



The Commonwealth Connectivity Agenda

CTU ICT WEEK 2024

SIDE EVENT - LEGAL REFORM AND DIGITALISATION WORKING GROUP

CONCEPT NOTE

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The Commonwealth's Legal Reform and Digitisation Working Group provides resources, advocacy, technical assistance, information sharing, and policy recommendations to assist Commonwealth member countries in navigating the legal reforms necessary for a smooth transition from paper-based to paperless trade.

This will enhance the efficiency, transparency, and environmental sustainability of Commonwealth trade, reduce costs, and ensure that Commonwealth countries keep pace with evolving trends in world trade.

In the digital age, paperless trade has emerged as an imperative for enhancing the speed, cost-effectiveness, and transparency of global commerce. Despite the acknowledged benefits, various legal challenges pose substantial barriers to adopting paperless trade.

These include differences in legal frameworks among countries, issues relating to digital signatures and identity and documents' legal recognition, and data protection concerns. Therefore, targeted legal reforms are crucial.

The Working Group assist member countries in making these legal reforms, focusing on two primary outputs:

1. **Commonwealth Model Legislative Text on Digital Trade:** a comprehensive and adaptable framework for legal reforms needed for Commonwealth member countries to transition to paperless trade.
2. **Legal Reform Roadmaps and Implementation Guidelines:** tailored legal reform roadmaps based on the country/regions' unique circumstances, existing legal frameworks, and national capacity. These roadmaps will outline the necessary steps needed to transition toward paperless trade, estimated timelines, and potential challenges to be resolved.

EVENT OBJECTIVES

This event aims to sensitise Commonwealth member countries and regional government officials to the work and outputs of the Working Group, and the support available from the Commonwealth Secretariat in assisting members in transitioning to paperless trade.

The event's objectives will be to:

- Present the Working Group on Legal Reform and Digitalisation to Commonwealth Caribbean member countries, raising awareness of its activities and the support available
- Invite participation from regional Commonwealth member countries in the regional Legal Reform Roadmap
- Invite participation/nomination of technical-level officials to the Working Group's Legal Consultative Taskforce
- Raise general awareness of the importance of the paperless trade transition and global progress towards this

TARGET AUDIENCE

- Ministers/Senior Officials from ministries with digital/trade/legal remit
- Legislators involved in drafting digital or trade related laws
- Representatives from regional/international organisations with digital/trade/legal focuses

FORMAT AND STRUCTURE

- 2-3 hour session
 - Opening remarks by senior officials from key Commonwealth regional members
 - Presentation from Commonwealth Secretariat on working group and support available to members
 - Intervention from legal expert on technical aspects of legislative reform
 - Belize case study as regional country having already undertaken legislative change - TBC