

## *Chair Summary JAG 2017*

Excellencies, distinguished participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is now my privilege to present to you my Chair's closing statement on the proceedings of the 51<sup>st</sup> session of the Joint Advisory Group.

I would like to begin by thanking the Secretary-General of UNCTAD, the WTO Director-General, the ITC Executive Director, and our special guests H.E. Mr. Albert M. Muchanga, Dr. Isatou Touray, Engineer Khurram Dastgir Khan, and Mr. Axel Addy, for their statements.

Their statements set the tone for today's productive and insightful discussions.

We first heard from the heads of the WTO and UNCTAD about the ongoing synergies between their organizations and ITC in enhancing trade's impact as a driver of growth, development, and job creation. The organizations continue to collaborate on trade information, statistical analysis, and implementing the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement in ways that support small and medium-sized enterprises.

They also reminded us that Aid for Trade remains a crucial avenue for integrating least developed countries and marginalized groups into the international economy, and working to reach the Sustainable Development Goals. They looked ahead to future cooperative and complementary work on the internationalization of small and medium-sized enterprises.

Our special guests looked at trade and development challenges they faced at home, and how the countries which they represent work with ITC to overcome them. They shared their stories of ITC's impact, from ensuring better trade opening through WTO accession; to creating new regional platforms to inform and advise businesses; and of course, ensuring the economic empowerment of women and youth.

Regarding ITC's achievements in 2016, the following points from today's discussions are worth emphasizing:

ITC has maintained a high level of delivery as well as value for money, disbursed \$85.4 million dollars across its portfolios, and leveraged each dollar of extra-budgetary funding into an impressive average \$14 of international business transactions.

A common theme throughout Members' interventions was the importance of ITC's focus on inclusive growth through private sector development and especially SME competitiveness. Various ITC projects were cited for helping companies increase their exports and grow by overcoming non-tariff barriers, strengthening their productive capacities and developing their human capital.

Another recurring theme was ITC's commitment to empowering women in the global economy. Many delegates praised the ITC SheTrades initiative's achievements, perhaps more critically, its potential.

A significant number of delegations took the floor to praise ITC's continued commitment to providing innovative approaches to address diverse challenges in partnership with a broad set of stakeholders from both the public and private sectors. This commitment – evidenced through an increased use of e-solutions like e-Ping and Market Access Maps and the online SME Trade Academy – also underscores ITC's drive to continually increase their value for money by adopting more effective and efficient ways of doing business.

In light of several delegations call for more predictable funding to the ITC, it was well noted that some delegations including China, Finland and Germany, announced their on-going and future contributions to ITC.

The ITC donor coordinator commended the ITC for its 'strong impact story' and encouraged the organisation to continue explore new ways of serving developing countries including through innovative private sector partnerships and enhancing the connection of MSMEs to preferential market access opportunities. Donors praised ITC's internal reforms and noted the critical importance of ITC's continuing to refine its results, value for money and internal coherence.

On the Annual Evaluation Synthesis Report, ITC management presented the key learning generated from diverse sources of evaluations in 2016 to among other things help ITC improve its evidence base for future activities and to improve its accountability to funders and beneficiaries alike.

The presentation of the outline of the Strategic Plan 2018-2021 and recap of the related online survey were useful and clearly appreciated by delegations which was evidenced from your statements and feedback – both of which are appreciated and will be crucial for composing the strategy that will form the basis of ITC's work in the coming years.

Today's constructive discussions demonstrated that ITC is an organization that seeks to continually engage with its stakeholders and beneficiaries while delivering new and innovative programming to achieve the integration of all actors, particularly youth and women, into the international economy.

In closing, I would like to thank you, funders and beneficiaries for your continued trust, support and engagement with ITC.

It has been my utmost pleasure to serve as your Chair.

Thank you