



Digital for Development Forum

21 October 2025
Room IX
3–6 p.m.



Description

Ensuring that digitalization brings benefits for all is among the top policy challenges, according to UNCTAD. The rapid pace of technological change is transforming economies worldwide in unprecedented ways, creating new opportunities, as well as challenges. Current trends suggest that value capture is benefiting the few rather than the many. The Digital for Development Forum will put the spotlight on two key development dimensions of technological change.

Discussions at the first session will build on new evidence from UNCTAD research on women digital entrepreneurs in the Global South that shows that most of them face systemic barriers, including limited access to finance, digital skills and leadership opportunities. Deliberate policy action is needed to address these issues. Leading experts and pioneering women entrepreneurs, including from the eTrade for Women initiative, will highlight how public policies, business strategies and partnerships can support digital entrepreneurship, close digital gender divides and ensure more inclusive and sustainable growth.

Discussions at the second session will turn attention to the interface between digitalization and regional integration, the twin drivers of economic growth and resilience. Most e-commerce remains domestic and there is considerable scope for more digital trade. UNCTAD has supported many member countries in strengthening digital readiness and advancing regional integration, including through collaboration with member States, regional organizations and development banks. This session will bring together perspectives from different parts of the world to highlight achievements, showcase successful models and draw lessons from each region's journey in harnessing digital technologies for regional economic integration.

Programme

Opening remarks: UNCTAD Deputy Secretary-General

Panel 1. From barriers to breakthroughs: Women entrepreneurs shaping the digital age

Questions

- How can Governments and institutions address barriers in order for women entrepreneurs to fully participate in the digital economy and in digital leadership and access funding?
- What strategies are needed to enable women entrepreneurs to scale their digital businesses regionally or internationally?
- What lessons can be learned from women-led businesses that have successfully navigated systemic barriers in their digital transformation?
- How can Governments incentivize private sector investment that supports women in the digital economy?
- What can the international community do to close the gender digital divide at scale?

Moderator: To be determined

Panel 2. Leveraging the digital transformation for regional integration: From policy to practice

Questions

- What are key enablers and barriers to building inclusive and resilient digital economies, that support regional integration?
- What lessons can be drawn from the experience of regional organizations in supporting inclusive regional digital ecosystems?
- Which particular challenges do small island developing States face?
- How can financial institutions support regional digital transformation?
- How can international organizations such as UNCTAD help strengthen digital readiness, regulatory frameworks and institutional capacity across regions?

Moderator: To be determined

Interpretation

English, French

Contact

Sabrina Ielmoli, Chief, eTrade Initiatives Section, Division on Technology and Logistics, sabrina.ielmoli@un.org