

**Common donor statement to Joint Advisory Group (JAG) of the International Trade Centre (ITC) on
4 July 2016**

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This statement is being delivered on behalf of Australia, Canada, Finland, France, Ireland, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States, the European Union and my own country Germany, in our capacity as donor coordinator for ITC.

Chair,

Global Context

2015 was the year of multilateralism with the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Climate Agreement, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the 10th Ministerial Conference of the WTO held in Nairobi. These were important steps towards creating a more sustainable world in its three dimensions: economic, social and environmental.

2016 is the year where we need to start transforming these agreements into concrete action at the global regional and local level. We welcome in this regard that ITC has proactively outlined how it intends to support and contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Ending poverty and hunger, achieving gender equality, decent work and economic growth, reducing inequalities, supporting sustainable consumption and production, increasing the exports of developing countries and building strong institutions are among the SDGs, towards which ITC is ready to contribute. ITC also outlines how it wants to achieve this, including by building strong partnerships with a variety of stakeholders and by supporting the private sector, esp. small and medium sized enterprises in developing countries.

Trade is an important issue in this context because it directly relates to all three dimensions of sustainable development and can foster inclusive and sustainable growth and economic development. Economically, trade can help to foster growth and generate jobs and income. Socially, trade can help to lift people out of poverty and reduce inequalities. Environmentally, trade can help to promote a more sustainable use of resources. We also look forward to a successful conclusion of the UNCTAD XIV Conference in Nairobi later this month.

ITC's aim is to promote SME's international competitiveness. And it can be seen as a model of how partnerships could be designed in the framework of the 2030 Agenda as it is used to engaging in partnerships with a variety of stakeholders including public institutions, academia and the private sector.

We also welcome ITC's leadership on gender equality and the empowerment of women and ITC's continued drive for innovation, including the SheTrades App, the new annual flagship SME Competiveness Outlook Report and the e-commerce caravan.

Chair,

After these opening remarks of a more general nature I would now like to use this opportunity to focus on some more specific issues:

Strategic Plan

ITC's strategy is designed to make ITC's work more focused and more results oriented. We appreciate that ITC has made good progress against its strategic plan and in operationalizing the programmatic approach. This has led to the establishment of organization-wide and program-specific theories of change and we look forward to their dissemination.

We support ITC's continued special focus on priority countries, which include Sub-Saharan Africa and the LDCs. At the same time we would like to underscore the "global public goods" nature of many of its global products, including StandardsMap and the e-Academy, which support SME and trade support and investment institutions no matter where they are located. We also appreciate that ITC is defining how its own expertise allows it to make a contribution to address the challenges related to unprecedented levels of displacement.

We value the establishment of informal fora for discussion and exchange, and look forward to them being used as we move towards the drafting of the next strategic plan. We also look forward to the development and early finalization of the operational plan for 2017.

Annual Report

The annual report provides, in a very comprehensive manner, a good overview of the results of ITC's work. ITC has achieved a record delivery in 2015, it has delivered more technical assistance and capacity building and it has attracted more users to its analytical and information tools. We recognize the good performance against the revised targets set for the year 2015. We acknowledge the challenges posed to ITC's performance by severe weather, health and natural disasters as they work with partner countries.

We appreciate the innovative approaches to measure the impact of ITC's programmes, which are currently being piloted and look forward to seeing how these initiatives will help to further improve the way in which ITC captures and is able to communicate the results of its interventions.

Financial status and reporting

The formal CCITF meeting, which was held three weeks ago, provided a good occasion to discuss ITC's financial situation, the operational plan for 2016 and the status of implementation of the recommendations from the independent evaluations.

Donors appreciate that there is now more clarity on how the overall resources available to ITC – both from regular contributions via the UN and WTO – as well as the voluntary contributions through the ITC Trust Fund – are being put to use and help the organization to achieve results. For the coming year, we hope to be able to understand even better the portion of the overall funding which is used for classical management and oversight functions and which portion can not necessarily be directly attributed to one of the six focus areas.

We recognize that the current financial situation and climate represent a challenge for ITC, but are encouraged to see that some of the dividends of the reforms undertaken are starting to come in. Furthermore, we look forward to understand more on ITC's plans to further broaden its donor base and strengthen its partnerships (especially with the private sector) as we see its work as crucial to improve the lives of so many people around the world.

Evaluations

We are encouraged by the way ITC deals with evaluations: The progress made concerning the implementation of recommendations of the two independent evaluations is welcomed, as is ITC's proactive initiative to receive additional external feedback on the way it operates.

We also appreciate that additional attention is being given to internal evaluations and monitoring, in order to further strengthen the process of continuous learning and improvement within the organization and to be able to monitor results on impact-level.

Conclusion

Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals will require further strengthening multistakeholder partnerships and identifying innovative multisectoral approaches. ITC is uniquely positioned to work with and in support of the private sector in order to maximize the contribution of the private sector in achieving the Goals.

But is also worth looking beyond these rather abstract concepts in order to understand why this really matters. Let me therefore just pick one concrete example from the Annual Report:

ITC's support to women working in the Raffia Sector in Madagascar:

ITC's intervention focused on training women challenged by declining yields with the aim of ensuring climate awareness and resilience. Due to these training programs, Madagascan women increased their productivity through improved product design and direct sales. This resulted in increased income levels in communities reliant on raffia for their livelihoods. At the same time, the intervention helped to build climate resilience, improve sustainability practices and ensure long-term profitability. It is only one example of an ITC program, but it illustrates how ITC's approach has a positive impact on the livelihoods of populations at the bottom of the pyramid while at the same time fostering sustainability.

Let me close by thanking Arancha González and the entire ITC team for the hard work in the past year and for the openness to learn from others – be it evaluators, SMEs in developing countries, multinationals or development partners. We look forward to working with ITC to further strengthen our collaborative efforts in support of sustainable development.

Thank you.