

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

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Chargé d’Affairs of the Permanent Mission of Costa Rica  
to the WTO  
On behalf of the Joint Advisory Group,**

**At the  
67<sup>th</sup> Session of the UNCTAD Executive Committee of the Trade and  
Development Board**

**05 February 2019  
(H.E. Salim Baddoura of Lebanon)**

Mr. Chair,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to submit the report of the 52<sup>nd</sup> JAG Session held at the World Trade Organization on 10 July 2018. The full report that I am going to present can be found in document ITC/AG(LII)/272.

During the JAG 2018, ITC presented to the member states its Annual Report for 2017, which demonstrated that ITC continued to deliver on its targets. Some key results included generation of \$650 million of additional exports and investments – amounting to \$14 of exports and investments for each dollar invested in ITC. 86% of ITC’s country-specific interventions were delivered in geographies of priority that

spanned LDCs, sub-Saharan Africa, landlocked developing countries, small island developing states, small, vulnerable economies, and post-conflict and fragile states. In 2017, ITC reached its target of connecting 1 million women entrepreneurs to international markets originally scheduled for 2020, resulting in a new target of connecting 3 million women by 2021.

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. They emphasized that strong collaboration between ITC and its parent institutions must continue to ensure that trade genuinely contributes to improving people's lives.

At the JAG, Executive Director of ITC, Ms. Arancha González framed ITC's work as tangible proof of the value of multilateralism and solidarity on trade, rendering it more tangible, transparent and inclusive. She stressed that ITC transforms 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.

Ms. González explained how ITC is now "accelerating forward" with \$100 million in new extra-budgetary funding commitments and a growing size and longer duration of ITC's projects that allow for improved and sustainable results on the ground. She stressed that working with its multitude of partners ITC is expanding its work on new market intelligence tools, women's economic empowerment, youth

entrepreneurship, reinforcing South-South links for trade and investment, while continuously fostering innovation.

This year, JAG placed a spotlight on youth entrepreneurship for private sector development, growth, and job creation – even in difficult conditions. Hala Zarrok, founder of the event management company “Mariage”, and Michael Ocansey, co-founder of AgroCenta, a startup working to empower Ghanaian farmers through digital trade, expressed the crucial role the business-support ecosystem had played in their entrepreneurial journey. They echoed young entrepreneurs around the world by stressing that they need not only the support to succeed but also the safe space for trial and error. In a nutshell, they inspired all participants with their stories and their energy.

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.

Key areas of ITC’s work, including trade facilitation, addressing NTMs, TISI strengthening, integrating MSMEs into global value chains by developing their competitiveness and connecting them to markets, received appreciation and calls for continued engagement.

Delegates praised ITC’s advocacy role on trade, appreciated ITC’s global public goods and its suite of tools and solutions including SME Trade Helpdesk, Market Analysis Tools, Market Price Information portal, e-Ping, Export Potential Map, and others.

Several delegations praised ITC's effective advocacy and thought leadership on women's economic empowerment, through the SheTrades initiative and the piloting of the Buenos Aires Declaration on Women and Trade. Many called for further scaling up the SheTrades initiative. One delegation urged ITC to explore the development of a SheTrades certification to both incentivize and reward good practice.

Delegates applauded ITC's focus on its priority countries and urged ITC to continue to work in post-conflict and fragile countries and to continue investing in LDCs. They encouraged ITC to continue placing importance on bolstering youth entrepreneurship particularly in fragile contexts.

Multiple delegations said that ITC's analytical work, particularly through its publications such as the SME Competitiveness Outlook, had positioned ITC as a thought leader for policymakers in developed and developing countries. The 2017 edition's focus on regional trade was timely and useful for many.

With regards to the presentation of the ITC 2018 Annual Evaluation Synthesis Report, delegates supported its recommendations. Areas for improvement included sustainability, impact, objective setting and beneficiaries' buy-in and baseline data. Delegates recommended collecting better data would contribute to better project design, calling on continued focus on improving results and impact, and cost effectiveness, while ensuring scale.

In terms of funding, delegates noted increased financial commitments, ITC's efforts to diversify its funders-base, as well as its continued emphasis on partnerships. They called on ITC's funders for continued financing, and in particular increased un-

earmarked funding to allow the organization to plan for the future, address demand as it arises, invest in innovation and business development.

Delegates looked forward to strengthening their cooperation with ITC and encouraged ITC to be fully involved in the reform of the United Nations Development System.

Mr. Chair, before I conclude, and looking forward, I would like to announce that building on its spotlight on youth employment last year, ITC will launch its youth and trade strategy this year. We will all be looking out for that.

Finally, I would like to announce that ITC JAG meeting this year will be held on 02 July 2019 at the WTO, the day before the global Aid for Trade review.

Thank you Mr. Chair.