

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

**H.E. Ms. Terhi Hakala, Ambassador, Permanent Mission of Finland
to the United Nations Office and International Organisations at
Geneva
Chair of the Joint Advisory Group,
At the**

**69th Session of the UNCTAD Executive Committee of the Trade and
Development Board,**

**06 February 2020
(H.E. Ambassador Michael Gaffey of Ireland)**

Mr. Chair,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to submit the report of the ITC's 53rd Joint Advisory Group Session held at the World Trade Organization on 2 July 2019. The full report that I will present can be found in the document ITC/AG (LIII)/276.

At the Joint Advisory Group meeting of 2019, Member States reviewed ITC's Annual Report 2018, which demonstrated that ITC's delivery went over and beyond most of its corporate goals and targets. Some of the key results included:

- Generating \$1.1 billion in exports and investment as a result of ITC's support, that corresponds to \$17 of exports and investments for each dollar invested in ITC;
- \$ 100 million delivery across all budgets;
- \$232 million extrabudgetary funds secured for 2019 and beyond;

- 86% of country-specific interventions delivered in LDCs, sub-Saharan Africa, landlocked developing countries, small-island developing states, small vulnerable economies, and post-conflict and fragile states.

ITC's crucial role within the Geneva trade hub was recognised by the heads of UNCTAD and WTO 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. It was equally stressed that the three organizations must maintain and scale up their collaboration to make trade more inclusive, promote development, and fight poverty.

The then Executive Director of ITC, Ms. Arancha González stressed that over the last two years, trade had become central to the global geo-politics and the role of MSMEs in supporting inclusive growth has been high on the agenda. She framed ITC's work as tangible proof of the value of multilateralism and solidarity on trade.

She reiterated that ITC transformed funders' contributions into market-based economic opportunities for MSMEs and the people at the base of the pyramid, resulting in improved livelihoods, reduced poverty and progress towards achieving the SDGs. Throughout its interventions, ITC placed particular emphasis on empowering women, young people and vulnerable communities to connect to market opportunities.

In 2018, despite a constrained financial environment, ITC sealed \$165 million worth of grant agreements that were larger, longer-term, and from a diverse source of funding. One aspect of this has been due to ITC's enhanced engagement with the private sector to become a more prominent partner. ITC partnered with Swiss retailer Coop to foster greater investment in the cocoa and yam sectors in Ghana. Similarly ITC partnered with UPS and Maersk to support women in trade, and with Huawei to build capacity for digital services.

To mark the point, at the JAG, ITC and the UEFA Foundation for Children signed an MoU to put the spotlight on youth – more particularly to demonstrate how trade can generate business and employment opportunities for youth – using football for development as an integrator for skills development and entrepreneurship. This partnership will be piloted in Guinea and The Gambia. H.E. Mr. Boubacar Barry, Minister of Trade of the Republic Guinea took part in the JAG and presented their approach to job creation for youth via entrepreneurship.

In addition, this year, three special guests addressed the JAG and provided insights into how to build on trade's contribution to structural transformation with regard to job creation and economic development in Eastern and Southern Africa, West Africa and Myanmar.

H.E. Ms. Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe, Secretary-General, COMESA stressed the importance of human capital development as a key driver of innovation, continued investments in physical infrastructure to reduce physical divide and to deepen regional economic integration.

Mr. Mamadou Traoré, Commissioner for Industry and the Private Sector, ECOWAS, recognised the AfCFTA as a driver for economic development. He noted the significant youth potential in the region and drew attention to technology and private sector transformation to strengthen productive capacities in West Africa.

H.E. Mr. U Aung Htoo, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Commerce, Republic of the Union of Myanmar, expressed the importance of equitable and inclusive private sector development and reiterated support to the multilateral trading system.

Through their statements, delegates called for greater support to multilateralism, recognising that the multilateral trading system was an important buffer against

complex global challenges. They expressed appreciation for ITC's continued emphasis on promoting inclusive and sustainable trade and economic growth, particularly in LDCs, fragile and post-conflict states, and recognised how this contributed to the achievement of the SDGs.

Several areas of ITC's work were emphasized by the member states. These include:

- ITC's global public goods and its suite of tools and solutions such as the Global Trade Helpdesk, the Rules of Origin Facilitator.
- ITC's work on National Export Strategies, measuring and addressing NTMs, its expertise in institutional capacity building, and supporting MSMEs across global value chains.
- ITC's work in fostering South-South trade; in agricultural sector, particularly in the Caribbean countries.
- ITC's work in fostering green economy and raising climate resilience and climate adaptation for MSMEs.
- ITC's work on youth entrepreneurship particularly in fragile contexts.
- ITC's advocacy and thought leadership on women's economic empowerment through the SheTrades Initiative, which is an effective mechanism to provide opportunities to women by connecting businesses to international buyers.

In terms of financing, ITC's funders expressed satisfaction with how ITC leveraged its financial resources, ITC's efforts to diversify its funders-base, as well as its continued emphasis on partnerships. To ensure the long-term sustainability of results, they recommended ITC to continue to foster local ownership and to further develop its existing risk management framework.

With regard to the presentation of the ITC 2019 Annual Evaluation Synthesis Report, this year's key learning theme was the issue of complexity. With the introduction of complexity in the analysis of ITC's interventions, the organization would be moving

from a project-focused approach to an on-going process of constant adjustment, flexibility and long-term interaction with stakeholders.

At the JAG, your statements served as your own countries' recognition and appreciation of the work of the ITC, both **funders** and beneficiaries alike. **It is a strong sign for ITC's management and staff of continued trust.** It is encouragement to continue the good work to strengthen trade capacity, reduce trade costs for small businesses and promote inclusive and sustainable development through investments in innovation and new business models.

Since the JAG in Summer 2019, ITC has continued to deliver. In November, it successfully held its annual WEDF in Ethiopia in partnership with the AU and the Ethiopian Government and just last month at Davos ITC helped to launch the SDG 500 which is a ground-breaking \$500 million investment platform to accelerate the progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

And a few dates for your calendar:

- May 27-28 will be the ITC's biannual World Trade Promotion Organisations and Awards event (WTPO) in Ghana;
- July 6 will be the date of the next JAG;
- and August 27-28 will be the World Export Development Forum in Mongolia with a focus on eco-tourism.

As you know, former ED Arancha Gonzalez has recently been appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs of Spain and Dorothy Tembo, former Deputy Executive Director is the current Acting Executive Director. I am sure I join you in congratulating Arancha and thanking her for her excellent piloting of ITC for six and a half years and expressing commitment to working with Dorothy during this interim period.

Thank you Mr. Chair.