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NATIONAL ICT POLICY REVIEW AND E-COMMERCE STRATEGY FOR BOTSWANA

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NOTE

The Division on Technology and Logistics of UNCTAD (DTL) carries out policy-oriented analytical work on the development implications of information and communications technologies (ICTs) and the digital economy, and is responsible for the biennial production of the Information Economy Report. UNCTAD promotes international dialogue on issues related to ICTs for development, such as e-commerce and entrepreneurship in the technology sector, and contributes to building developing countries' capacities to design and implement relevant policies and programmes in these areas.

UNCTAD's national ICT Policy Reviews aim to support accelerated economic growth and development through effective diagnostics, national assessments, strategy development and policy advice to countries requesting technical assistance in areas such as e-commerce and ICT planning.

PREFACE

Information and communications technologies (ICTs) have become critical drivers of productivity, innovation and growth. They also have the potential to enable more inclusive development and support job creation in countries that articulate supportive policy and regulatory frameworks and are able to invest in the physical and human capital needed to close the digital divide.

In spite of the rapid evolution and growing complexity of digital technologies, e-commerce remains a basic but essential application for the development impact of ICTs through its effects on business and industrial competitiveness, the opportunities it opens to access new markets and the emergence of entirely new products and services.

E-commerce has been expanding rapidly in many developing countries. While known primarily for its ability to serve as a channel to market and to empower entrepreneurs and enterprises, e-commerce can also play an important role in helping developing countries grow trade and industry, boost productive capacity and facilitate integration into global value and supply chains. E-commerce fosters the flow of digitalized content and information, goods, services, and data, which can support the growth of a knowledge-based economy. As the world continues to grapple with the COVID-19 pandemic, ICTs and e-commerce are also playing a role in supporting countries' post-pandemic recovery efforts and helping them "build back better."

UNCTAD supports countries in formulating their national e commerce strategy through comprehensive diagnostics, policy advice and customized strategy development. This ICT Policy Review and National E-Commerce Strategy of Botswana, prepared at the request of the Ministry of Investment, Trade and Industry, aims at leveraging Botswana's strengths while tackling the bottlenecks and challenges that impede the expansion of e-commerce in the country. The publication lays out five strategic thrusts and recommendations for strengthening Botswana's performance in key policy areas.

To support Botswana in achieving its Vision 2036, NDP11 and the SDGs, the ICTPR e-commerce strategy model was expanded to take into account priority areas of Botswana's development agenda, including growing the country's export markets, private-sector development, citizen empowerment, job creation, productive capacity, global competitiveness, diversification and building a knowledge based economy.

On behalf of UNCTAD, I would like to express our appreciation for the excellent collaboration of MITI and its partners on the strategy. The strategy development has also benefitted from partnerships and cooperation with the World Bank, UNDP, ITU, ITC and private-sector research partners. My hope is that the analysis and recommendations contained in the report will make a valuable contribution to Botswana's efforts at leveraging e-commerce for economic growth and inclusive prosperity.

Isabelle Durant
Deputy Secretary General of UNCTAD

FOREWORD

Botswana's Vision 2036 lays out a transformational agenda that defines our aspirations and goals as a people. It includes transforming Botswana from an upper-middle-income country to a high-income country by 2036. It also includes a compelling vision of what our future looks like. In that future, Botswana has chosen a path of prosperity, one that not only moves us toward prosperity as a nation but aligns with the SDGs and our vision for inclusive growth and prosperity that benefits all of our people.

Our Vision 2036 also paves the way for navigating a transformational path that will enable Botswana to diversify its economy and eliminate the barriers that have mired our businesses in low competitiveness and our industry in low productivity. By overcoming these challenges, we aspire to become a nation impassioned and driven by a culture of excellence, with a top-performing workforce, businesses and industries operating at full throttle, efficiency and productive capacity at the apex of global excellence, standards of quality, competitiveness, learning and innovation.

Botswana has long recognized that information and communications technologies (ICTs) can play a critical role in the achievement of this vision. Over the past few decades, beginning with the creation in the 1990s of Botswana's Government Computer Bureau and the country's first compelling ICT roadmap, the 2007 National Information and Communications Technology Policy (also known as Maitlaimo), Botswana has laid the ICT foundations for executing its enduring transformational vision.

This includes investing in building its ICT infrastructure, liberalizing the telecommunications sector, enacting key laws to create a favourable ICT legal and regulatory environment, launching IT modernization in its public sector, mounting major e-government initiatives, launching population-wide ICT education and literacy efforts and boosting the capacity to harness ICT technologies to spur sustainable economic development, bring life-enriching information and services to its people and catalyze diversification of the economy.

Today, Botswana is ready to harness ICTs to empower businesses, grow the private sector and support the accelerated growth of trade and industry. The convergence of the Internet with commerce has given rise to the rapid growth of e-commerce among developed and developing countries alike. In addition, in the past year, e-commerce has played an important role in reducing the infection rates and risks to life endangered by the 2020 global COVID-19 pandemic and supporting the post-pandemic economic recovery.

Committed to creating an environment that supports e-commerce, Botswana's Ministry of Investment, Trade and Industry (MITI) requested technical assistance from UNCTAD in developing a national e-commerce strategy. The strategy described in this publication is a comprehensive strategic planning work based on a thorough diagnostic of Botswana's e-commerce landscape and five key strategic thrusts aligned with Botswana's Vision 2036. I would like to commend UNCTAD for giving us a strategy that is comprehensive yet user-friendly. It provides a solid foundation to build on and is a very important component of the Botswana Government's current policy for driving post-COVID-19 recovery and transformation. Botswana stands to benefit considerably from the strategy. I would like to thank UNCTAD for producing this invaluable document.

Mmusi Kgafela
Minister of Investment, Trade and Industry
Government of Botswana

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ACRONYMS

ADSL	asymmetric digital subscriber line
AfCFTA	Africa Continental Free Trade Agreement
AGOA	African Growth and Opportunity Act
B2B	business-to-business
B2C	business-to-consumer
B2G	business-to-government
B2P	business-to-people
BAB	Bankers Association of Botswana
BCCARO	Botswana Consumer Center for Advocacy, Research and Orientation
BDC	Botswana Development Corporation
BISS	Botswana Interbank Settlement System
BITC	Botswana's Investment and Trade Centre
BITRI	Botswana Institute for Technology Research and Innovation
BIUST	Botswana International University of Science and Technology
BoB	Bank of Botswana
BOBS	Botswana Bureau of Standards
BOCRA	Botswana Communications Regulatory Authority
BoFiNet	Botswana Fibre Networks
BOTEC	Botswana Technology Centre
BTA	Botswana Telecommunications Authority
BTC	Botswana Telecommunications Corporation
BTCL	Botswana Telecommunications Corporation Limited
BURS	Botswana Unified Revenue Service
C2C	customer-to-customer
CEDA	Citizen Entrepreneurial Development Agency
CEEP	Citizen Economic Empowerment Policy
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
CPMI	Committee on Payments and Market Infrastructures
DIT	Department of Information Technology
EASSy	Eastern Africa Submarine Cable System
ECHB	Electronic Clearing House Botswana

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