

## **Chairperson's Closing Remarks**

### **55<sup>th</sup> Session of the Joint Advisory Group**

Excellencies, distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen.

Let me start by thanking UNCTAD for hosting our return to an in-person JAG in this hybrid format.

We are grateful to all the delegates who have joined us today - at the Palais and online - who have shared their views and feedback on the ITC's recent and future work. Through these lively and productive discussions, we will continue to strengthen our cooperative efforts.

Allow me to congratulate you, Executive Director, on your second successful session of the JAG, a month after your first anniversary since you took the helm of ITC.

You said today in your opening remarks that “trade has never been more critical to building back on better foundations”. And I firmly agree.

During this session, we heard from UNCTAD on the fruitful partnership they have enjoyed with ITC. They noted your joint work on women’s economic empowerment, e-commerce, trade facilitation and more. We are certain that the Barbados Covenant will have a positive impact on how we pursue recovery efforts and inclusive economic policies.

We also heard from the WTO, sharing the tangible outcomes from the continued collaboration with ITC on agriculture, green trade, gender and MSMEs. We wish the WTO a successful Ministerial Conference this month.

Over the course of the day, we heard from representatives who voiced their support for ITC’s work, their hopes for the future and where greater attention should be given.

Speakers commended ITC's agile response to deliver much needed technical assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic. They expressed their approval for the results shown in the 2020 Annual Report.

Many speakers noted the continued challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. They asked that priority be placed on MSMEs and helping those who are furthest behind.

In this regard, speakers appreciated the inclusion of a specific focus on LDCs, landlocked developing countries, small island developing states and fragile states in the Annual Report.

They applauded the effectiveness of ITC's tools and resources to support MSMEs in developing countries, especially the e-learning platforms. This proved to be a valuable resource for MSMEs.

The importance of digitalization in the adaptability of MSMEs during the pandemic was highlighted by some

speakers. Digitalization was recognized not only for its role in trade facilitation efforts but also in the competitiveness and connectivity of MSMEs in developing countries in a challenging trade landscape. They expressed their approval to accelerate the integration of digital solutions.

Speakers also expressed their approval for ITC's work on women in trade, noting the significant strides made by the SheTrades programme to connect women entrepreneurs to international markets.

Facilitating green trade was a key theme for many speakers. They stressed the importance of a green recovery post-pandemic. They voiced their support for increased mainstreaming efforts for cleaner and greener trade for MSMEs and regional value chains, especially in agriculture.

Several speakers also appreciated ITC's continued actions to foster inter-agency cooperation. They stressed the importance of collective action for economic recovery and

expressed their belief that ITC's role as an aid for trade organization could add value to global discourse and progress towards achievement of the sustainable development goals.

And finally, we heard appreciation of the consultation process for the new Strategic Plan and agreement on the direction of travel that the Executive Director has laid out.

I would like to thank all of the speakers for their interventions and valuable insights shared today.

Without further ado, I wish to invite Executive Director Coke-Hamilton to close the 55<sup>th</sup> Session of the Joint Advisory Group.

Thank you.