

# *World Trade, E-Commerce, and COVID-19: Role of and Implications for China's Electronic World Trade Platform (eWTP)*

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## *Abstract*

In 2016 Alibaba founder Jack Ma founded eWTP as both a commercial and a digital world trade lobbying platform. COVID-19 provided an important window for eWTP to demonstrate the power of its commercial digital commerce network for both commerce and aid purposes. Relief items, sold and donated, were rapidly distributed from China across Asia, Africa, and Europe. This article explains eWTP in principle and in practice. Evident is that eWTP played an important, targeted, and expansive role during the crisis and has demonstrated a capacity to unlock trade for developing countries and small and medium enterprises. It is, however, too early to tell if this will convert to long-run gains for eWTP itself. This owes to the pandemic having served as a bigger springboard for both the commercial and regulatory agenda that eWTP has been a front-runner of. The net long-run impact for eWTP is hence unclear.

Many countries in 2020 implemented containment measures and nonpharmaceutical interventions to halt the spread and fatalities of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Examples include social distancing

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