

## **ED's Closing Statement – 55<sup>th</sup> JAG**

Thank you, Chairperson Ambassador Bekkers, for your able stewardship of today's meeting. I look forward to working with you over the course of this critical year.

I want to thank all the speakers and delegations for their statements, observations and congratulations. We have taken good note of your feedback and comments which will assist us in shaping our work programme for the future.

Over 40 of you took the floor today. In the middle of a make-or-break climate change conference, and a few weeks before a WTO Ministerial, I truly appreciate you coming out today and supporting the ITC.

This is my second JAG and the first time in a while that I've been able to interact in person with delegates in this beautiful room. It really makes a difference.

At the outset, I want to thank again my staff for continuing to deliver above and beyond expectations in an increasingly complex operating environment.

And I also want to repeat my appreciation to our funders that have continued to support ITC through extra-budgetary funding, in particular through Window 1 unearmarked grants.

What I've heard today has been truly inspiring.

I've heard your feedback on our next Strategic Plan. I deeply appreciate all the comments that you have provided and thank you for reaffirming the overall thrust of the Plan.

We look forward to receiving further comments over the next two weeks to enable us to finalize the Plan.

I welcome the presentation of our Annual Evaluation Synthesis Report. The insights from this Report will help us build an even better ITC by the end of 2025.

I've heard your call for us to keep doing more to “go green” – in our programmes, in our advocacy and in our operations.

I've heard your passion for closing the digital divide. To build more resilient economies based on better connectivity and more empowered tech entrepreneurs.

I thank you for your widespread support to our work with women entrepreneurs and assure you that we will scale up our work in this area in the coming years.

I've heard your appreciation for our continued collaboration with our partners in the Geneva Trade Hub. We will do more to tell the story of how ITC's work supports the work of the WTO and UNCTAD.

More than anything else, I've heard you express your shared concern about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on MSMEs, women, youth and vulnerable communities.

And how we can help our partner countries to build back on stronger and more stable foundations. To harness a recovery with trade and small business at its heart.

This is why I am inspired by your call for us to keep focusing on the base of the pyramid. To keep prioritising to our core constituency of least developed, landlocked, small island and fragile states.

To keep delivering results and telling the ITC story.

Finally, I want to thank you again for engaging with us at our first – but I suspect not the last – hybrid Joint Advisory Group meeting.

I learned a lot today. My staff and I return to our desks and field offices energised and inspired.

I also, clearly, have quite the party to plan.

Thank you and I wish you all a good evening.