

Dear Madam Chair

Thank you for giving me the floor and at the outset I would like to congratulate you for assuming the chairmanship of the 53rd Session of the ITC Joint Advisory Group.

Excellencies, Her E. Ms. Gonzalez ITC Executive Director, distinguished delegates and ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to start by thanking ITC, WTO and UNCTAD for convening this meeting aimed at examining the activities and achievements of the ITC and its future plan.

I want to start by welcoming the honorable Ministers and all those who have traveled from elsewhere to join us here today.

Afghanistan commends ITC for excellent work it has done throughout these years and specially in 2018.

We are pleased to note that most of ITC projects and services have been devoted to LDCs and most vulnerable groups, and we hope that this trend will continue in years to come.

ITC has been an important partner of Afghanistan. ITC has assisted Afghanistan through Advancing Afghan Trade Project, an initiative by the European Union and the ITC.

The project aims to lay the foundation for strengthening Afghanistan's trade capacities and building a business-friendly environment.

The project uses trade as a lever for economic growth by facilitating job creation, poverty reduction and enhanced regional cooperation, aimed to further increase Afghanistan's ties to the global economy, following its accession to the WTO in 2016.

Among all the other achievements, 2018 saw endorsement and launch of Afghan national export strategy which has been developed with the technical and advisory assistance of ITC.

Afghanistan will continue to work closely with ITC to explore other possible projects in the future and I take this opportunity to thank all development partners for the financial support provided to ITC to carry its mandates.

Finally, my delegation expresses our deep thanks and gratitude to Ms. Arancha Gonzalez, ITC Executive Director, for her able leadership and to all ITC capable Geneva-based team and as well as ITC's regional coordinators. I wish ITC all the best for its future endeavors.

Thank You!