



Workshop

Scaling beyond borders: digital trade, e-commerce and export readiness

18 November 2026

13:00–16:00 | Room TBC

Background and regional context

Digital trade and e-commerce are reshaping how businesses reach customers, access new markets and participate in international trade. According to the latest statistics from United Nations Trade and Development (UNCTAD), digital trade and e-commerce continue to expand globally, creating new opportunities for businesses of all sizes to offer products and services across borders.¹

In the Arab region, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) account for more than 96% of all businesses, contribute up to 40% of gross domestic product, and play an important role in employment and economic growth.² However, many SMEs continue to face challenges in accessing regional and international markets. According to the International Trade Centre (ITC), SMEs often face higher trade costs, limited market intelligence, logistics constraints, regulatory requirements, financing gaps and limited digital capabilities compared with larger firms.³

Recognizing the growing importance of digital trade, several Arab countries are implementing national strategies and reforms to strengthen SME competitiveness and expand participation in regional and international markets. Saudi Arabia continues to advance digital trade as part of **Saudi Vision 2030**, supporting SME digital transformation, e-commerce, digital payments, logistics and entrepreneurship through **Monsha'at** and other national programmes. The United Arab Emirates is implementing its **Digital Economy Strategy** and investing in digital infrastructure, artificial intelligence, advanced logistics and digital government services to strengthen its position as a regional hub for digital trade and cross-border commerce.

Jordan is implementing the **National E-Commerce Strategy (2023–2025)** and developing its second phase (2026–2029) to strengthen the digital trade ecosystem, improve the regulatory environment, and support SME participation in e-commerce and cross-border trade.⁴ Egypt continues to strengthen SME competitiveness through the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency (MSMEDA) and national digital transformation programmes that promote entrepreneurship, digital services and business growth.⁵ As the host country of the Arab SMEs Summit 2026, Iraq is working to strengthen private sector development, improve regional connectivity, and expand trade and investment opportunities, creating new prospects for SMEs to participate in regional value chains and cross-border trade.⁶

Building on this progress, there is considerable scope to further strengthen SME export readiness, digital capabilities, logistics, trade compliance, access to finance and market intelligence across the region. Greater progress in these areas can enable SMEs to participate more effectively in regional and global value chains.⁷ The workshop provides a platform for exchanging practical experiences, discussing emerging trends, and identifying actions that support SME internationalization through digital trade and e-commerce.

Objectives

The workshop aims to:

- Examine current trends in digital trade, e-commerce and SME internationalization, and explore opportunities for SMEs to access new markets.
- Discuss policies and practical mechanisms to strengthen SME export readiness and competitiveness.
- Highlight key enablers of cross-border trade, including digital platforms, logistics, digital payments, financing and trade facilitation.
- Promote regional knowledge exchange and the sharing of best practices among policymakers, private sector actors, business support organizations and development partners to strengthen the digital trade ecosystem.

Participants

The workshop brings together a diverse range of stakeholders, including:

	Policymakers and government officials responsible for trade, the digital economy, investment, export promotion and SME development.
	Regional and international organizations supporting trade, private sector development, entrepreneurship and digital transformation.
	SMEs, entrepreneurs and private sector representatives, including digital commerce platforms, logistics providers, financial institutions and business support organizations.
	Experts and practitioners in digital trade, e-commerce, export development, trade facilitation, market access and cross-border digital payments.

Agenda

Time	Title	Session description	Speakers
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13:00–14:00	Session 1 The future of e-commerce: key trends and growth opportunities	This session examines key trends and opportunities in e-commerce, focusing on how emerging technologies, digital tools, artificial intelligence and changing consumer behaviour can help SMEs access new markets, strengthen competitiveness and achieve sustainable growth.	Moi Peter Elia, Programme Officer, International Trade Centre (ITC) United Nations Trade and Development (UNCTAD) Ammar Ameen, CEO, Miswag
14:00–15:00	Session 2 Expanding beyond borders: digital tools and platforms	This session explores practical digital tools and platforms that SMEs can use to identify business opportunities, better understand customers and competitors, track industry trends and make informed decisions. It also considers how these tools can support SMEs in assessing new markets, planning for international expansion and taking the first steps towards reaching customers abroad.	International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) Teba Aladwan, Economic and Development Advisor, Netherland Embassy, Iraq Orderii (TBC)
15:00–16:00	Session 3 Export readiness: from preparation to international trade	This session focuses on the key requirements for export readiness, including assessing business capacity, meeting quality and regulatory requirements, and preparing products and operations for international trade. It also highlights practical steps that SMEs can take to strengthen their export readiness.	Sami Ouechtati, Technical Advisor, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Maythem Saad, Founder & CEO Berhyah

Endnotes

1. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), Statistics on the digital economy, e-commerce and digital trade, 2025.
2. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), [Beyond barriers: how access to finance can unleash SMEs' potential in the Arab States region](#), 28 August 2025.
3. International Trade Centre (ITC), [SME Competitiveness Outlook 2025: a digital transformation roadmap](#), 2025.
4. Jordan News, [Ministry of Industry and Trade concludes review of National E-Commerce Strategy](#), 27 June 2026.
5. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), [SME and Entrepreneurship Policy in Egypt, OECD Studies on SMEs and Entrepreneurship](#), 2025.
6. Republic of Iraq, Ministry of Planning, [National Development Plan 2024–2028](#), 2024; [Private Sector Development Strategy 2014–2030](#), 2014.
7. ITC, [SME Competitiveness Outlook 2025: a digital transformation roadmap](#), 2025.