

I would like to begin this statement by expressing my sincere gratitude to ITC for another successful year of valuable support provided to Tajikistan that contributes to increasing our international trade and competitiveness. I would also like to thank the donors, in particular SECO and the European Union, for their funding which has made this support possible.

ITC has been working in Tajikistan since 2002 in the framework of several trade development projects. Through these projects ITC helped Tajikistan foster the competitiveness of SMEs in agro-processing as well as textile and clothing sectors, lately through the GTEX project. ITC also has been assisting trade support institutions in improving their capacities and services, providing policy advice and capacity building to the Government of Tajikistan in developing sectoral export strategies. ITC also assisted the Government of Tajikistan in the process of the country's accession to the WTO and implementation of the WTO membership commitments, including the implementation of the provisions of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement.

Last year, ITC started a regional project for Central Asia financed by the European Union, called Ready4trade, in which Tajikistan is also a beneficiary. The project supports development of international and intra-regional trade in Central Asia, through two main components, namely trade facilitation and support in development of E-commerce on policy and enterprise level. Currently, the development of E-commerce strategy for Tajikistan is underway.

During the time of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, which is challenging to everyone, but especially to SMEs, all these initiatives are particularly timely and crucial. Therefore, we are very much value the cooperation with ITC and hope it will continue in the future. In this context we would like to highlight that since SECO financed project - GTEX that aimed at promoting the textiles and clothing sector - ends in 2021, we hope that the support to the sector will continue after 2021 as it will be even more demanded in the post-COVID period.