



**UNCTAD Regional Conference on
ICT Strategies for Competitiveness and Development:
Promoting e-business, trade facilitation and logistics
in Latin America and the Caribbean
Rio de Janeiro, 18-20 November 2003**

The Secretary-General of UNCTAD has the honour to inform the Governments of the GRULAC group that UNCTAD, in cooperation with the Government of Brazil and the Latin American Technological Information Network will convene a regional High-level Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean on ICT Strategies for Competitiveness and Development: Promoting E-business, Trade Facilitation and Logistics, to be held in Rio de Janeiro from 18 to 20 November 2003.

The Conference will focus on the application of ICTs and e-business in Latin America and the Caribbean with a particular emphasis on the improvement of the export competitiveness of the economies of the region. The outcome of the conference is intended to represent a contribution to the preparatory process of UNCTAD XI, as well as of the World Summit on the Information Society to be held in Geneva in December 2003.

The Conference will consider policies and strategies that can enhance the contribution of ICT and e-business to economic development and regional economic integration. Particular attention will be paid to issues of trade facilitation, transport and logistics. Participants, including high-level Government officials, private sector and civil society representatives, will share experiences in designing and implementing national and regional ICT strategies and will discuss best practices and issues in e-business development. In this regard, the first two days of the Conference will begin with a discussion of current national and regional initiatives in ICT strategies for development both in general and in the field of trade facilitation and logistics. This will be followed by two tracks of thematic working groups running in parallel.

One track will examine broad ICT policies and experiences addressing questions such as the promotion of access and use of ICT by businesses, the role of open source software in e-business development and the creation of e-business skills. Another track will deal with aspects such as new safety and security requirements and the role of ICT in meeting them, ICT applications for trade facilitation, transport information communities and transport networks in Latin America and the Caribbean. Legal and regulatory questions, as well as regional initiatives dealing with e-commerce and transport and transport infrastructure will also be discussed.

The Conference will close with a Ministerial Session that will establish an agenda for action aimed at achieving specific objectives at regional and national levels to make more effective use of ICTs for competitiveness and development. In this connection, participants could formulate a common position regarding international initiatives on ICTs and e-commerce, addressing in particular the World Summit on the Information Society. This could be expressed through a Rio Declaration on ICT strategies for competitiveness and development.

The Governments concerned are therefore invited to designate a delegation composed of high-level government representatives and experts from the private sector for participation in this Conference. It is hoped that Ministers will participate, in particular, at the Ministerial Round Table on 21 June 2003. In order to encourage such representation, UNCTAD will cover the cost of the participation (travel and subsistence) of one representative from each country on the basis of the least costly fare.

Nominations for participation in the Conference should be sent by 12 May 2003 to Mr. Y. Kalindaga, Officer-in-Charge, Electronic Commerce Branch, Division for Services Infrastructure for Development and Trade Efficiency, UNCTAD secretariat, Palais des Nations, CH-1211 Geneva 10, tel.: +41(0)22 907 2042/907 5912; fax: +41(0)22 907 0052; e-mail: yusuf.kalindaga@unctad.org. E-mail messages should also be copied to the following e-mail address: angel.gonzalez-sanz@unctad.org.

The preliminary programme of the Conference is attached. Any updates will be posted on the UNCTAD website (www.unctad.org/ecommerce). The working languages of the Conference will be English, Portuguese and Spanish.

Rubens Ricupero
Secretary-General of UNCTAD
30 July 2003