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Chair's summary of the fifth meeting of the Working Group on Measuring E-commerce and the Digital Economy[1]

Summary

In this document, prepared by the Chair of the Working Group on Measuring E-commerce and the Digital Economy, a summarized account is given of discussions during the fifth meeting of the Working Group, held at the Palais des Nations in Geneva on 11 and 12 December 2024.

The Working Group discussed progress in electronic commerce (e-commerce) and digital economy measurement by international organizations, the measurement of the value of e-commerce, non-survey–based measurement of e-commerce and the digital economy, and related capacity-building. Based on the discussions, the present Chair's summary proposes possible topics for future meetings of the Working Group, for the consideration of and decision by the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on E-commerce and the Digital Economy at its eighth session.

[1] This document summarizes the discussions held during the fifth meeting of the Working Group on Measuring E-commerce and the Digital Economy. It does not necessarily reflect the views of the UNCTAD secretariat or its officials or member States. Mention of any firm or licensed process does not imply the endorsement of the United Nations.

I. Opening

1. The fifth meeting of the Working Group on Measuring E-commerce and the Digital Economy was held in Geneva on 11 and 12 December 2024. Annex I to this summary contains an attendance list and annex II presents a list of knowledge resources shared during the meeting.

2. At the opening plenary, the Working Group elected the Deputy Director of the Business Statistics Division of the Singapore Department of Statistics[2] as its Chair. The Deputy Commissioner General of the Jamaica Tax Administration[3] was elected Vice-Chair-cum-Rapporteur.

3. After the election of officers, the Chair advised the Working Group that the results of the meeting would be reported to the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on E-commerce and the Digital Economy at its eighth session in May 2025, in the form of a Chair's summary to be finalized after the fifth meeting of the Working Group.

4. The Working Group adopted an agenda, as follows:

1. Election of officers.
2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work.
3. Progress in measuring e-commerce and digital economy work by relevant international organizations.
4. Measuring the value of e-commerce.
5. Non-survey–based measurement of e-commerce and the digital economy.
6. Building capacities for measuring e-commerce and the digital economy.
7. Topics for future consideration by the Working Group.
8. Adoption of the Chair's summary.

5. The Director of the Statistics Service of UNCTAD, in her opening remarks, noted that the digital economy was not easily identifiable in current economic statistics and it was therefore difficult to quantify the benefits and costs in developing countries. The outcomes of the Summit of the Future held in September 2024 mentioned data and statistics nearly 90 times, underscoring their critical role. States had committed to harnessing technology and data in order to anticipate risks, seize opportunities and manage uncertainty, and noted that capacities and standards for digital systems, networks and data were essential in order to facilitate trade. High-quality, consistent and internationally comparable data were critical in tracking progress, targeting interventions and accelerating sustainable development, and the Director highlighted the Global Digital Compact in this regard. She stated that the United Nations Statistical Commission would be invited to endorse the draft update of the System of National Accounts in 2025, which would provide guidance on capturing elements of the digital economy, offering tools such as supply-use tables in order to ensure more informed policies on consumer welfare, digital divides and the enablers of and obstacles to participation in digital trade and the digital economy. Data and the digital transformation were as high as ever on the global agenda, yet measurement remained a challenge and there was a high level of demand for training and technical assistance in the measurement of e-commerce and the digital economy. UNCTAD was making the most of limited resources by collaborating with other United Nations entities in advancing work in this regard, along with ensuring coherent approaches and trusted numbers and supporting countries effectively; and was increasing the emphasis on the use of statistics for evidence-based policymaking through tools such as the new data insights platform showcasing key findings from the latest UNCTAD statistics, with brief analysis and visualizations, for example, with regard to digitally deliverable trade. Finally, the Director noted the importance of the work of the Working Group in addressing the lack of data, which hindered policy analysis and research on the digital economy, particularly in developing

[2] Mr. Si Yuan Tan.
[3] Mr. Hank Williams.

countries; and in driving methodological development, sharing experiences and focusing on the capacity-building efforts of various stakeholders.

II. Item 3
Progress in measuring e-commerce and digital economy work by relevant international organizations

6. Under this standing item, the Working Group reviewed progress in the related work of international organizations. The UNCTAD secretariat summarized the latest work on measuring e-commerce and the digital economy and noted that there were few official statistics on information and communications technology (ICT) usage by businesses in developing countries, despite the interest of national statistical offices and long-standing efforts of international organizations. Member States were encouraged to respond to the UNCTAD data collection exercise in 2025 and engage with the secretariat if there was a need for capacity-building. Ongoing work on developing the measurement of the value of e-commerce was conducted with a view to increasing not only the availability of such data but also international comparability. In 2025, UNCTAD planned to conduct a quality review of the ICT statistics database and an update of core indicators, continue the compilation of statistics on the value of e-commerce and digital trade and continue to provide capacity-building and technical assistance, subject to available resources.

7. A representative from the Statistical Office of the European Commission (Eurostat) advised the meeting about the latest European Union survey on ICT usage and e-commerce in enterprises and detailed the yearly survey design process at Eurostat, which was adapted in accordance with feedback from previous years, as well as evolving policy needs and technological developments. The Eurostat model questionnaire was limited to 73 mandatory variables, to reduce the response burden, and covered economic activities; current topics covered included the use of cloud computing services by enterprises, data utilization and analytics and artificial intelligence. E-commerce was covered under a voluntary module, and enough data had been gathered to allow for the issuance of figures on the monetary value of e-commerce sales under selected indicators. Not all countries included such questions in national surveys, and it was important for Eurostat to propose model questions in order to ensure a harmonized approach and comparability. Evolving technologies posed challenges to measurement, for example with regard to the increasing use of generative artificial intelligence. A model question had been introduced, aimed at measuring the type of artificial intelligence technology used by enterprises. In addition, the financial sector and the mining sector were not yet covered by the survey, although the former was a significant provider of digital services. Finally, the representative noted that metadata, model questionnaires and methodological guidelines were available on the Eurostat website, and could serve as references for national statistical offices.

8. A representative from the International Labour Organization detailed recent progress in measuring digital platform work and digital platform employment, an area lacking official statistics and that could serve as a significant complement to digital economy statistics. Digital platform work was increasing in both developed and developing countries, and the prevalence of digital platform employment in the economy could not as yet be quantified, along with the characteristics of digital platform employees, working conditions and impacts on the domestic labour market. About 40 countries, mainly in Central Asia and Europe, attempted to measure digital platform employment, using different methodologies. In addition, at least 70 other countries in different regions had expressed interest in measuring digital platform employment and would welcome methodological guidance. In *Handbook on Measuring Digital Platform Work and Employment*, issued in 2023, the International Labour Organization, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and Eurostat provided a conceptual framework as a first step. The statistical definition of digital platform employment, indicators, data collection recommendations and further methodological guidelines were required. Finally, the representative noted that in 2023, the International Conference of Labor Statisticians had asked the International Labour Organization to develop statistical standards in this area, aimed at adoption at the next conference in 2028 and, in this regard, the International Labour Organization had

launched a working group to, among other things, articulate how the concepts of digital platform work and employment related to the concepts of e-commerce and the digital economy. At its first meeting in November 2024, the working group had discussed the boundaries of economic activities that should be included in digital platform employment. Its next meeting would take place in person, in Singapore, in 2025.

9. A representative from the International Telecommunication Union presented an update on behalf of the Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development, which had marked its twentieth anniversary in 2024 with various events, including a report on progress in ICT statistics presented to the United Nations Statistical Commission, as well as during the World Summit on the Information Society+20 high-level event, the World Telecommunication/ICT Indicators Symposium and the annual methodological workshop on ICT statistics of the Regional Centre for Studies for the Development of the Information Society, Brazil. Over the past 20 years, the Partnership had succeeded in raising awareness of the importance of ICT statistics in policymaking, establishing core indicators endorsed by the United Nations Statistical Commission, developing manuals in this regard, building capacity through workshops and training courses, making available knowledge resources and offering regular opportunities for exchanging experiences and building networks of statistical stakeholders through various expert and working groups. More recently, the Partnership had proposed a thematic list of ICT indicators, to complement the Sustainable Development Goals monitoring framework, and provided inputs on the relevance of ICT statistics to discussions of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development and consultations on the Global Digital Compact. However, in 2024, a stocktaking exercise conducted by the Partnership had identified many remaining challenges in ICT measurement. For example, the level of availability of data on ICT use remained low in developing countries despite high demand, mainly due to limited funding for regular ICT data collection, as part of either dedicated ICT surveys or modules in established surveys. The International Telecommunication Union had collected data on e-commerce indicators in household surveys since 2020, but only about 40 countries reported on activities conducted while using the Internet, barriers to e-commerce use, barriers to Internet use, payment channels while using e-commerce and methods of delivery. Finally, the representative noted that capacity-building and training on producing such statistics was ongoing and there was a need for countries to build capacity in order to complement the paucity of survey-based data with innovative data sources. For example, the International Telecommunication Union worked with other United Nations entities to use mobile telephone data to complement missing data on the use of the Internet. The Partnership aimed to engage new partners, to cover new areas such as ICT in health.

10. A representative from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development detailed recent work on measuring digital trade and e-commerce, including the publication of *Digital Economy Outlook*. In 2024, the working party on digital economics, measurement and analysis had discussed the measurement of, among other things, artificial intelligence, digital health, well-being in digital environments and experimental estimates of digital trade. The Organisation was also revising the Going Digital Measurement Road Map and Integrated Policy Framework. Finally, the representative noted that with regard to experimental estimates of digital trade, the Organisation aimed to complete the digital trade picture, covering 80 per cent of the global economy. Results were planned to be issued in 2025, combining data on digitally delivered trade from the World Trade Organization, data on digitally ordered trade from UNCTAD and estimates by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development on digitally ordered and delivered trade using data from the Trade in Value Added database, to be considered not as official statistics but as a research product aimed at informing policy discussions.

11. During the ensuing discussion, some experts welcomed efforts to measure digital platform employment, since platform intermediation was increasingly shaping economy, employment and trade-related trends, as well as demand for new skills. With regard to a query from one delegate on the use of innovative data sources with regard to digital employment, one panellist noted that non-survey–based data sources could complement the information gathered through labour force surveys but might only be useful in individual countries rather than with regard to international comparability; for example, not all

countries might be able to access big data from digital platforms. Another panellist stated that surveys remained important in producing baseline information, yet mobile telephone big data was useful in providing complementary and timely information, and the Working Group could discuss how big data might be used by national statistical offices. With regard to a query from a few experts on how to ensure good responses about the value of e-commerce, one panellist noted that there were challenges in ensuring that those individuals in enterprises with knowledge about e-commerce were the ones who responded to surveys; some countries had been unwilling to publish data due to uncertainties about the quality of responses from companies but, for example, Eurostat had successfully issued data on the value of e-commerce for about 20 countries, although a challenge in implementing Eurostat surveys was linked to the fact that several countries faced difficulties in explaining to respondents complex concepts and technologies, which impacted the quality of responses. With regard to a query from one delegate on the inclusion of the financial sector, the panellist noted that this could be covered on a voluntary basis and that results were pending. The UNCTAD secretariat noted that the delivery of financial services was included in *Handbook on Measuring Digital Trade*, although data availability was limited, and it was also possible to extract financial sector information using the digital supply-use tables framework. With regard to a query from one delegate on the trade in value added methodology, to measure digitally delivered and ordered trade, one panellist stated that the methodological choices of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development would be issued in 2025. With regard to a query from one delegate on capturing other parts of cross-border e-commerce, such as small consignment shipments or cryptocurrency transactions, and whether, in future, the Working Group could help differentiate e-commerce transactions and data from financial technology actors, digital platforms and logistics providers, the UNCTAD secretariat noted that, even if private sector data could be leveraged, it might not be comparable across countries and, in this regard, the task group on measuring e-commerce aimed to propose statistical guidelines for international comparability; combining new data sources with surveys, necessary to ensure baseline information, posed a greater challenge and could be a future discussion item for the Working Group. The Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development needed to ensure that core indicators produced through surveys remained relevant and that capacity-building continued. The International Telecommunication Union and UNCTAD were willing to collaborate in this context, for example by participating in the training courses and workshops of each entity. Finally, with regard to the e-waste statistics presented by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the UNCTAD secretariat noted that *Digital Economy Report 2024: Shaping an Environmentally Sustainable and Inclusive Digital Future* focused on the interface between digitalization and environmental sustainability and addressed a narrower scope of the broad e-waste category, referred to as digitalization-related waste.

III. Item 4
Measuring the value of e-commerce

12. The Working Group, at this session, reviewed progress in the area of the measurement of the value of e-commerce. A representative of the UNCTAD secretariat provided an overview of the work of the task group on measuring e-commerce in 2024, for which Singapore had served as Chair, with the participation of 23 member States and 6 international organizations. The task group held quarterly meetings, with an online platform for discussion launched in August 2024; discussions had been held on the following five topics: user needs; scope of e-commerce; coverage of e-commerce statistics; data sources and collection; and analysis and dissemination. Following each targeted discussion, the secretariat had drafted guidelines and recommendations, made available on the online platform for comments, and, in 2024, initial drafts of four sections of the guidelines had been completed (introduction; measurement needs; coverage of statistics on value of business e-commerce; and valuation of e-commerce transactions), with two further topics discussed (scope of e-commerce and data collection). In 2025, the task group would continue to hold quarterly meetings and might meet in person if financial support was made

available; and planned to submit a complete draft to the Working Group ahead of its sixth meeting at end-2025.[4]

13. A representative from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development detailed a joint workshop held with UNCTAD in November 2024 on the strengths and limitations of the definition of e-commerce by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development in 2009 and the supporting guidelines. Over 70 experts from the working party on digital economics, measurement and analysis of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the task group on measuring e-commerce of UNCTAD, as well as invited representatives of e-commerce platforms, shared perspectives on the definition, widely used in many countries, with some variations. In addition, statistical challenges posed by emerging technologies and business models were addressed, as well as distinguishing e-commerce from digital activities and measuring digital intermediation platforms. Finally, the representative noted that the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development aimed to include the outcomes of discussions in the review of the definition and the interpretation and guidelines, in 2025 and 2026. Issues raised during the workshop with regard to the measurement of the value of e-commerce would be reflected in the work of the task group on measuring e-commerce.

14. During the ensuing discussion, questions were raised about how to best measure cross-border e-commerce, such as when dealing with consumption abroad (mode 2), and how to record international e-commerce components in the balance of payments. The panellist noted that whichever framework was used, it should be adaptable and technology-neutral, since technology evolved and its prevalence varied among countries. The UNCTAD secretariat noted that there were practical as well as conceptual measurement considerations; for example, online shopping systems could produce structured data, but transactions agreed through manually typed messages, such as those sent through email systems, messaging applications and social media, did not; the aim was to obtain a workable statistical framework that would yield a level of comparability, along with transparency about coverage, and new statistical guidelines needed to be accompanied by capacity-building. One delegate suggested that the task group on measuring e-commerce could invite e-commerce companies with particular business models, such as drop-shipping companies, to share insights on how such models worked and should be reflected in e-commerce statistics. A few experts suggested that the statistical guidance could refer to several tracks or levels, for example one for digital intermediation platforms and another for shopping through the use of social media or other informal platforms. The Chair noted that the task group on measuring e-commerce was already discussing some of these issues and encouraged countries not already in the task group to join the discussions; and, with regard to inviting private sector companies, the Chair suggested that the task group could begin by inviting member countries to share experiences in engaging private sector companies.

IV. Item 5
Non-survey–based measurement of e-commerce and the digital economy

15. The Working Group discussed non-survey–based sources of data to measure e-commerce and the digital economy, and participants were encouraged to share national experiences in leveraging administrative data, big data and electronic payment systems. Presentations provided insights into practical applications, highlighted challenges and outlined strategies for integrating non-survey–based data sources into official statistical systems. The importance of refining methodologies in order to better capture the dynamics of e-commerce and digital trade was emphasized, particularly in the context of cross-border transactions.

[4] Task group on measuring e-commerce, 2024, Update on activities, available at https://unctad.org/meeting/working-group-measuring-e-commerce-and-digital-economy-fifth-meeting.

16. A representative from the Bank of Jamaica presented the approach in Jamaica to leveraging non-survey–based data sources to measure digital trade. A comprehensive inventory of data sources had been established, combining traditional administrative records with innovative methodologies. Key data sources included household surveys, such as the Survey of Living Conditions (capturing digitally ordered transactions), customs data obtained through the UNCTAD Automated System for Customs Data (providing insights into digitally ordered goods, particularly through courier statistics), credit card transactions monitored by the Bank of Jamaica (with challenges in distinguishing resident and non-resident transactions) and administrative tax records. The representative emphasized the challenges of granularity with regard to credit card data and the need for legislative reforms in order to improve digital trade measurement; and highlighted the integration of big data techniques, such as web scraping and crawling, to identify companies with features such as purchase buttons and link them to administrative records. The methodology in Jamaica, while resource-intensive, aimed to enhance the accuracy and scope of digital trade statistics, with a focus on addressing gaps in informal economic activities. Finally, the representative identified opportunities for improving data collection infrastructure and strengthening international collaboration in order to refine measurement practices.

17. Representatives from the Statistics Department of Bank Indonesia detailed the approach in Indonesia to compiling digital trade statistics using non-survey–based data sources. The digital trader methodology was used to profile businesses involved in cross-border digital trade and match transactions across multiple data sets. Key data sources included the international transaction reporting system, customs declarations, credit card and debit card data and marketplace platforms. Text mining and entity-resolution techniques were used to clean and standardize data, resolving inconsistencies such as those related to naming conventions. Techniques such as web scraping and crawling were used to extract data from websites and marketplaces, profiling businesses with an online commercial presence. The panellists highlighted efforts to capture low-value e-commerce transactions through customs reporting and card payment data and to classify digital intermediary platform traders by linking platform activity with customs and financial data; despite the granularity of this approach, challenges remained, including the resource-intensive nature and the need for further automation and integration of digital value added tax returns, and the panellists emphasized the importance of leveraging advanced analytics and fostering collaboration with tax authorities, to expand the scope and reliability of digital trade measurement.

18. A representative from the Bank of France presented the approach in France to measuring international digital trade, focused on consumer imports, and highlighted the use of credit card payment data collected under European Central Bank regulations in order to estimate household digital imports and the impact on the balance of payments. Key findings included the fact that digital imports accounted for 5.3 per cent of total imports and 2.2 per cent of gross domestic product, with significant variations in sectoral and geographical composition compared with traditional trade flows. Physical services, such as travel and accommodation booked through foreign platforms, formed the largest component of digital imports. Sectoral breakdowns showed that digital services, goods and financial services were also significant contributors, although challenges remained with regard to separating financial service margins from underlying assets. The representative noted the disproportionate role of financial platforms in driving digital imports, with Ireland, Luxembourg and the Kingdom of the Netherlands accounting for a high share due to roles as digital trade hubs. Finally, the representative emphasized the importance of refining methodologies, particularly in distinguishing financial service margins and addressing geographical concentration, to better integrate digital trade dynamics into official statistics.

19. A representative from the Foreign Exchange Office of Morocco detailed national efforts to measure digital trade through non-survey–based data sources, including the use of banking data, such as transactions made with Moroccan bank cards both domestically and abroad, and customs data collected through the UNCTAD Automated System for Customs Data. Recent reforms, such as the introduction in 2022 of customs codes dedicated to e-commerce, had enabled better tracking of digitally ordered goods. The representative noted that e-commerce imports had accounted for 0.03 per cent of total imports in 2024, with growth in categories such as clothing, electronics and manufactured goods. Challenges

included identifying enterprises with significant e-commerce activity and adapting customs procedures to the digital trade environment. Finally, the representative emphasized the commitment of Morocco to refining statistical methodologies and enhancing collaboration between trade, customs and financial authorities, to support the development of e-commerce.

20. During the ensuing discussion, delegates considered practical methodologies for using non-survey–based data to measure e-commerce and the digital economy. One delegate noted concerns about the challenges of using web scraping to link administrative data from business registers with company websites, emphasizing the lack of alignment between the online and official representations of businesses, which affected statistical representativeness. Another delegate stated that, in Jamaica, for example, business activities were linked to tax registration numbers, which helped map web scraping outputs to registered entities, although challenges with regard to unregistered businesses persisted. One delegate discussed how e-commerce transactions could be identified within customs data. A few panellists described the methodology in Indonesia for profiling digital traders, including matching customs data with names identified through web scraping and discussions with key stakeholders, and highlighted the use of consignment notes to capture low-value transactions while excluding items sent by migrant workers. One panellist highlighted the use in Jamaica of algorithms to classify businesses and incorporate data from administrative and customs records, to enhance the granularity of analysis. With regard to a query from one delegate on screening for donation buttons on a website in order to identify e-commerce, one panellist emphasized the need to scrutinize donation patterns for potential tax avoidance mechanisms. With regard to a query from the Chair on classification, a few panellists detailed how firm websites were classified in Indonesia for international transactions by analysing web activity and supplementing this with general survey data, where applicable. The Chair summarized the potential of web scraping and noted challenges in achieving granularity and classification accuracy in digital trade data.

V. Item 6
Building capacities for measuring e-commerce and the digital economy

21. The Working Group, at this session, considered efforts by countries to develop capacities to measure e-commerce and the digital economy and discussed technical assistance and capacity-building support offered by UNCTAD and other international organizations and the capacity-building priorities for countries.

22. A representative from the UNCTAD secretariat detailed the Trade-in-Services Statistics Information System, which was part of capacity-building on enhancing the measurement and analysis of trade and services, including digital trade and services. Services were key in the digital and physical infrastructures that underpinned global supply chains and trade in digitally deliverable services was increasing faster than other services, yet there were significant data gaps with regard to the types of services traded, partners and modes of supply. The information system project had begun in 2015 in connection with UNCTAD work with countries in Western Africa and was aimed at helping countries collect data on trade in services from businesses and obtain more detailed information. The system was designed for use by national statistical authorities, offering an online data collection module and multimodal data collection, to ask businesses about data on trade in services, then process, validate, edit and disseminate the data. The system was aligned with international guidelines for compiling statistics on trade in services, enhancing comparability between countries. In addition, the level of detail could be adapted to each country and the modules (survey management, data entry, cleaning, compilation, quality assurance and dissemination) could be implemented according to evolving capacity. For example, a country could apply only the online data collection module, then feed the collected data into any other information system or use the quality assurance module to analyse existing data sets. The system was not a final product; it had mainly been applied in Western Africa and there was significant interest from and potential for use in other countries. At the fifty-sixth session of the United Nations Statistical Commission, to be

held in March 2025, UNCTAD aimed to hold a side event on the system, and welcomed participation by national statisticians who wished to learn more about the system. Finally, the representative noted that UNCTAD collaborated with the United Nations Statistics Division and the World Trade Organization on providing e-learning courses on trade in services statistics, free of charge, in English and French, based on *Manual on Statistics of International Trade in Services*, with over 7,000 participants trained since 2016.

23. A representative from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development detailed a digital trade survey designed by the co-authors of *Handbook on Measuring Digital Trade* and implemented in 2024, to take stock of the progress made by compilers (national statistical offices, central banks and other agencies involved in international trade statistics) in producing official statistics on digital trade and of the availability of information on digital trade that could be used to compile official statistics. Preliminary results showed that the majority of respondents lacked information on digitally ordered trade; respondents who did have such information sourced it mainly from customs data, followed by business ICT usage surveys, then business surveys. Some countries (35) had reported that it would be possible to estimate digitally ordered and digitally delivered trade and others had noted that inquiring about digital ordering made it difficult to obtain significant results from surveys. Information on digital intermediation platforms was rare and there were two critical challenges in measuring digital trade, namely, sources often did not provide enough product detail to make reasonable estimates; and institutions measuring different parts of digital trade did not work together. Finally, the representative noted that capacity-building was required with regard to the handbook.

24. A representative from the Department of Statistics of Andorra detailed the implementation of a data collection exercise with regard to ICT use by enterprises and e-commerce, held on a biennial basis since 2018. The exercise had helped build the capacity of the national statistical system and the published results supported the efforts of the Government to develop digitalization. A dedicated ICT survey was conducted online, with questions that followed Eurostat statistical guidelines. Implementing such a survey for the first time had required a significant pedagogical effort to explain to respondents, such as family-owned businesses, why it was mandatory, necessary and important to respond. The survey had been extensive and yielded a valuable baseline by which Andorra could quantify how widespread ICT adoption and investment was among enterprises and how significant e-commerce was in domestic and foreign sales, as well as clarify areas that could be further developed. The experience of data collection in Andorra could provide insights for other small landlocked countries on the implementation and usefulness of a dedicated ICT survey.

25. During the ensuing discussion, the UNCTAD secretariat noted that the initial Trade-in-Services Statistics Information System project had been conducted with support from the World Bank for countries in Western Africa and that other partners were needed in order to support expansion into other countries and regions; collaboration with other entities, such as the International Monetary Fund and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, could help support the expansion of the system to other countries, as well as maintenance over time; in future, training with regard to the system could include *Handbook on Measuring Digital Trade*; and capacity-building with regard to the handbook had, in 2024, focused on regional workshops organized by the co-authors and other partners. With regard to a query from one delegate on whether exported services counted as digital products and were considered e-commerce, one panellist responded that Andorra focused on exported services that were purchased digitally. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development noted that the handbook provided examples of how to account for services ordered domestically from a provider abroad; and noted, with regard to a query from one delegate on services ordered from domestic providers, as in the case of e-government services, that the handbook did not explicitly cover e-government services but, as in the case of the financial sector, the digital supply-use tables framework could be used to extract information on the Government sector. The Chair noted that, in Singapore, for example, e-commerce statistics included the revenue generated by government entities that had market functions. One expert noted that, with regard to capacity-building, Eurostat had an international statistical cooperation strategy, involving engagement with and the promotion of bilateral external relations with several countries not members of the

European Union, exchanging information, expertise and good practices; and national statistical offices could reach out to Eurostat.

VI. Item 7
Topics for future consideration by the Working Group

26. As per its terms of reference, the Working Group discussed possible topics that could be examined at future meetings and that would be proposed to the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on E-Commerce and the Digital Economy at its eighth session. The Intergovernmental Group of Experts would decide on the provisional agenda items to be discussed at the sixth meeting of the Working Group in late 2025.

27. All of the agenda items merited further discussion, but because the time available was limited, it was suggested that the Working Group keep the following agenda items for its next meeting: progress in measuring e-commerce and digital economy work by relevant international organizations; measuring the value of e-commerce; and developing capacities for measuring e-commerce and the digital economy. Given interest in defining the digital economy, international organizations could provide updates on work done in this area.

VII. Item 8
Adoption of the Chair's summary

28. The Working Group agreed that a Chair's summary reflecting the key issues discussed during the meeting would be produced after the end of the meeting. It authorized the Chair and the Vice-Chair-cum-Rapporteur to finalize the summary. The Chair's summary would be submitted to the eighth session of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on E-commerce and the Digital Economy to be held in May 2025.

VIII. Conclusion

29. As per the substantive agenda items, the Working Group conveyed the following conclusions and recommendations to the Intergovernmental Group of Experts:

(a) On progress in measuring e-commerce and the digital economy: Recommends that UNCTAD continue efforts to gradually improve the measurement of e-commerce and the digital economy by engaging with other international organizations and national statistical offices in future meetings of the Working Group;

(b) On measuring the value of e-commerce: Asks UNCTAD to continue coordinating the work of the task group on measuring e-commerce, to develop statistical guidelines that can be used by developing countries to measure the value of e-commerce, to elicit more country experiences of good practices, challenges and lessons learned and to report back on progress at the sixth meeting of the Working Group;

(c) On non-survey–based measurement of e-commerce and the digital economy: Encourages countries to continue exploring the use of non-survey–based sources of data for official statistics on e-commerce and the digital economy, as a complement to statistics resulting from business surveys, and to share their experiences at the sixth meeting of the Working Group;

(d) On building capacities for measuring e-commerce and the digital economy:

(i) Recognizes that the availability of survey-based statistics from developing countries needs to be strengthened and that official statistics should reflect the changing digital economy landscape and commitments expressed at the Summit of the Future and in the Global Digital Compact;

(ii) Calls on the donor community to increase support for methodological development, including the updating of the core indicators and the participation of developing countries in related technical meetings, as well as

capacity-building, training and technical assistance, on e-commerce and digital economy statistics that are needed to support policymaking;

(e) On topics for future consideration by the Working Group Recommends that the Working Group include the following agenda items at its next meeting:

(i) Progress in measuring e-commerce and digital economy work by relevant international organizations;

(ii) Measuring the value of e-commerce;

(iii) Updating the core indicators on ICT use by businesses and on the ICT sector;

(iv) Developing capacities for measuring e-commerce and the digital economy.

Annex I

Attendance list of the fifth meeting of the Working Group on Measuring E-commerce and the Digital Economy

1. A total of 105 participants registered for the meeting, 43 per cent of whom were women.

2. Representatives from the following States members of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development registered:

Andorra
Azerbaijan
Bahamas
Barbados
Brazil
Cambodia
Canada
Comoros
Congo
Djibouti
Dominican Republic
El Salvador
Ethiopia
France
Guatemala
Holy See
Indonesia
Iraq
Jamaica
Kenya
Lebanon
Malawi
Micronesia (Federated States of)
Morocco
Niger
Pakistan
Panama
Peru
Russian Federation
Saudi Arabia
Singapore
Spain
Sri Lanka
State of Palestine
Thailand
Türkiye
United Arab Emirates

3. Representatives from the following intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and academia registered:

Cairo University
European Union
Global Express Association
International Labour Organization
International Network for Standardization of Higher Education Degrees
International Telecommunication Union
International Trade Centre
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
Universal Postal Union
Village Suisse ONG
World Economic Forum
World Trade Organization

Annex II

List of resources shared during the fifth meeting of the Working Group on Measuring E-commerce and the Digital Economy

The 3 contributions, 6 substantive documents and 14 presentations by international organizations and national experts are available on the meeting webpage at https://unctad.org/meeting/working-group-measuring-e-commerce-and-digital-economy-fifth-meeting. Other resources shared during the meeting included the following:

Andorra

Statistics on equipment and use of ICT and e-commerce in companies https://www.estadistica.ad/portal/apps/sites/#/estadistica-en/

Canada

Survey of digital technology and Internet use, 2023 https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/240917/dq240917c-eng.htm

International Labour Organization, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and Statistical Office of the European Commission

Handbook on Measuring Digital Platform Employment and Work https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/handbook-on-measuring-digital-platform-employment-and-work_0ddcac3b-en.html

International Monetary Fund, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, UNCTAD and World Trade Organization

Handbook on Measuring Digital Trade, second edition https://unctad.org/publication/handbook-measuring-digital-trade

International Telecommunication Union

Capacity development statistics https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Pages/capacitydev/default.aspx

ITU Academy free self-paced online courses on statistics https://academy.itu.int/

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

Digital Economy Outlook 2024 volumes 1 and 2 https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/oecd-digital-economy-outlook-2024-volume-1_a1689dc5-en.html; https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/oecd-digital-economy-outlook-2024-volume-2_3adf705b-en.html

Going Digital toolkit https://goingdigital.oecd.org/

New perspectives on measuring cybersecurity https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/new-perspectives-on-measuring-cybersecurity_b1e31997-en.html

Truth quest survey methodology and findings https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/the-oecd-truth-quest-survey_92a94c0f-en.html

Statistical Office of the European Commission

Database https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/main/data/database

Digital economy and society methodology and publications https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/digital-economy-and-society/methodology; https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/digital-economy-and-society/publications

ICT usage in enterprises survey metadata https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/metadata/en/isoc_e_esms.htm

Podcast on statistics https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/main/news/podcasts

Publications and statistics explained https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/main/publications; https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php

UNCTAD

Course on statistics of international trade in services https://tft.unctad.org/projects/current-projects/trade-statistics-2015-present/

Data hub https://unctadstat.unctad.org/

Manual for the Production of Statistics on the Digital Economy https://unctad.org/publication/manual-production-statistics-digital-economy-2020

Statistics Quality Assurance Framework https://unctad.org/publication/statistics-quality-assurance-framework

Trade-in-Services Statistics Information System https://unctad.org/programme/trade-services-statistics-information-system-tisstat