

WTPO 2012 Closing Remarks

Ms. Patricia Francis

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10 minutes

Datuk Dr. Rebecca Fatima Sta Maria,

Dr Wong Lai Sum,

Ladies and Gentlemen, distinguished delegates.

These two days have flown by incredibly fast. I enjoyed re-connecting with some old friends, making new acquaintances, celebrating the award winners and generally soaking in the energy of the conversations: I feel fortunate to have spent the past three days hearing and engaging with some of the smartest people who work on trade promotion. I also feel very fortunate to count many of you as friends.

When we closed WEDF in Jakarta on Wednesday there was a feeling that we have gained a better understanding of the trends that effect world trade and the challenges that lie ahead for policymakers, trade support institutions and exporters alike.

The last two days have given us the chance to go a lot further and see how some of the challenges identified can actually be tackled at the practical level. From benchmarking and assessment to managing sudden change, we have heard some incredible stories of not just innovations by TPOs but also their impact on exports, including SME exports.

For me, a few conversations really stood out - primarily because of the compelling solutions, perspectives and opportunities that they brought to life. Let me highlight three:

- It is uplifting to hear stories like El Salvador's PROMESEA's, which has reinvented itself in the midst of the economic crisis and has played midwife to the creation of exports that did not exist before. So when you see or hear of Salvadorian plastics and pharmaceuticals in Ecuador – think of Promesea.
- Or take Kazakhstan's Kanex Invest, which after only 4 years of operation can demonstrate that every dollar it received in government funding generated \$56 in new exports.

- Third, we have seen how identifying niche markets and moving early into those markets can lead to the establishment of important market positions. As we heard, Malaysia has gained important benefits from recognizing early the importance of Halal and it continues to develop that market and hold on to its strong export position.

For ITC, the session on Assessment and Benchmarking has revealed that our programme has come of age: many of the TPOs who had been through it have acted on the findings and have come out stronger.

After two years of hard work by ITC and the TPOs that were our guinea pigs, our pilot has turned into a major product with a track record and responded to a request which you our clients had asked us for in our client surveys over the last couple of years.

As we roll out this programme further, I hope many of you will take advantage of it and in two years' time we will hear more success stories of TPO improvement and export growth.

So what's next and where do we go from here?

Clearly we TPOs need to do a better job of selling ourselves. We are a bit like the proverbial cobbler, whose own children have no shoes: we help market our clients, but our own work often goes unnoticed in the eyes of decision makers and the wider public.

Many of you have talked about the importance of communicating to stakeholders of making them understand the impact your work has. We all know of the World Bank study that concluded a 10% increase in the budget of a TPO produces an expansion of exports of between 0.6% and 1.0% - a multiplier of about 50. But does anybody else know? Our exporters, politicians and the budget hawks at the Ministry of Finance?

As Ms Pilar Lozano Ramirez of Proexport Columbia put it so succinctly yesterday, the best way to promote ourselves is to show that we are achieving results, how we are doing it, and that we are doing it in the right way. I share Jean-Marie's belief that by our next conference we need to make major strides towards a best practice methodology of impact measurement.

At ITC we often talk about ourselves as a Global TPO, which needs all of you to be able to deliver impact to exporters. Similarly to our situation, you also often do not have the contact with all of those that could benefit from your assistance.

In order to increase their impact TPOs need to establish ties with sector associations and other private sector trade support institutions to further enhance the distribution of good practices and build strong bridges with the private sector.

All of us will leave the conference energized; contemplating what we can concretely implement from the stories we have heard from our peers. For ITC a key take away has to be the importance of facilitating the sharing of knowledge and best practices among members of the worldwide TPO community.

We are committing ourselves to the establishment of a TPO networking programme and of an online networking community that will allow the conversations to take place virtually, in real time, all the time. We will be in touch with you to seek your input as we develop this platform. Once we

have created a lively network, the biannual TPO conference will retain its relevance but will change in nature: we will not go there to find out about each other's stories and learn best practices, but will use the time together to build on the best practices, contrast and debate.

For me personally, however, this has been my last WTPO Conference. Since my term as ITC Executive Director ends in June, I will not be there in Dubai in 2014 to enjoy the energy of this vibrant city and of the equally vibrant TPO community. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank you for what you have taught me over the years first as a TPO and then as the ED of ITC: seeing new horizons, determination to succeed and the importance of concrete results.

Before handing over to Dr Wong to close the event, let me congratulate this year's award winners once again: the Uganda Export Promotion Board, Jamaica Promotions Corporation, ProMéxico and Advantage Austria.

I would also like to thank all of you who have who made this conference possible. MATRADE, the Government of Malaysia, the team at ITC, and you for your time and contributions. With co-organizing and hosting this conference MATRADE has proven once again that they are indeed one of

the most professional and impressive TPOs not just in the region but in the world.

Thank you and safe journey home!

