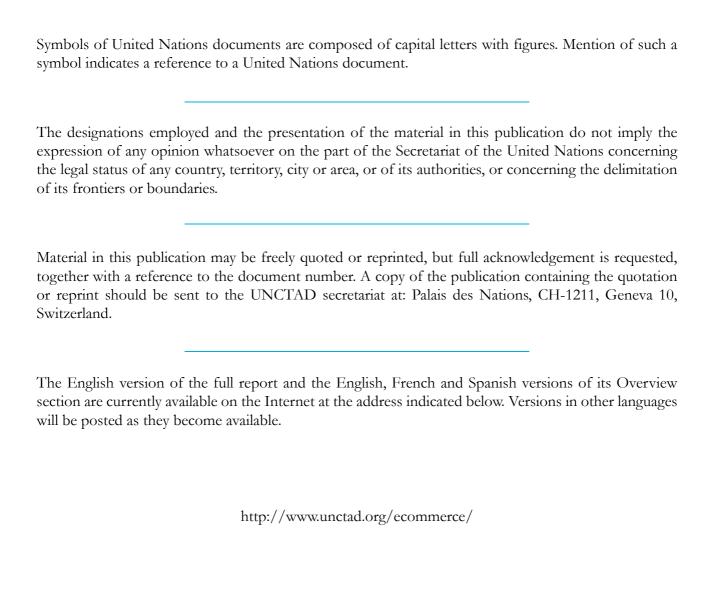




UNITED NATIONS New York and Geneva, 2003

UNCTAD/SIDTE/ECB/2003/1

Note



UNITED NATIONS PUBLICATION

UNCTAD/SDTE/ECB/2003/1

Sales No. E.03.II.D.30

ISBN 92-1-112602-9

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Foreword

Few manifestations of the power of human creativity have so extensively and so quickly transformed society as the rise of the Internet and other information and communication technologies (ICT) over the past decade. Dramatic as the changes may be, the process of assimilating and learning from them has only just begun.

ICT can improve education, health, governance and trade. They are dramatically changing social and economic relationships and interactions, giving people, businesses and governments the tools with which to devise more productive, more inclusive and more development-friendly societies and economies. For the moment, however, we are still grappling with the painful reality that those who stand to benefit most from the advances of the ICT revolution are also those who have the least access to the technology behind it.

The United Nations is strongly committed to doing its part to enhance the ability of developing countries to realize the full potential of ICT in stimulating and supporting development. We are working with Governments and partners in industry, civil society and academia to bring ICT applications to education, health, natural disaster management and many other key realms of human endeavour and well-being. E-commerce and e-business are among the most promising of those applications, capable of offering new ways to participate in global markets, new possibilities for diversifying national economies, and new and better jobs for young people.

This third edition of the E-Commerce and Development Report, published by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, identifies some of the implications that the growth of the digital economy may have for developing countries. It aims to provide practitioners and policy makers with a better understanding of the options available to them in leading sectors of developing-country economies. It is also meant to contribute to the debates at the World Summit on the Information Society and efforts to create a truly inclusive information society that serves and empowers all people. Above all, if it helps developing countries to adopt and take advantage of new digital technologies, this report will have served its purpose.

Kofi A. Annan

Secretary-General of the United Nations

Acknowledgments

The *E-Commerce and Development Report 2003* was prepared under the overall direction of Zhongzhou Li and, starting in May 2003, John Burley, who succeeded him as the head of UNCTAD's Division for Services Infrastructure for Development and Trade Efficiency (SITE). The team responsible for the preparation of the report was led by Yusuf Kalindaga, Officer-in-Charge of the Electronic Commerce Branch of SITE. The team included the following UNCTAD staff members: Cécile Barayre, Dimo Calovski, Angel González Sanz, Rouben Indjikian, Yutian Meng, Carlos Moreno, Marta Pérez Cusó and Susan Teltscher. Pilar Borque Fernández and Mohammed Muwaabe provided administrative support.

Diego Oyarzun designed the cover and formatted the charts, and the text was edited by Talvi Laev.

The UNCTAD team would like to recognize the contribution of the following consultants who provided inputs for various chapters: Martha Gilbert, Ethan Katsh, Thaweesak Koanantakool, Robin Mansell, Colin Rule, Donald Siegel and Steven Weber.

The team also wishes to thank the following individuals for the information, comments and feedback they provided regarding various aspects of the report: Jean-François Baylocq, Soumitra Dutta, Markus Fischer, Titus Gitau, Colin Howard, Bruno Lanvin, Girish Minocha, Matti Pohjola, Morten Scholer, Sanjit Sinha, Assefa Tigneh and Graham Vickery.

Research assistance was provided by Rocío Rico Cantillo during her internship with UNCTAD.

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