



Iraq eTrade Readiness Assessment



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NOTE

Within the UNCTAD Division on Technology and Logistics, the ICT Policy Section carries out policy-oriented analytical work on the development implications of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and e-commerce. It is responsible for the preparation of the Digital Economy Report (DER) as well as thematic studies on ICT for Development.

The ICT Policy Section promotes international dialogue on issues related to ICTs for development and contributes to building developing countries' capacities to measure the information economy and to design and implement relevant policies and legal frameworks. It also monitors the global state of e-commerce legislation (unctad.org/cyberlawtracker). Since 2016, the Section has coordinated a multi-stakeholders' initiative entitled eTrade for all (etradeforall.org), which aims to improve the ability of developing countries, particularly least developed countries (LDCs), to use and benefit from e-commerce. The initiative is also behind the new eTrade for Women program, launched in 2019, which aims to promote a more gender-inclusive digital economy, in particular through its network of Ambassadors. These digital entrepreneurs are active in all developing regions and contribute to capacity building, mentoring and awareness raising activities for more inclusive gender policies.

Reference to companies and their activities should not be construed as an endorsement by UNCTAD of those companies or their activities.

The following symbols have been used in the tables:

Two dots (..) indicate that data are not available or are not separately reported. Rows in tables have been omitted in those cases where no data are available for any of the elements in the row;

A dash (-) indicates that the item is equal to zero or its value is negligible;

Reference to "dollars" (US\$) means United States of America dollars, unless otherwise indicated;

Details and percentages in tables do not necessarily add up to the totals because of rounding.

Reference to "IQD" means Iraqi Dinar. For the purpose of this report: IQD 1 = US\$ 0.00084 (6 September 2019).



PREFACE

The eTrade for all Initiative, launched at the fourteenth Ministerial Conference of UNCTAD in July 2016, is a practical example of how to harness the digital economy in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, notably Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 5, 8, 9, and 17. The initiative seeks to raise awareness, enhance synergies, and increase the scale of existing and new efforts by the development community to strengthen the ability of developing countries to engage in and benefit from e-commerce by addressing seven relevant policy areas:

- E-commerce readiness assessment and strategy formulation
- ICT infrastructure and services
- Trade logistics and trade facilitation
- Payment solutions
- Legal and regulatory frameworks
- E-commerce skills development
- Access to financing

As part of the initiative, demand-driven assessments are envisaged to provide a basic analysis of the current e-commerce situation in the countries concerned, and to identify opportunities and barriers. The resulting reports will serve as valuable inputs to these countries' involvement in various discussions related to e-commerce and digital trade, such as in the context of the UNCTAD Intergovernmental Group of Experts on e-commerce and the Digital Economy.

It may furthermore help developing countries and Least Developed Countries (LDCs) to identify areas in which they could benefit from assistance by partners of eTrade for all.

The Iraq eTrade Readiness Assessment is the first assessment conducted by UNCTAD in a non-LDC country, adding to the twenty-five assessments conducted by UNCTAD in LDCs since 2017. It follows an enhanced methodology, including an in-depth contribution by the Universal Postal Union (UPU) as a key partner in this assessment.

With much appreciation, I would like to acknowledge the International Islamic Trade Finance Corporation for funding the eTrade Readiness Assessment of Iraq as well as for being a close partner within the eTrade for all initiative. With the eTrade for all partners, UNCTAD is committed to supporting Iraq in their resolve to harness the potential of e-commerce for development.

Shamika N. Sirimanne

Director, Division on Technology and Logistics, UNCTAD



As a founding partner of UNCTAD's eTrade for all initiative, the Universal Postal Union (UPU) attaches great importance to the eTrade Readiness Assessment process as an important tool to build an e-commerce enabling environment both nationally and globally.

Iraq's eTrade Readiness Assessment is an important milestone in the UPU's contribution to the eTrade for all initiative. For the first time, the UPU has assessed the national post's payment (PRE) and digital readiness (DRE) for e-commerce at the same time. Combined with the UPU's postal Operational Readiness for E-commerce (ORE) assessments, this new approach has provided a holistic and complete diagnosis of the situation and role of the Post in Iraq as a key partner in the development of e-commerce from payment to delivery.

While recognizing that the postal network, with its vast geographical coverage and multi-dimensional services, is well placed to support e-commerce, the eTrade Readiness Assessment identifies a number of challenges for the postal sector in meeting key requirements for the development of e-commerce in the country.

In order to respond to the identified challenges, the report makes several recommendations that, if implemented, will enable the Iraqi Post to become a main actor in further e-commerce facilitation, especially in promoting SMEs engagement in e-commerce.

This assessment should be followed by actions and the UPU looks forward to working closely with UNCTAD and interested development partners to support the implementation of the report's recommendations.

Siva Somasundram

Director, Directorate of Policy,
Regulations and Markets (DPRM),
International Bureau, Universal Postal Union



FOREWORD

E-commerce has great potential to become a powerful driver of economic growth, inclusive trade, and job creation in the member countries of the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) Group by offering the opportunity to access wider markets without the constraint of having to establish and maintain physical presence. However, some of our countries still face numerous challenges to develop their online presence, due to the unavailability of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), access to the required skills and financial support, limited infrastructure and adequate regulatory framework.

In this context, at the International Islamic Trade Finance Corporation (ITFC) - member of the IsDB Group - we consider that digitalization is now the future of trade, and one of our strategic focus in ITFC is to support our member countries to get the enabling environment for e-trade. Since 2017, ITFC has adopted a new model that goes beyond financing trade into building the capacities to meet the critical market needs of our member countries.

One of our member countries, Iraq, has recently entered into a new phase of post-conflict reconstruction. In line with its 2030 Vision driven by digital transformation, ITFC, through its flagship program Aid for Trade Initiative for the Arab States (AFTIAS), partnered with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and Universal Postal Union (UPU) to assess the readiness of post-conflict Iraq to engage in and benefit from e-commerce. Through UNCTAD's eTrade Readiness Assessments, developing countries can take stock of their ICT capabilities and design a strategy to tackle challenges to and bottlenecks in the growth of e-commerce and the digital economy.

The eTrade Readiness Assessment of Iraq aims to increase national actions (policies and programs) that will help raise its readiness and capacity to engage in and benefit from e-commerce; grant enhanced access to technical cooperation opportunities available among eTrade for all partners and leverage possible venture opportunities by eTrade for all partner members.

This UNCTAD assessment provides a roadmap for developing e-commerce in Iraq and supports the government's goals to upgrade ICT infrastructure, build digital trust by improving the legal framework and support e-government initiatives.

In this regard, I would like to sincerely thank UNCTAD for putting together this significant contribution to the evidence base for supporting digital development in Iraq.

I would like to confirm that ITFC is committed to supporting its member countries' trade-led development efforts, including leveraging technology for better trade.

Eng. Hani Salem Sonbol

Chief Executive Officer

International Islamic Trade Finance Corporation

Chairman, Aid for Trade Initiative for the Arab States (AFTIAS) Program



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