

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

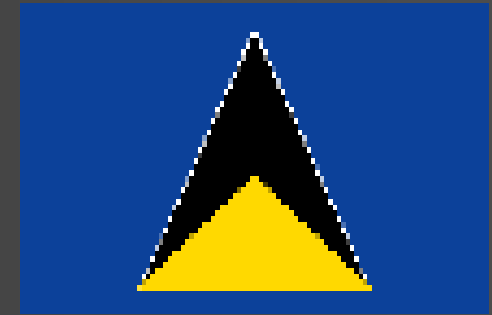
Need for Special and Differential Treatment for SIDs

- 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
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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 address 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 conducive 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