

Statement of Egypt
International Trade Centre
49th Joint Advisory Group (JAG)
Friday, 24 June 2015 - 10h00

Madame Chair,

At the outset, the delegation of Egypt would like to thank the outgoing Chair H.E. Ambassador Mariam Salleh for her capable chairmanship of the JAG for the last year and wish her all the best for her future endeavors, and also, welcome the new Chair H.E. Ambassador Patricia O'Brien.

Let me also express our thanks to the ITC and the WTO as well as UNCTAD for their longstanding support to Egypt, which includes providing technical assistance and enhancing cooperation with a special focus on trade promotion and export-led institutional support.

Madame Chair,

Egypt has taken robust strides towards reform, at the political, economic and social levels. Maintaining reforms is a priority to restore confidence in Egypt's economy, the policies being adopted to revamp the economy aim at increasing openness to trade and increasing competitiveness in the business environment.

It is worth mentioning in that respect the Egypt Economic Development Conference that took place in Sharm El Sheikh last March, a milestone of the government's medium term economic development plan designed to bring prosperity and improved social services to the people of Egypt. The Conference attracted leading global figures from business and politics, it highlighted the extensive reforms the government has already implemented and showcased future reforms designed to restore fiscal stability, drive growth and attract investment with the overarching aim of improving the welfare of the Egyptian people. It was an opportunity that repositioned Egypt on the global investment map and affirmed its potential as a source of political and economic stability in the region and a trusted partner on the international stage.

It is our belief that real social justice cannot be simply realized by the provision of benefits and grants to less privileged citizens, but can only be realized by forming well balanced economic relations, ensuring social protection and giving each person the opportunity to prosper, in a manner that exhibits sustainability, transparency and justice.

There is a need to create a new mainstream for society, a mainstream conscious of the necessity to encourage investments, prioritize productivity, and raise the welfare standards of the people and for the people, ensuring that all Egyptians benefit the rewards of growth and prosperity.

Egypt's rapidly growing population (the largest in the Arab world), limited arable land, and dependence on the Nile all continue to overtax resources and stress society. The government is challenged to meet the demands of Egypt's population through economic reform and massive investment in communications and physical infrastructure.

We believe that we will overcome our challenges by generating more job opportunities, and encouraging increased investments in education and capacity building, while addressing horizontal issues including the poverty alleviation among youth and women, as well as the gender inequalities.

Madame Chair,

Having said that, it is quite essential to make reference to a Programme, that has been implemented by the ITC, and came to an end two years ago: 'Enhancing Arab Capacity for Trade - EnACT'; this Programme aimed at reinforcing trade policy, trade promotion and competitiveness in five Arab countries including Egypt.

EnACT had a particular area of focus to streamline the role of women and the youth in export related activities through strengthening capacity building, allowing for export related employment creation, in particular enabling women and youth to be more equipped to secure and sustain their jobs in the export sector.

Egypt has also benefited from the Non-Tariff Measures Survey, its results led to better inform stakeholders - from both Business and Government - on trade and industrial policy, and on means to remove obstacles to trade.

Therefore, it is imperative to highlight the outcome such programs bring to Egypt, and notwithstanding the current Aid for Trade Initiative for Arab States. The latter includes important activities undertaken by the ITC. I would like therefore, to seize this opportunity to express our strong willingness for the ITC to pursue more programs on a regional basis or on a bilateral one dedicated to Egypt. This is whilst taking into consideration the challenges we are facing with the increased necessity to stimulate the economy and combat unemployment.

Finally, we would like to express our appreciation to the Government of Canada for its generous financial support to the EnACT Programme, and we would be further encouraging them to continue their support for technical assistance in Egypt in the very near future. And we would also call upon other partners and donor countries to consider initiating new programs with the ITC in the same spirit of the EnACT.

And last but not least, special thanks and appreciation go to the outstanding work and efforts of the ITC team under the proficient and talented leadership of the Executive Director Ms. Arancha González.

Thank you.