

Mr. Jaime Coghi Arias, Minister Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Costa Rica to the World Trade Organization, the Outgoing Chair,  
Mr. Roberto Azevêdo, Director-General of the WTO,  
Dr. Mukhisa Kituyi, Secretary-General of UNCTAD,  
Ms. Arancha González, Executive Director of the International Trade Centre (ITC),  
Excellencies, distinguished participants,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I welcome you all to the 53rd session of ITC's Joint Advisory Group. I am honoured to chair the JAG this year, and I thank Minister Counsellor, Mr. Jaime Coghi Arias, for his warm welcome.

ITC's role is to make trade happen. That is, to make it possible for businesses to take advantage of the market opportunities defined here and elsewhere. But ITC's work goes beyond making trade happen. Through its expertise, knowhow, and engagement with strategic partners, ITC works to make good trade happen – trade that promotes growth that is equitable, socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable. Because of this focus, ITC prioritises micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises – these firms employ the vast majority of people, making them critical to achieving inclusive growth.

This corresponds perfectly to also Finland's development cooperation priorities. We have been supporting ITC's work for a long time as we see that our priorities are well aligned. ITC has been able to achieve excellent results and made real changes in people's lives in developing countries. We appreciate that significantly.

ITC's work focuses on the countries and communities where inclusive, equitable and green growth matters the most – which is to say, least-developed countries, land-locked developing countries, small-island developing states, small vulnerable economies, post-conflict and fragile states. 86% of ITC's country-specific interventions in 2018 were in these priority countries.

What does this mean in practice?

- From rural Afghanistan to refugee camps in Kenya, ITC is working to connect small-scale entrepreneurs and freelancers to international value chains for goods and services, leading to higher incomes and improved prospects.
- ITC helps MSMEs cope with climate change. In Morocco's textile and agro-processing industries and Kenya's tea, coffee and cut flower sectors, ITC is supporting businesses to develop and implement climate adaptation and mitigation strategies such as obtaining international environmental management certification or replacing firewood with solar energy.
- ITC continues to partner with governments and businesses to address constraints facing women entrepreneurs in the world economy. In 2018, ITC built on the Buenos Aires Declaration on Women and Trade, supporting seminars for WTO members on issues such as financial inclusion, public procurement and international value chains.

Finland supports these areas with great interest. Our first policy priority is to enhance the rights and status of women and girls. Finland also wants to help developing countries to make their economies stronger, more diversified and more inclusive. Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises are essential here. Finland has also increased development cooperation in fragile states, Afghanistan being the largest fragile state recipient of our aid.

The report before you gives insights into ITC's delivery in 2018. The results, as Minister Counsellor Coghi Arias said, are impressive.

In short, through its services on the ground, its global public goods, and its thought leadership, ITC works toward to our shared objective of making trade work for all. ITC interventions contribute directly to 10 Sustainable Development Goals.

I thank you for your attention.