

Thank you Chair,

First of all I would like to echo others in welcoming you ambassador as a new chair, and also thank the representatives in the panel for delivering inspiring statements today.

Turning to the Annual report I have some comments to share from our perspective.

Overall, we find that ITC has achieved an impressive upscaling of activities and for surpassing most targets set for 2018. ITC continues to provide critical public goods to facilitate for MSME to trade, raise incomes, create employment make structural transformation happen and making use of the opportunities offered by e-commerce. The opportunities and pressures created by the expansion requires close attention to internal control systems and we are happy to see steps taken in this regard.

The Independent Evaluation Units, in their Annual Evaluation Synthesis Report 2018 provide useful recommendations as to how the you can improve the sustainability of your results.

Recommendations include paying even greater emphasis on ensuring local ownership, being more flexible, innovative and giving greater attention to the ecosystem surrounding the Trade and Investment Institution and SMEs more directly involved in projects. We welcome that you have increased your investment in the capacities of key, local institutions, increased UN coordination, and that you have managed to longer and larger engagements to improve the sustainability of results and increase leverage beyond individual ITC projects.

Working in places with a favorable enabling environment is one way to increase the chances of sustained results. At the same time, we know that the needs are often the greatest where institutions are weak, where you, together with other actors have to build an enabling environment. We will continue to support you in working in challenging environments such as LDCs and post conflict and fragile states. Afghanistan is one such place and the report includes case studies showing how you innovate to establish necessary ties and skills to increase trade.

ITC is an important actor promoting the transformation to more inclusive and sustainable value chains. In the joint donor statement, Carl Christian made reference to the record heat waves in Europe and the important work ITC is doing in increasing the climate resilience of SMEs in some of its programmes. The UN special rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights last week published a report on climate change saying that "Climate change threatens to undo the last 50 years of progress in development, global health, and poverty reduction," Further upscaling of ITCs work with TISIs and SMEs on making value chains climate resilient and in promoting a green economy, adapted to local contexts, will be critical.

Finally, Throughout the annual report we see examples of how ITC is promoting women's economic empowerment, in your own wording "not simply as a moral imperative" but as a "practical necessity for countries to reach their development potential". ITCs experiences and approaches are worth sharing more broadly. We are looking forward to seeing more in future reporting how gender, youth and environmental sustainability is being mainstreamed for greater competitiveness and better impact.

Chair to sum up, we would like to express our appreciation for a good report, for good progress made and not least, for the hard and professional work by you Executive Director, the senior management team and the staff.

