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**UNCTAD–UNECE High-Level Regional Conference for Transition Economies
“ICT and E-Commerce Strategies for Development”**

The Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) present their compliments and have the honour to inform the Governments concerned that UNCTAD and UNECE are co-organizing a Regional Conference for Transition Economies on "ICT and E-Commerce Strategies for Development". The Conference, which will take place at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on 20-21 October 2003, will start with keynote addresses and will conclude with a High-level Round Table. Other sessions will include discussions of national ICT and e-commerce strategies and practices, regional cooperation in that domain, and the state of e-business and e-finance.

This initiative is part of UNCTAD's work on information and communication technologies (ICT) and e-commerce for development and UNECE activities regarding international standards for e-business and global supply chains, as well as the development of the knowledge-based economy in transition countries. The work of both UN agencies in the area of ICT and e-commerce strategies for development provides policy guidance to member countries in their drive to embrace modern ICT and Internet based e-business and e-government practices. The goal is to make transition and developing economies and their enterprises more competitive and able to produce and sell higher-value-added products and services through global e-marketplaces.

The Conference will focus on the development of ICT, e-business and e-commerce in the transition economies and will consider appropriate policies and strategies that can enhance the capacities of these countries to use or even produce ICT-related technologies, primarily in the area of e-business and in particular e-trade applications. Participants will share local, regional and global experiences in policy formulation and implementation of ICT and e-commerce strategies.



The Round Table is expected to close with general conclusions that position transition economies vis-à-vis international initiatives related to ICT and e-commerce. In this connection, the Ministers in charge of ICT and e-commerce policies and strategies in transition economies, having adopted a set of principles and priorities for action towards an information society at the Pan European Regional Ministerial Conference at Bucharest on 7-9 November 2002, might wish to complement the efforts of their counterparts from Asia and Africa, who have already adopted declarations within the framework of similar UNCTAD regional conferences, and thus draw the attention of the international community, and in particular the World Summit on the Information Society, to the role of e-business and e-commerce in transition economies.

The Governments concerned are therefore invited to designate a delegation composed of high-level government representatives and experts from the public and private sectors to participate in this conference. It is hoped that delegations will be led by ministerial-level representatives, in particular for the Round Table that will be held on the afternoon of October 21 at the Palais des Nations. UNCTAD and UNECE will cover the cost of participation (travel in economy class and daily subsistence) of one representative per delegation from transition economies.

Nominations for participation in the Regional Conference should be sent by 18 September 2003 to Mr. Rouben Indjikian, Senior Economic Affairs Officer, Electronic Commerce Branch, Division for Services Infrastructure for Development and Trade Efficiency, UNCTAD secretariat, Palais des Nations, CH-1211 Geneva 10, *tel:* +41(0)22 917 5838/5515; *fax:* +41(0)22 917 0052; *e-mail:* rouben.indjikian@unctad.org.

... The tentative programme for the Conference is attached. Further revisions of the programme will be posted on the Web sites of both UNCTAD (www.unctad.org/ecommerce) and UNECE (www.unece.org/trade).

The working languages of the Conference will be English, French and Russian.

(signed)

Rubens Ricupero

(signed)

Brigita Schmögnerová

3 September 2003