Report on the TrainForTrade course Legal Aspects of E-Commerce for SIDS 2023 (LAEC)

Organized by UNCTAD
In the framework of the Development Account Project:
TrainForTrade blended learning strategy to boost the digital economy in Small Island Developing States of Africa, the Caribbean and Asia and the Pacific (Project 2225F tranche 14)
Delivered in English
Course delivery dates: from 30 October to 1 December 2023
Webinars' date: 6 December 2023

UNITED NATIONS UNCTAD

TRAIN FOR TRADE

eTrade for all
Connecting the dots

LEGAL ASPECTS OF E-COMMERCE FOR SIDS 2023

e-learning from 30 October to 1 December + webinar on 6 December

Module 1 ▸ 2 ▸ 3 ▸ 4 ▸ 5 ▸ 6 ▸ 7 ▸ 8 ▸ 9 ▸ Simulations ▸ Webinar

282 participants from
37 countries or areas

172 women (61%)

330 post exchanges in the forum
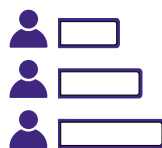
89% average score

89% satisfaction rate

135 certificates granted

Participants had access to manuals, multimedia presentations, tests, surveys, forum and webinars

"Valuable resource for both beginners and professionals"

"It consolidated a lot of information into a concise, but detailed document."

"The game was very interesting and applicable."

Summary

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development successfully organized an e-learning course on the "Legal Aspects of E-Commerce" (LAEC). It was delivered from 30 October to 1 December 2023, followed by a concluding webinar held on 6 December 2023.

Designed specifically for Small Island Developing States, the course was also open to other countries/territories in the Pacific and the Caribbean regions at the request of Pacific Island Forum Secretariat and CARICOM as well as participants from United Nations missions in Geneva. Among the 282 participants from 37 countries or areas who initially registered, 145 started the course, while 135 completed it and obtained a certificate. The course contributed to women's empowerment: they represent 63.7 per cent of graduates (86 over 135). Overall, the training was successful and interactive. The average score and satisfaction rate were 89.3 and 89.3 per cent respectively.

The course was delivered via the TrainForTrade distance learning platform. It is a place where participants may access manuals, multimedia presentations, modules, evaluations, opinion polls, and fora. The latter were created for each module, allowing discussion with instructors, experts and other participants.

The course's main objectives are to enhance the capacities of lawmakers, government officials and other stakeholders in all aspects considered for the drafting of electronic commerce laws; Providing useful and new knowledge on the challenges and best practices in the field of E-commerce. Its design was such that, at the end of the training, participants will have all the necessary tools to identify, draft and promote modern e-commerce regulation policies in Small Island Developing States.

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Background

Digital technologies and their application to international trade practices can greatly contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). E-commerce and, more broadly, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) have an immense potential for supporting the participation of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in international and regional markets, building their resilience and their ability to benefit from today's large global digital markets. Despite these promises, the digital economy in SIDS is still in an early stage of development. These countries do not only face challenges related to infrastructure development, but also related to capacity and knowledge. Adapting their legal frameworks, adopting digital identity systems and collecting statistics on digital trade are of vital importance for the transition to a digital economy. It goes without saying that the COVID-19 pandemic has intensified complex pre-existing bottlenecks in this matter. SIDS have crucial reforms to undertake in order to fully benefit from the potential of the digital revolution.

In this regard, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has a significant role to play. As the United Nations' focal point for trade and development integration, it has much experience in supporting countries on issues located at the nexus between investment, technology, finance and sustainable development. Within UNCTAD, TrainForTrade is specialised in capacity building and delivering trainings via a recognized blended learning method and state-of-the-art technological solutions. TrainForTrade has been mandated by the UN Development Account tranche 14 code 2225F to assist SIDS in fostering digital economy development and enhance crisis responsiveness as part of a project on the digital economy in SIDS. This course, devoted to the legal aspects of E-commerce, is the second in a series of three. The first course being Digital Identity for Trade and Development, offered in February 2023 over five weeks with a webinar to finish. The third and final course as a part of this project will focus on digital economy statistics and is still in the development phase.

Objectives

This course aims to give participants all the necessary tools to develop an understanding behind regulatory policy achievements, issues, concerns and needs related to E-commerce in their respective countries. It also seeks to promote regional synergies between SIDS, fostering the exchange of ideas and solutions. The main objectives are to enhance the capacities of lawmakers, government officials and other stakeholders in all aspects to be considered for the drafting of electronic commerce laws.

After the course participants will be able:

- To explain a wide range of regulatory issues that concern e-commerce;
- To describe the new developments and scope of e-commerce issues;
- To exchange experiences and knowledge on harmonization aspects of e-commerce.

Programme Outline

This course contains nine modules covering the different topics of the legal aspects of E-commerce. The participants should spend between 4 to 5 hours per week learning the material and participating in the fora. The nine modules are devoted to:

Module 1: Regulating E-commerce
Module 2: Trade and E-commerce
Module 3: E-Transaction
Module 4: Consumer Protection
Module 5: Payments and taxing E-commerce
Module 6: Protecting personal information
Module 7: Securing E-commerce
Module 8: Cybercrime
Module 9: Content regulation

The course content is accessed through TrainForTrade's distance learning platform. This provides access to module manuals, multimedia presentations, exams, opinion surveys and two end of course simulation exercises. Thanks to the fora, each module offers the possibility to discuss with the instructors and other participants, encouraging interaction and cooperation.

Two modules were completed per week, making a total of 5 weeks of training. The final week saw the addition of two optional simulation exercises. For the simulations participants were taken through real-world scenarios where they needed to decide the right course of action to take in mitigating challenges related to E-commerce.

A 90-minute follow-up webinar was organized to conclude the course. The topics covered during the webinar were selected from proposals submitted by the course participants during the on-line course.

For a more detailed outline, please refer to *Annex 1: Agenda of the e-learning course*.
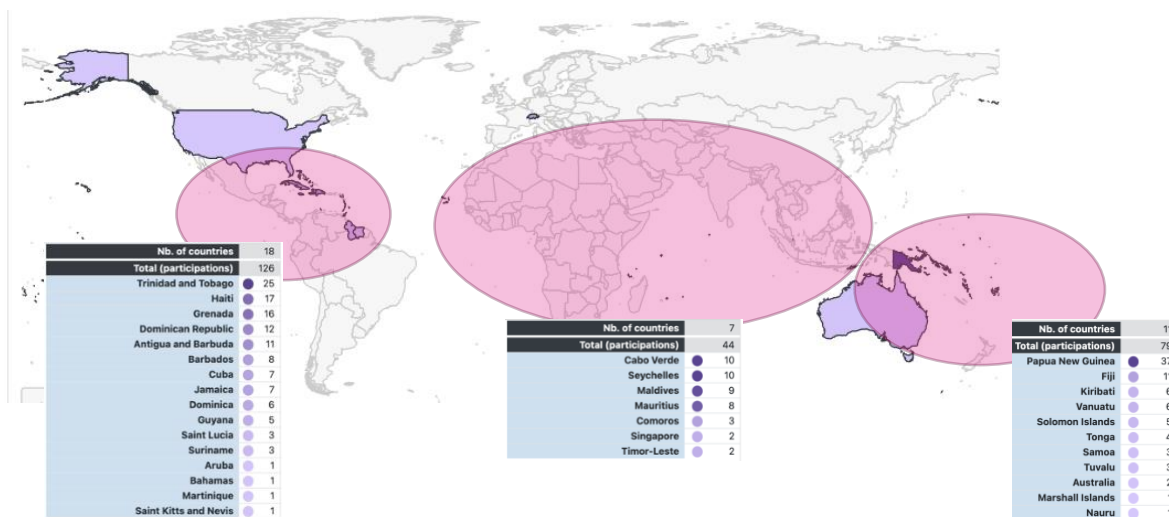
Course Participants

Primary Target

- **Policy and law makers:** regulators (enforcement agencies). Those in charge of defining general policy guidelines and elaborating national legal frameworks for e-commerce.

- **Judiciary:** lawyers, judges & law enforcement involved in electronic commerce issues
- **Service providers:** businesses offering online products and services.

By the closing of the application period, UNCTAD/TrainForTrade approved the registration of 282 participants from 37 countries. All participants were from UN designated SIDS with the addition of Australia (2 participants), Martinique (1 participant) and the United States (1 participant). 19 participants were accepted from international organizations. The course also saw 14 registrations from Switzerland, most of which were members permanent missions based in Geneva. Out of this total of 282, 145 participants initiated their activities in the course and 135 have completed it receiving a certificate of completion. The course contributed to women's empowerment: they represent 63.7 per cent of graduates (86 over 135). (For detailed information about participants, with breakdown by gender and countries, please refer to *Annex 3: Participants of the e-learning course*).

Figure 1. Registration by country

Nb. of countries	18
Total (participations)	126
Trinidad and Tobago	25
Haiti	17
Grenada	16
Dominican Republic	12
Antigua and Barbuda	11
Barbados	8
Cuba	7
Jamaica	7
Dominica	6
Guyana	5
Saint Lucia	3
Suriname	3
Aruba	1
Bahamas	1
Martinique	1
Saint Kitts and Nevis	1

Nb. of countries	7
Total (participations)	44
Cabo Verde	10
Seychelles	10
Maldives	9
Mauritius	8
Comoros	3
Singapore	2
Timor-Leste	2

Nb. of countries	11
Total (participations)	79
Papua New Guinea	37
Fiji	11
Kiribati	6
Vanuatu	6
Solomon Islands	5
Tonga	4
Samoa	3
Tuvalu	3
Australia	2
Marshall Islands	1
Nauru	1

Delivery of the Course

The on-line course was conducted from 30 October to 1 December 2023 with the follow-up webinar on 6 December 2023. The course was delivered in English. Registration and course participation were free of charge. Registered trainees were provided with the on-line platform user guide and the credentials to log-on to the TrainForTrade e-learning platform, where all the course material was available.

The e-learning course was conducted according to the established schedule (see *Annex 1: Agenda of the e-learning course*). During the five-week period participants had the opportunity to go through nine modules, learn through various multimedia means (manuals and videos), and to interact with other participants from different countries, facilitators, and experts in the discussion fora. These fora are a privileged place for the exchange of ideas, information, and experiences, ideally complementing the programme. Trainees could organize their study and their agenda, while knowing that they would be evaluated at the end of each week through an on-line test. The end of the nine modules saw two additional optional simulations replicating real-world scenarios of E-commerce related issues. The interactive simulations, themed around hacking and E-sales, take participants through situations where it is up to them to make decisions on what may be the best course of action.

At the end of each module, as well as at the end of the course, participants were invited to share their feedback and suggestions through opinion questionnaires. This will allow UNCTAD to improve the training material and the course organization in the future (for more information, please refer to *Course Evaluation*). The course follow-up was a webinar held on 6 December 2023 to clarify the different issues met during the course and present a selection of national case studies developed by the trainees.

Difficulties

In November 2023, the Southwest Pacific was struck by Cyclone Mal. Some registered participants faced challenges in accessing the course due to the weather event, making it difficult for them to participate.
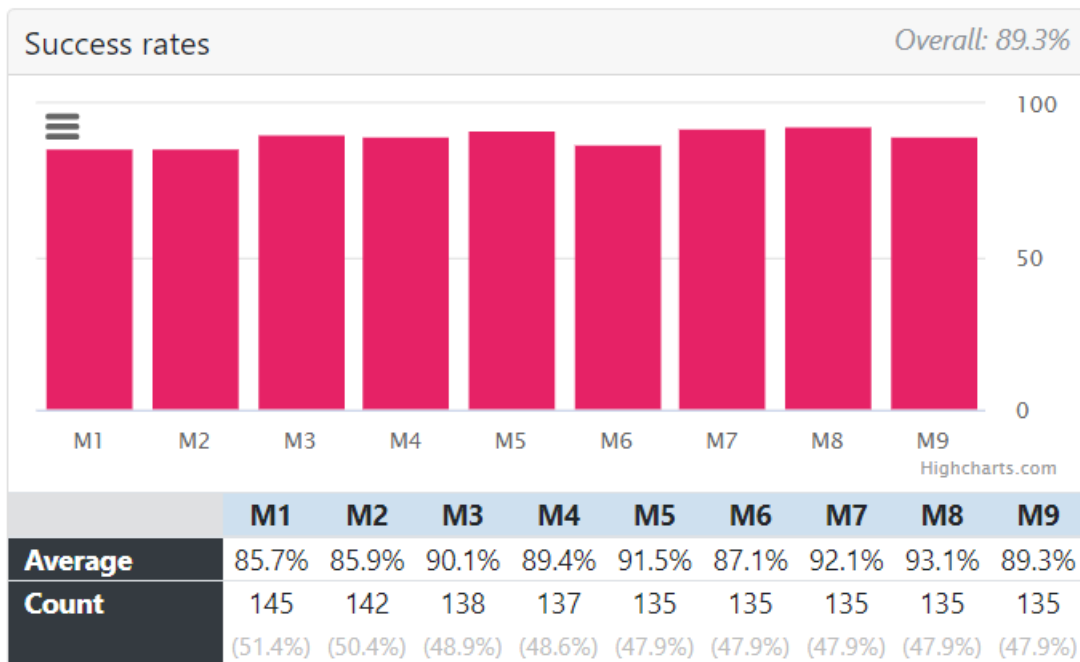
Main moderators for the fora:

Mr. Dan Svantesson, Mr. Dominique Chantrel and Ms. Ana Maria Rodriguez Riaño from UNCTAD moderated the discussions in the fora and provided technical assistance.

Course Results

At the end of each module, participants were evaluated on their newly acquired knowledge through a quiz. The average grade for specific modules ranged from 85.6 to 92.1 percent (see figure below).

Figure 2. Average grade (%) for quizzes for specific modules (M1-M9) in LAeC 2023 course

	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7	M8	M9
Average	85.7%	85.9%	90.1%	89.4%	91.5%	87.1%	92.1%	93.1%	89.3%
Count	145	142	138	137	135	135	135	135	135
	(51.4%)	(50.4%)	(48.9%)	(48.6%)	(47.9%)	(47.9%)	(47.9%)	(47.9%)	(47.9%)

Discussions in the fora

Participants engaged in discussions and exchanges with experts in the course's fora. **There was a total of 330 posts** exchanged focusing on topics covered by the course. A brief overview can be found in the figure below.

Figure 3. Number of posts in the different fora and the word cloud with the most frequent words used

Course Forum Exchanges
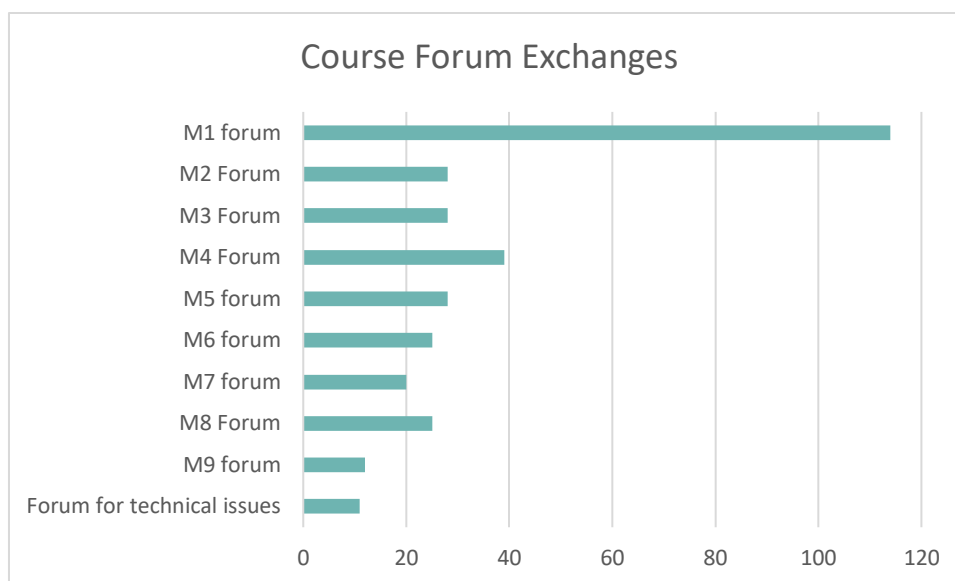
Course Evaluation

Participants were asked to evaluate both the course in general and the different modules. This system allows TrainForTrade to assess the learning process, the content's accuracy and the relevance of the course organization. **The satisfaction rates for all the modules were between 82.3 and 92.7 per cent** (see the figures below). Though quite high, the numbers reflect that there is still room for improvement.

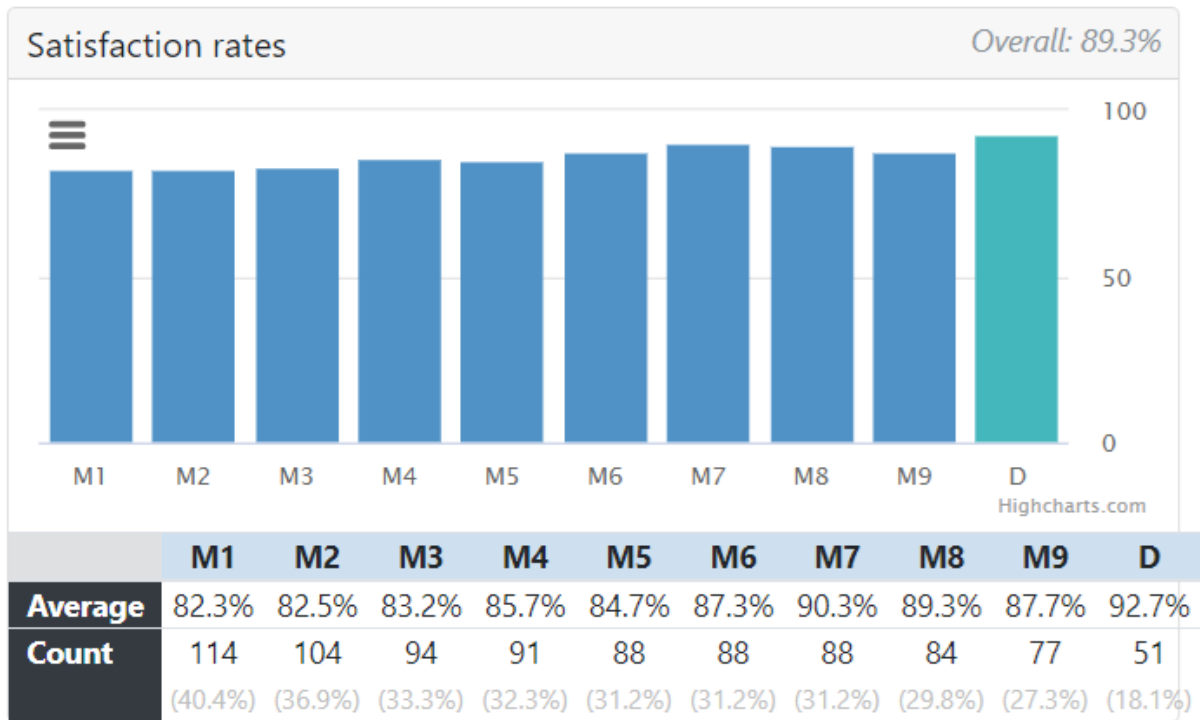**Figure 4. Satisfaction rates (%) for specific modules (M1-M9) and final feedback for LAeC 2023 course**

Satisfaction rates — Overall: 89.3%

	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7	M8	M9	D
Average	82.3%	82.5%	83.2%	85.7%	84.7%	87.3%	90.3%	89.3%	87.7%	92.7%
Count	114	104	94	91	88	88	88	84	77	51
	(40.4%)	(36.9%)	(33.3%)	(32.3%)	(31.2%)	(31.2%)	(31.2%)	(29.8%)	(27.3%)	(18.1%)

Figure 5. End of the course opinion questionnaire for LAeC 2023

Anonymous final feedback on the cours
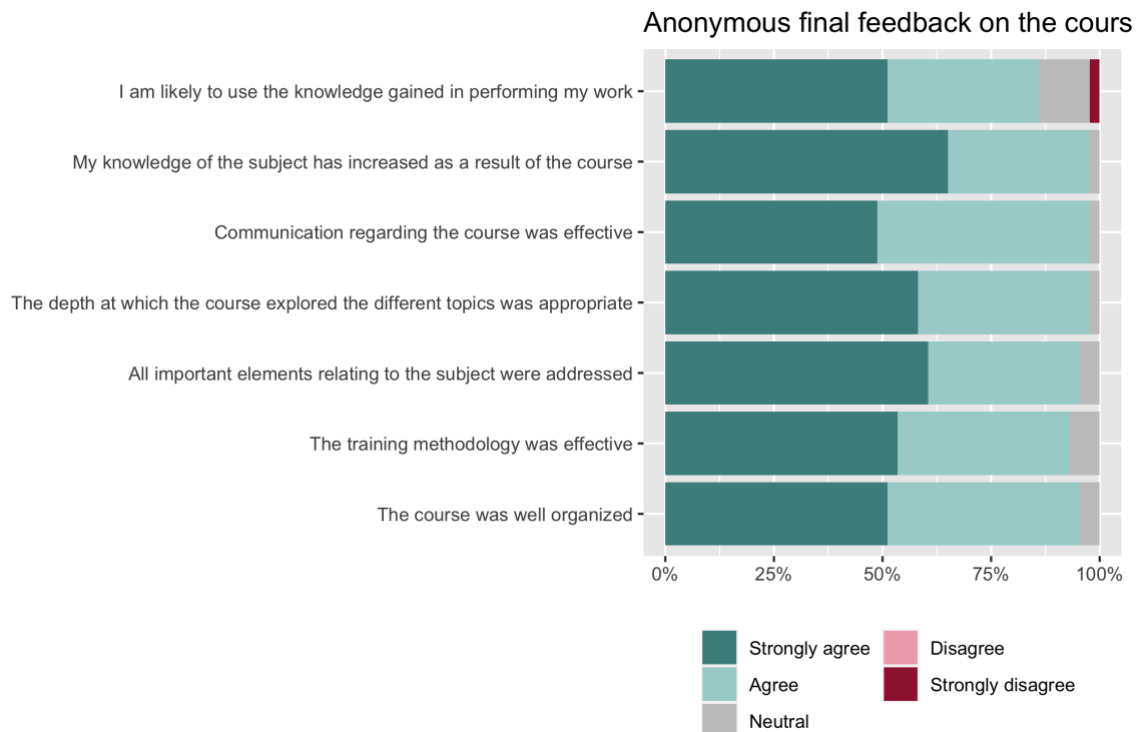
Final Opinion Questionnaire

Strengths of the course

The most popular strengths of the course were the real-life case studies, the course structure, the simulation exercises and the fact that the course was applicable to all and not to heavy when it came to legal jargon.

"The course's strength lies in its ability to equip participants with practical knowledge and analytical skills essential for navigating the complex landscape of e-commerce, making it a valuable resource for both beginners and professionals in the field."

"Self-Pace Learning increased accessibility for me as my work schedule would have made it difficult to attend in person sessions. I appreciated the flexibility and the assessment after each module. The use of modern-day examples."

"It consolidated a lot of information into a concise, but detailed document. Avoiding legalese is a bonus, as it allows those of us who are not lawyers to better understand typically complex topics."

"The course material and deliverance were very useful to complete the course. The game was very interesting and applicable."

"The strengths of a course on the Legal Aspects of e-Commerce lie in its ability to provide comprehensive understanding and knowledge in various areas relevant to the intersection of law and online business transactions."

"The various engaging follow-up activities after each module and the optional simulation exercise. These options reinforced the importance of various topics covered throughout the module."

Aspects to be improved

Participants made several suggestions for improvements. Many who work full-time posts were under the impression that two modules per week is too much. Others suggested more case-studies/real life examples in each module. And some showed their enjoyment of the course, asking for more webinars, simulations and additional sources of information.

"The time frame to complete the course was bit challenging for me, in that, 2 modules had to be completed within a week. In view that I was engaged in some other events, had faced some challenges to keep up with the course within the proposed timeline. But in general, I was able to complete it."

"I'd like to have a simulation game for each module."

"The course modules are long, considering that most participants are also working, making the course available on the portal for a longer time would allow needed flexibility."

"The incorporation of the wealth of e-commerce case stories for participants to get immersed in this exciting field. Example: Bankrupt crypto exchange FTX is under criminal investigation in The Bahamas."

"Share a reading list of articles on legal aspects of e-commerce to have a vantage point from industry about the challenges of e-commerce."

"The pace of the course was a bit fast to also balance with regular work duties. I enjoyed the course content a lot so I would not recommend a reduction of the work sheets for the modules but maybe two modules every other week to slow the pace a bit."

Testimonials

All aspects of the course generated positive feedback from the participants: the topic itself, the training materials and the method followed. Many underlined that the course was well organized and that its content provided a thorough and comprehensive introduction to the legal aspects of e-commerce, pointing out that the knowledge acquired will be helpful with their professional work.

"Right now, my country is about to approve its law on digital services, which encompasses e-commerce. It would have been great if I had taken this course in the preparatory phase of the law. However, the skills acquired will certainly help me in the phase of disseminating the law itself, both to economic operators and to the general public. Many issues related to the legal aspects of e-commerce were clarified." – Ms. Filomena Celso Silva Fernandes Semedo, Capo Verde

"The 'Legal Aspects of e-commerce 2023' course was a game-changer. It provided a deep dive into the intricate legalities governing online business. From contracts to privacy laws, it covered crucial aspects vital in today's digital marketplace. This course equipped me with the skills to navigate complex legal scenarios in e-commerce. I'll apply this knowledge to ensure businesses comply with regulations, mitigate risks, and craft solid legal strategies." – M. Rua Puka, Papua New Guinea

"It is relevant in contemporary times, and this necessitates the development of the legal infrastructure and policies to govern business transactions in this form. I do appreciate the content provided in the course, and it would be helpful for the work I do on the E-commerce file and the discussions at the WTO." – M. Colin Luckie, Guyana

"Digitalisation is the new normal. As such having a good grasp of how e-commerce is evolving and what are the underlying legal implications is essential, not only for policy and decision makers, but also for each and every user of the Information and Communication Technology. It is to be recalled that ignorantia juris non excusat, alias ignorance of law is no excuse. In this respect, the UNCTAD Legal Aspects of e-commerce online course is timely and a must for one and all." – Meenaksi Bhirugnath-Bhookhun, Mauritius

Follow-up webinar

The e-learning course was followed by a concluding webinar held on 6 December 2023. All course participants were invited to this opportunity and to go beyond the modules' content and share national and regional case studies. On the basis of their quality, the following five topics were selected to be featured during the sessions:

- Is it e-Legal? E-Commerce and Jurisdictional Issues in Australia, Ms. Courtney Tillman (Dentons, Australia)
- E-Commerce in Cabo Verde - Strategies and Regulations, Ms. Jónica Brito Tavares and Mr. António de Jesus Lopes Teixeira (Ministry of Industry, Trade and Energy, Cabo Verde)
- An Examination into e-Commerce Legislation in Antigua and Barbuda, Ms. Susan Jarvis (Government of Antigua and Barbuda, Antigua and Barbuda)
- Central Bank Digital Currencies - A Caribbean Perspective, Mr. Matthew Cowen (DGTL Futures, Martinique)
- Human Rights Issues in Haiti Related to Legal Aspect of e-Commerce, Mr. Réserme Leger (Inspection Générale des Finances, Haiti)

159 participants registered for the webinar. Mr. Dominique Chantrel and Mr. Dan Svantesson who developed the course took part in these two sessions summarizing the course content and exchanges as well as looking into policy recommendations and next steps. The webinar was moderated and supported by Mr. Tomasz Kulaga and Mr. Maxime Ladrière from UNCTAD/TrainForTrade.

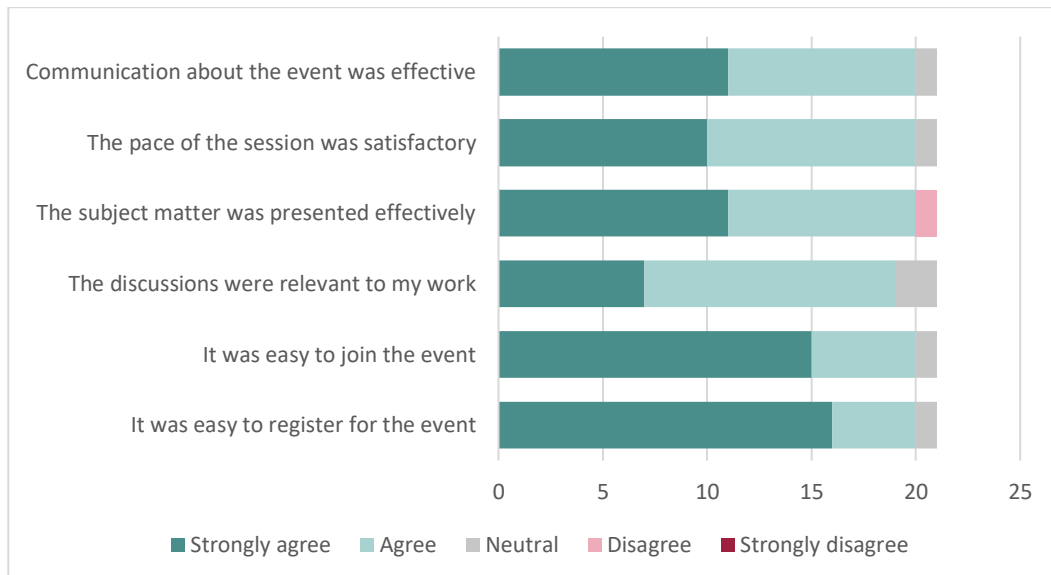Screenshot taken during one of the webinar

The webinar was conducted via Zoom. The slides shared during the event and its recording are available to course participants on the e-learning platform.

Feedback

Regarding the webinar, the satisfaction rate was 94 per cent with 21 responses (see figure below).

Figure 6. Evaluation of the LAeC 2023 webinar

Conclusions

The course enhanced capacities and enabled exchanges between public policy specialists and trade practitioners mostly from SIDS. According to participants, the methodology and the distance learning platform were efficient and adapted to the teaching objectives. Feedback highlighted the richness of case studies, the appropriateness of the course's progression, as well as the relevance of the modules'

subjects in view of the participants' background. The collected testimonies will be used to elaborate future courses and improve student learning.

TrainForTrade E-Learning Course on the Legal Aspects of E-commerce 2023

Organized by UNCTAD

from 30 October to 1 December 2023

Week	Module	Activities
Week 1 30 October – 3 November	1 and 2	Read the manual of Module 1 & 2 (PDF or EPUB)
		Watch the video M1 & M2
		Run quiz M1 & M2
		Give your feedback on M1 & M2 (Opinion questionnaire)
Week 2 6-10 November	3 and 4	Read the manual of Module 3 & 4 (PDF or EPUB)
		Watch the video M3 & M4
		Run quiz M3 & M4
		Give your feedback on M3 & M4 (Opinion questionnaire)
Week 3 13-17 November	5 and 6	Read the manual of Module 5 & 6 (PDF or EPUB)
		Watch the video M5 & M6
		Run quiz M5 & M6
		Give your feedback on M5 & M6 (Opinion questionnaire)
		Personal case study (optional)
Week 4 20-24 November	7 and 8	Read the manual of Module 7 & 8 (PDF or EPUB)
		Watch the video M7 & M8
		Run quiz M7 & M8
		Give your feedback on Module 4 (Opinion questionnaire)
Week 5 27 November – 1 December	9 and 2 simulations exercises	Read the manual of Module 9 (PDF or EPUB)
		Watch the video M9
		Run quiz M9
		Give your feedback on M9 (Opinion questionnaire)
		Run the game Hacking
		Run the game Saling
		Give your feedback on the 2 simulations
		Give the Overall feedback of the course
		Complete the Golden Book
Week 6 4-8 December	Webinars	One or two webinars on Wednesday, 6 December. Times to be specified in due time.

Annex 2: Participants of the e-learning course

The following two tables provide details about the participants' country of residence and gender for SIDS and other countries or areas and international organisations.

Country	Participants			Certificates		
	Total	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men
Antigua and Barbuda	11	6	5	7	4	3
Aruba	1	1	0	0	0	0
Australia	2	2	0	2	2	0
Bahamas	1	1	0	0	0	0
Barbados	8	7	1	3	2	1
Cabo Verde	10	6	4	7	4	3
Comoros	3	2	1	1	1	0
Cuba	7	4	3	1	1	0
Dominica	6	4	2	5	4	1
Dominican Republic	12	9	3	7	5	2
Fiji	11	5	6	7	2	5
Grenada	16	14	2	9	8	1
Guyana	5	5	0	3	3	0
Haiti	17	7	10	13	5	8
Jamaica	7	6	1	5	4	1
Kiribati	6	5	1	0	0	0
Maldives	9	3	6	2	0	2
Marshall Islands	1	1	0	1	1	0
Martinique	1	0	1	1	0	1
Mauritius	8	3	5	4	1	3
Nauru	1	0	1	0	0	0
Papua New Guinea	37	21	16	12	8	4
Saint Kitts and Nevis	1	1	0	1	1	0
Saint Lucia	3	1	2	0	0	0
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	1	1	0	0	0	0
Samoa	3	2	1	1	1	0
Seychelles	10	9	1	6	6	0
Singapore	2	0	2	1	0	1
Solomon Islands	5	3	2	1	1	0
Suriname	3	1	2	2	1	1
Switzerland	14	8	6	7	5	2
Timor-Leste	2	0	2	1	0	1
Tonga	4	2	2	1	0	1
Trinidad and Tobago	25	19	6	18	14	4
Tuvalu	3	2	1	1	1	0
United States of America	1	0	1	1	0	1
Vanuatu	6	1	5	0	0	0
International organisation	19	10	9	4	1	3
Total	**282**	**172**	**110**	**135**	**86**	**49**