

ITC, Joint Advisory Group 10 July 2017*Check against delivery***Norway**

Norway would like to start by commending ITC for the way ITC tracks the organisation's contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals. The links between ITC programmes and projects and selected SDG targets serve as good illustrations of the importance of ITC's work. We believe this demonstrates ITC's dedication to the Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals. We would encourage other organisations to follow ITC's example.

Global growth and trade are finally picking up speed. Still, growth in many developing countries is trailing behind. A particular worry is the growth levels in Africa South of Sahara. In this region, average growth is barely expected to surpass population growth. In this regard, Norway is pleased to note that over 85 % of country-specific assistance was provided to ITC's priority countries last year, including in particular the least developed countries. Targeting those most in need of assistance is an important strategic choice.

ITC and Norway are now in the process of entering into a new multi-year cooperation agreement. The new agreement will ensure better predictability for ITC. The bigger part of our grant will not be earmarked and therefore contribute to all six focus areas.

Improving the economic status of women has its own inherent value, but it is also beneficial to society as a whole as it leads to increased tax revenues, economic growth and poverty reduction. Gender equality is both a priority area and a cross-cutting issue for ITC. On the Norwegian side, we have a new and updated Action Plan for women's rights and gender equality. We are pleased to have ITC as an important partner in our efforts for the economic empowerment of women.

In closing, I would like to join others in thanking Arancha Gonzalez and the rest of the ITC team for their dedication and hard work.

Thank you.