

The Ethiopian Round Table on the study – The Role of ICTs in Enhancing Trade and Economic Growth in Ethiopia

The Ethiopian Round Table that discussed the country study on ICTs, Trade and Economic Growth was held from 26 – 27 February 2007. Close to 30 participants drawn from the Ethiopian Government (including the Ethiopian ICT Development Authority, the Ethiopian Customs Authority, the Ethiopian Telecommunications Agency, the National Bank of Ethiopia, the Ministry of Capacity building, the Development Bank of Ethiopia), the Addis Ababa Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Associations, the Women Exporters Association, the Ethiopian Economic Association's Economic Policy Research Institute, and the private sector attended the two day round table.

Following the presentation of the report and discussions that followed, participants of the round table held detailed discussions on the following four topics:

1. Policy related issues
2. Legal and regulatory framework
3. Private sector readiness
4. The Way forward

The round table recommended the following as the way forward:

1. That the consultants will develop the report by incorporating the comments and issues raised by participants
2. That there is a need for awareness creation (including among policy makers and legislators) in order to promote the contribution of ICT to Trade and Economic Growth
3. The need to put into operation the outcomes and recommendations of the study
4. Further research is needed to address the gaps identified in the research
5. The need to establish a working group to follow up on the recommendations and come up with action plans, and the need to identify stakeholders who will be part of the action plan.

In his concluding remarks, the Director-General of the Ethiopian ICT Development Agency (EICTDA) requested the consultants to address the following issues so that the study can be taken by his agency as a roadmap for the implementation of the e-commerce development policy.

1. To address the issues raised in the way forward once the gaps and issues raised by his office have been incorporated into the document
2. To include an international experience on using ICTs in trade based on the experiences of a country that can be considered as “a success story”
3. To define/list the pre conditions for e-commerce at the country level
4. To recommend a sectoral focus of area in the export sector where ICTs can be employed as a starting point for the use of ICTs in trade (e.g. horticulture, coffee, leather, etc.)
5. The need to get data on the business ICT indicators
6. To address the status of the private sector ICT firms that are crucial for supporting the e-commerce activities

As a continuation to the round table, the ECA collaborated with the Ethiopian ICT Development Agency (EICTDA), the Ethiopian Telecommunication Corporation (ETC) and the Addis Ababa Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Associations (AACCSA) as part of the 11th Addis Chamber International Trade Fair that was held from 22 – 28 February 2007, in organizing a half-day symposium on ICTs, Trade and Investment. This allowed the outcome of the study to be tabled to a larger audience mainly consisting of participants from the private sector.

The role of the AACCSA in promoting the private sector and the plan to establish an ICT center aimed at building the capacity of the Ethiopian private sector received positive feedback from the participants. ECA has expressed its commitment to assist in the capacity building activities of the centre so as to address one of the recommendations of the round table and the symposium.

Both events were covered by the local TV, radio and newspapers. The round table was also covered by the Amharic service of the Voice of America, including an interview with Aida Opoku-Mensah.

Links:

<http://ena.gov.et/EnglishNews/2007/Feb/26Feb07/17934.htm>

http://www.voanews.com/horn/amharic_audio.cfm