

**Introduction of the report of the Fifty-first Session of the
Joint Advisory Group of the International Trade Centre**

By

**Ambassador Frances Mary Lisson of Australia
Chair of the Joint Advisory Group,**

At the

**Sixty-fourth Session of the UNCTAD Trade and Development
Board**

20 September 2017

(H.E. Mr. Tudor Ulianoschi, Republic of Moldova)

Mr. Chairman,

Ladies and gentlemen,

As the Chair of the 2017 Joint Advisory Group, it is my pleasure to submit the report of the 51st JAG Session held at the World Trade Organization on 10 July 2017. The full report that I am going to present can be found in document ITC/AG(LI)/268.

At the JAG, ITC presented to member states its Annual Report for 2016, which clearly demonstrated that ITC delivered on its targets, diligently catering to the needs of those who need it the most, with an impressive 85% of country-specific interventions being channeled to LDCs, sub-Saharan Africa, landlocked developing countries, small island developing states, small, vulnerable economies, and post-conflict and fragile states. Similarly, ITC continued to prioritize marginalized segments of the society, through its work on Shetrades with the

economic empowerment of women, job creation for youth, and connecting refugees and migrants to markets.

ITC's crucial role within the Geneva trade hub was recognised by both WTO Director General Roberto Azevêdo and UNCTAD Secretary General Mukhisa Kituyi, who praised the highly complementary work among the three organizations, particularly in the areas of trade facilitation, e-solutions, trade and market intelligence and in strengthening the linkages between export development, investment, and entrepreneurship.

Executive Director of ITC, Arancha Gonzalez reminded of the continued strong demand for ITC services, as evidenced by a solid pipeline valued at over \$200 million and a delivery of \$85 million of trade and market intelligence, technical assistance and capacity building support. She noted that ITC's results were concrete; every \$1 invested in ITC resulted in \$14 of exports and investment, leading to \$685 million worth of additional exports and investment in 2016 for ITC direct and indirect beneficiaries.

This year, the JAG hosted several high level speakers who delivered special addresses on their experiences and collaboration with the ITC. Minister of Trade, Industry, Regional Integration and Employment of the Gambia, Dr. Isatou Touray, confirmed The Gambia's commitment to women's economic empowerment and reducing the high rates of youth unemployment. She highlighted the partnership between The Gambia, the European Union and ITC on the Youth Empowerment Project, which aims to create job opportunities and encourage entrepreneurship.

The African Union Commissioner for Trade and Industry, Mr. Albert Muchanga, stressed that the AU would like to collaborate with the ITC in implementing the Pan-African SME strategy to improve intra-African trade and competitiveness. Detailing several on-going projects between the ITC and the AU, Mr. Muchanga requested the ITC's support to achieve gender equality and to implement the framework of the Continental Free Trade Area.

The Minister of Commerce and Industry of Liberia, Mr. Axel Addy, highlighted that ITC's accession support and diagnostic on SME Competitiveness had been crucial to Liberia's trade policy.

The Minister for Commerce of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Engineer Khurram Dastgir Khan- who was the Minister at the time and is now the Minister of Defence- praised ITC's capacity building work and the progress made towards inclusive growth. ITC's studies had revealed the export potential of various sectors of the Pakistani economy and has helped to shape Pakistan's export enhancement policies.

Through their statements, members expressed appreciation for ITC's continued emphasis on promoting inclusive and sustainable trade and economic growth, and recognised how this contributed to the achievement of the SDGs.

Commenting on the ITC Annual Report 2016, delegates noted the positive results achieved during the year and that ITC had continued to respond to growing demand, despite budgetary pressures. Delegates applauded ITC's focus on its priority countries and urged ITC to work in post-conflict or fragile countries and to continue investing in LDCs.

Delegates recognized the considerable improvement of internal coherence and evaluation, and encouraged ITC to carry on its internal organizational alignment, as well as to pursue stronger evidence of impact. There was recognition of ITC's collaboration with various partners and for engaging and promoting synergies between the private sector and the government actors.

In terms of thematic focus, delegates highlighted value-chain development, South-South trade and regional integration, export promotion and diversification, reducing non-tariff measures, trade facilitation, in particular for implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement. There was clear support for ITC's work on SheTrades. Delegates appreciated ITC's commitment to sustainability and welcomed its work on Trade for Sustainable Development, in particular the Standards Map. They equally requested the opportunity to work further with tools such as the Export Potential Map and the SME Trade Academy.

The 2016 edition of the SME Competitiveness Outlook, with its focus on standards and regulations was welcomed by member states. ITC's work on tourism, e-commerce and e-learning were encouraged for further expansion.

With regards to areas for further improvement, ITC was asked to strengthen efforts to ensure that deliverables remain tailored to the context of clients. They equally requested that work on TISI development receive complementary support to provide better services for SMEs. They urged ITC to continue its efforts to diversify its funding mechanisms, while they called for existing and new funders to continue to invest in ITC.

Last but not least, delegates commended Executive Director Gonzalez for her leadership and ITC staff for their dedication and professionalism.

In the afternoon, ITC presented the 2017 Annual Evaluation Synthesis Report and the outline of its new Strategic Plan for 2018 – 2021.

The discussion on evaluation showcased the findings of the past year; synthesized lessons learnt and provided recommendations to ITC management for future operations. Overall the results were positive and the ITC was found to be on track in terms of its core business and management approach. In terms of project strategy, the programmatic approach has been progressively integrated into new project design. In terms of project services for clients, ITC's comparative advantage was confirmed to be in supporting SMEs in their efforts to internationalize.

On ITC's Strategic Plan 2018 – 2021 the discussion focused on ensuring the new strategy linked ITC's interventions to the SDGs, focused on customized approaches to the specific trade and development needs of its clients, and prioritized results and impact. Members were invited to further contribute to the consultative process.

Mr. Chairman,

Before I conclude, it is worth noting that on 25-27 September, ITC will hold its Trade for Sustainable Development Forum, with the opening day being held at the ITC. At the WTO Public Forum ITC will be leading on sessions on Shetrades, and sustainability initiatives and will also use the occasion to launch the findings of its SME E-commerce survey. On 5 October ITC will launch the third edition of its

flagship publication “SME Competitiveness Outlook 2017, which will address regional integration initiatives and value chains. This will be held at the WTO. On 25-26 October, in collaboration with the Government of Hungary, ITC will hold the 2017 edition of its annual World Export Development Forum in Budapest. I invite you to attend all of these important events.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.