Business for Development
Implications for Export Strategy-Makers

Competitiveness, Development and “e”

The Issue: The bursting of the “e” bubble sent clear messages to the business community in both developed and developing countries. Specifically,

- e-Business is Business
- Not competent off-line = Not competent on-line
- Technology alone is no substitute for good business practice

Yet, despite the diminishing level of “e” hype, eBusiness continues to offer developing country firms enormous scope to improve competitiveness and generate new export prospects.

But the business sector in most developing countries has been slow to respond. This is particularly the case within the small-to-medium sized enterprise sector (SMES), which not only possesses the greatest potential to contribute to export performance, but can also benefit most from “e” applications.

The Proposition: National export strategy-makers must devote significantly greater attention to the impact that e-Business will have on enterprise competitiveness and export performance. E-competency development must be a central feature of national export strategy.

Such a strategy should:

- Target the SME sector and its support agencies;
- Shift gradually from e-awareness creation to e-competency building;
- Support development of national and regional e-marketplaces; and
- Facilitate SME participation on emerging global B2B e-marketplaces.

Focus of the Debate: We propose that the debate focus on the following:

1. Should export strategy extend into the area of “e” competency development, and if so, what should the focus of this strategy be?

2. What is involved in shifting the emphasis from e-awareness to e-competency building and what steps must be taken to achieve this shift?

3. What are the implications of a national export strategy which proactively promotes e-Business development for those public sector institutions responsible for implementing the strategy?