

8 April 2013

Workshop on E-Commerce, Development and SMEs

8 April 2013- Room CR I

Centre William Rappard – WTO/OMC

OPENING ADDRESS BY AMBASSADOR MARION WILLIAMS

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentleman,

Welcome to this Workshop on E-Commerce, Development and Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises. It is my pleasure to open this public event and I extend a warm welcome to each of you.

Before making some introductory remarks to open this Workshop, I would like to introduce those with me here on the podium. With us this morning is Ms Patricia Francis, the Executive Director of the International Trade Centre and Mr Harsha Singh, a Deputy-Director General of the WTO and the head coordinator for the E-Commerce Work Programme in the WTO. Also with me this morning are Mr Shishir Priyadarshi, the Director of the WTO's Development Division and Mr. Hans-Peter Werner, a Counsellor in the same Division and the organizer of this workshop.

This workshop has been in the making for some time and I am very pleased today that it is taking place after several months of preparation. While E-Commerce and Development have been topics of discussion at the WTO for almost two decades, it is only quite recently that the subject has once again become a focus of increased attention. As I see it, a main reason for this renewed interest, especially this year, is the critical role that e-commerce plays to help empower the citizens of all countries, and especially those in developing and least-developed countries. In the course of the next two days, you will hear about how the internet and mobile telephony is changing the way we live and work. But it is perhaps in developing countries, and especially in Africa, where e-commerce and mobile technology are witnessing the fastest growth and are creating new ways of doing business. The new, more affordable technology is helping to change the way fishermen fish and sell their catch and the way farmers grow and harvest their crops. It is empowering people by giving them access to the right market information and data so they can improve their livelihoods and that of their families, villages, cities and countries. This is as true for the fisherman who now knows which

market offers him the best price as for the woman in the rural village who has at her fingertips real time data showing her the true value of the ground nuts she just harvested. In this new way of doing business, the traditional role of "the middleman" has been overtaken by technology.

Before we start on our work on E-Commerce and Development issues in earnest, however, I would like to ask WTO Deputy-Director General Harsha Singh to give an official welcome address. DDG Singh, please you have the floor.