

**ADB-ESCAP Workshop on Promoting E-commerce in Asia and the Pacific
Bangkok, Thailand, 27-28 August 2018**

Workshop summary

ADB and ESCAP brought regional and international partners together in Bangkok to identify holistic solutions to move e-commerce forward.

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) organized [a joint workshop](#) on e-commerce in the Asia-Pacific region in Bangkok, Thailand on 27- 28 August 2018. The workshop brought together more than 60 experts and practitioners from governments, development organizations and the private sector. With the rapid growth of e-commerce in the region, in both domestic markets as well as across borders, the workshop provided an opportunity to discuss common challenges and explore holistic solutions to move e-commerce in Asia and the Pacific to next stage of development. From cross-border tax issues to electronic payments and financial inclusion, the workshop covered a broad range of policy issues related to e-commerce.

The workshop highlighted the prominent position of the Asia-Pacific region in propelling the development of e-commerce. A few, certainly non-exhaustive, examples are highlighted as follows:

- Mobile penetration rates are increasing across Asia. In Myanmar mobile penetration rose from 2.5% in 2011 to 97.5% in 2016, a sim card costed US\$300 in 2012 while the price dropped to US\$1.50 today.¹
- In the Philippines, e-commerce has been identified as an important component in the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprise (MSME) Development Plan 2017-2022.
- Indonesia has recently launched an e-commerce road map.
- In China, “Internet Plus” has been applied to support agricultural e-commerce.
- In Bangladesh, mobile financial services offer an innovative way to promote financial inclusion for e-payments to the majority of people who don’t have bank accounts.
- A few sea ports and terminals in the region such as Hong Kong, Singapore, Sydney, and Manila are participating in a blockchain project led by IBM and Maersk.
- The Alibaba e-commerce ecosystem is maturing and providing more convenience to its customers.

The workshop recognized that e-commerce is providing individuals and SMEs with unprecedented opportunities to gain access to domestic and international markets. Some countries in the region, such as China, are exploring the opportunity to use e-commerce as a tool for poverty reduction. However, not all countries in the Asia-Pacific region are reaping the benefits. Furthermore, the development of e-commerce will inevitably impact traditional brick and mortar shops and may lead to unemployment. In the context of the Sustainable Development Goals, policy intervention should, on the one hand, facilitate the development of e-commerce, and on the other hand, ensure that e-commerce enables inclusive development and leaves no one behind.

¹Data mentioned here should not be treated as official and the accuracy of the data could not be guaranteed. Nevertheless, discussion during the workshop was more focused on the rapid improvement of ICT infrastructure underpinning the e-commerce development in Asia-Pacific region.

Given the cross-cutting nature of e-commerce and challenges associated with various procedures involved in e-commerce, the workshop concluded that a partnership approach is key to moving e-commerce to next stage of development in Asia and the Pacific. Initiatives such as [eTrade for all](#), which adopts a holistic approach as well as stronger private-public policy dialogue for promoting e-commerce and the [“Rapid e-Trade Readiness Assessment”](#) were well recognized during the workshop.

The workshop reflects a solid collaboration between ADB and ESCAP in promoting the development of e-commerce in the region. In June 2018, ADB and ESCAP jointly published [“Embracing the E-commerce Revolution in Asia and the Pacific”](#). The report presents a new comprehensive framework to better examine the evolution of e-commerce in the region and examines the impact of Fourth Industrial Revolution technologies on e-commerce.

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