

**Philippine Statement on the 55<sup>th</sup> Session of the ITC Joint Advisory Group**  
2 November 2021, 10am

Thank you, Mr. Chair.<sup>1</sup>

The Philippines congratulates you on your assumption as Chair of the 55<sup>th</sup> Session of the Joint Advisory Group (JAG) Meeting. We also thank the ITC for organizing this annual meeting to update Members on ITC's activities and exchange views on its work program.

As a joint agency of the United Nations and the World Trade Organization, the ITC plays an institutional role in supporting developing countries like the Philippines to realize the benefits from an open and fair multilateral trading system. The ITC is an important partner of the Philippines in promoting trade as an effective way to achieve inclusive and sustainable economic development. It plays a critical role in our shared objective of improving MSMEs' global competitiveness and participation in international trade.

The Philippines is pleased to have established, through the years, a robust partnership with ITC in strengthening the integration of our business sectors and fostering the participation of our MSMEs in the global market. MSMEs are the economic lifeblood of the Philippines as they are the embodiment of inclusive and sustainable growth.

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<sup>1</sup> H.E. Mr. Paul Bekkers, Ambassador, Permanent Representative to the WTO, Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva

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We have successfully collaborated with ITC in various projects in the past and we look forward to our continued partnership through the ongoing initiatives, such as the Global Trade Helpdesk, the SheTrades initiative, and the EU-funded ARISE Plus project which all contribute to the strengthening of the integration of our business sectors and MSMEs in the international market.

As among the early users of the Global Trade Helpdesk, the Philippines welcomes the official rollout of the improved and expanded platform providing accessible, timely and relevant trade intelligence to MSMEs. We have also supported the inclusion of the Global Trade Helpdesk in the WTO Informal Working Group on MSMEs' package of recommendations to enhance MSME engagement in the global marketplace and have committed our support to continue providing information to the platform.

Moreover, we are glad to continue our cooperation on the SheTrades initiative to further strengthen our country's efforts in promoting women's economic empowerment and provide Filipino women entrepreneurs and women-owned SMEs with a unique network and platform to connect to markets. Likewise, we are delighted to collaborate with ITC on the ARISE Plus Philippines to foster inclusive economic growth in the Philippines through improved international trade performance and competitiveness as well as economic integration.

In closing, the Philippines remains committed to our collaboration with ITC. We appreciate ITC's partnership with the Philippines, and we look forward to

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continuing working together with you in helping MSMEs reach their full potential in the global market.

Thank you, Chair.