

Statement by Malawi at the Fifth Session of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on E-commerce and the Digital Economy

27 April 2022

- **Ambassador Febrian Ruddyard, Chairperson of the 5th Session of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Ecommerce and the Digital Economy;**
- **Ambassador Mathias Francke Vice Chairperson;**
- **Ms. Rebeca Grynspan, Secretary-General of UNCTAD;**
- **Ms. Shamika N. Sirimanne, Director, Division on Technology and Logistics;**
- **Excellencies,**
- **Distinguished delegates,**

1. The Republic of Malawi wishes to align itself with the statement delivered by Ambassador Chad Blackman Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Barbados on behalf of Group of 77 and China.
2. At the outset, let me join my colleagues in extending my congratulations to you, chairperson and vice chairperson for assuming the roles of chairmanship of this important meeting.

Chairperson;

3. This meeting is being held at an opportune time when States are putting up structures that will enable a smooth recovery from the pandemic and digitalization is playing a key role in this. The meeting will accord us an opportunity to share knowledge and deliberate on key issues on e-commerce and the digital economy.
4. The Covid-19 pandemic has proven the importance of digitalization. With restrictions on the physical movement of people, online platform became the most efficient alternative of moving goods and services. While there has been a sharp increase and growth of online businesses, we cannot ignore the existence and widening of the digital divide which is more evident in least developing countries like Malawi.
5. LDCs are still facing challenges to integrate into the digital economy. Lack of adequate skills, infrastructure, and other resources have further pushed the countries behind in the development of the digital economy.

Chairperson;

6. I wish to offer my gratitude to UNCTAD and EIF for the support they have been rendering to Malawi in ensuring that we are not left behind as the world is advancing in the development of the digital economy. UNCTAD supported us in undertaking the eTrade Readiness Assessment which has provided us with insights on the opportunities and challenges affecting Malawi's integration into the digital economy, and recommendations in key policy areas which Malawi can implement.
7. In view of this, the recently launched Malawi vision 2063 has clearly highlighted that the core of Malawis digital development is inclusive wealth creation which offers Malawians access to

improved standards of living. We have envisioned that a strong digital core and well-developed digital services will enable critical sectors such as agriculture and health and support the rise of digitally traded services to ignite rapid economic growth and create employment.

Chairperson;

- 8.** Malawi acknowledges the role data plays in driving development, especially for countries which have the necessary resources to add value to the data and use it in a meaningful way. Digitalization is envisioned to play a significant role in economic recovery and the building of resilience to future pandemics. Inclusivity and sustainability in the development of the digital economy will be key to ensure the attainment of the SDGs.
- 9.** LDCs, however, still have challenges in acquiring a mix of skills and infrastructure to use data for development, as such we count on the support from UNCTAD and other development partners.

Thank you for your attention