

## **53<sup>rd</sup> JAG speech WTO DG Azevêdo:**

### **ITC is “delivering concrete changes on the ground”**

Thank you Madam Chair, Ambassador Hakala – welcome to the role.

And let me also thank Ambassador Molinari and his team for their hard work and leadership over the last year.

Secretary-General Kituyi,  
Executive Director Gonzalez,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning.

As ever, it is a pleasure to host the ITC Joint Advisory Group here at the WTO.

This meeting is a significant moment for the trade and development community. It is an opportunity to consider the achievements of the ITC over the past year, and to look to the challenges ahead. It is also a chance to discuss how our three organizations can keep working together to make trade more inclusive and improve people's lives across the globe.

Of course, this debate is particularly timely. We are hosting the Aid for Trade Global Review here this week, which helps to bring all this work into sharp focus.

I think we can look back at a very productive year for the ITC.

The latest Annual Report shows that the ITC had a very active 2018 – and that it is delivering concrete changes on the ground.

For example, the ITC worked with governments and regional authorities in West Africa to set up a region-wide Trade Obstacles Alert Mechanism.

It has helped Afghanistan's efforts to launch a national export strategy.

In Senegal, thanks in part to ITC support, mango exporters saw a 7.7% increase in exports compared to the previous year.

In Rwanda, helped by ITC initiatives, the spices sector has exported its first consignments of hybrid chilis to India.

Overall, ITC supported 18,500 enterprises to improve their international competitiveness through various projects. This is very impressive. It accounts for almost twice the original target of 9,500 enterprises.

Behind these numbers, there are many more livelihoods that have been impacted positively by this work. Each of these projects is making a big difference in their communities. And, taken together, they are a constant and welcome reminder of the power of trade to drive growth, development and job creation.

I would also note that 51% of the enterprises supported were owned, operated and controlled by women.

The empowerment of women in the global economy is a key priority for me and for the ITC, so it is very positive to see this work bearing fruit, including through the SheTrades initiative.

In 2018, almost 4,000 women entrepreneurs were trained as part of this initiative, helping them to improve the international competitiveness of their businesses.

I am very pleased to congratulate the ITC on these achievements. The WTO is proud to support this work.

We are also proud of the ongoing collaboration between our organizations, which helps to complement and strengthen our efforts.

We collaborate in a number of areas – including on many aspects of the WTO's regular work in SPS and TBT, accessions and capacity building.

I am particularly pleased that in many of these initiatives, we are capitalizing on new technologies to help bridge information gaps, which remain a huge barrier to many traders, especially the smallest.

This includes our cooperation on the Cotton Portal, which helps exporters, importers, investors and trade support institutions search business opportunities and market requirements for cotton products.

We also built a constructive partnership around e-Ping – the alert system to increase transparency and dialogue on SPS and TBT notifications. We have joined forces to develop a database for notifications relating to the LDC services waiver.

And there is much more in the pipeline.

The WTO, UNCTAD and ITC are joining forces on the Global Trade Helpdesk.

This tool will provide all the information that traders need in one place, free of charge, accessible to all. It promises to be a big step forward in making trade more inclusive.

We are also working together on a website to highlight the vital contribution of trade to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. It will be an important resource, which we hope to launch in the coming months.

I look forward to continuing this joint work and taking it from strength to strength. Together, we can keep ensuring that trade delivers concrete results on the ground.

This is particularly important in the current context, with trade tensions running high.

Last week, we issued a report highlighting that the turbulence generated by these tensions is continuing. Trade flows are being hit by new trade restrictions at a historically high level.

Further escalation would risk a major economic impact, threatening jobs and growth in all countries, hitting the poorest the hardest.

With this in mind, I think we should be encouraged by the outcomes of the G20 summit in Osaka this weekend. I took part in the summit and was struck by the overall positivity towards the trading system.

In their communiqué the G20 leaders pledged their support for a strong, predictable and stable trade and investment environment and acknowledged the role of trade as an important engine of growth, job creation and development. In addition, they stressed the importance of WTO reform.

We should welcome this. I think that the only way to strengthen the system in a changing world is by being ready to see changes in the system as well. We must be ready to evolve.

And as we discuss reform, we must maintain our focus on trade's role in promoting development and fighting poverty. This should be our North Star, guiding us in this journey.

We will keep working with the ITC and UNCTAD to this end.

Together, we can ensure that trade makes its full contribution in each of these areas and to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

I wish you all a very successful event – and another successful year ahead.

Thank you.