E-Commerce and its Relevance to the Caribbean, Regional & World Trade Agenda

Ministry of Commerce, Investment & Consumer Affairs
St. Lucia
E-Commerce

- Shifting of business processes from paper to electronic transactions through Internet
- US: exploitation of information technology to improve commerce
- UK: doing business electronically
Why E-Commerce?

**Business**
- Online advertising and ordering
- Bill payment
- Products delivery
- Procurement

**Government**
- Distribution of benefit payments to citizens
- Processing of applications for drivers’ licences and passports
- Payment of invoices and grants

Lower costs, improve customer service and increase productivity
Relevance of E-Commerce to SIDs

- The right framework of principles and rules for development of critical infrastructural elements
- Development of optimal national policy approaches to facilitate enabling infrastructure for stimulation and growth of SIDs
- Achievement of national development objectives
Provision of GATS in relation to E-Commerce

- Infrastructure of GATS has significant bearing on determining the precise treatment of e-commerce.
- Recognition of asymmetries between countries.
- All e-transmissions are deemed services with no apparent distinction between different technological means through which specific services may be delivered.
Provision of GATS in relation to E-Commerce

- GATS constitute in principle the foundation for other agreements and thus influence development of hemispheric, regional or sub-regional agreements on trade in services
- Draft FTAA will only make sense if it is “GATS-plus”
- CSME must be “FTAA-plus”
Trade and Investment Liberalisation

- Infrastructure elements burdened by and subjected to a myriad of trade and investment barriers
- Market access commitment of GATS
- Reassess the practicality of reinforced conditions accompanying market access – Article XVI
- Flexibility for SIDSs to impose restrictions against sensitive and vulnerable sectors
Need for Special and Differential Treatment for SIDs

- Link Articles X and XXI to Market Access conditions to allow recourse from economic difficulties arising from inability to enforce restrictions on scheduled service sectors
- Protocol II of Treaty of Chaguaramas
- Provisions for domestic regulation, monopolies and exclusive service providers and business practices require elaboration
- Need to address Consumer Protection Law and Enforcement and interconnectedness with GATS
Need for Special and Differential Treatment for SIDs cont’d

- Issues of monopolies, exclusive service providers and business practices relating to SIDs in developing technological infrastructure of e-commerce are addressed by CARICOM.

- Full relevance of provisions to e-commerce requires inclusion of precise norms and disciplines.

- E-commerce present new economic opportunities for expansion of SIDs narrow economic base.
St. Lucian Experience

- Ministry undergoing a Repositioning Exercise within framework of Public Sector Reform
- Consultations held with all major stakeholders and organisations engaged directly in, or provide information and communications technology related services
- Recommendations of consultations collated in a Draft National E-Commerce Policy for St. Lucia
- Review of Policy by Stakeholders
- Submission to Cabinet of Ministers for approval
- Implementation - Funding
The Way Forward

- A coordinated, systematic and purposeful approach towards attainment of strategic and policy objectives urgently required.

- Co-operation of a wide range of Agencies, Statutory Bodies and other organizations and facilitation of cross-departmental and cross-functional linkages essential

- Development human resources for E-Commerce through education, training and retraining.
The Way Forward cont’d

- Enactment of adequate legal and regulatory infrastructure that is supportive of and conductive to e-commerce.
- A trusted and stable banking sector for the development of e-commerce and participation in the global economy
- Heightening of consumer protection concerns
- Improved access to the internet and ICT