

## 51<sup>ST</sup> JOINT ADVISORY GROUP (JAG) MEETING

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Statement by the Chair of the 51st Session:  
H. E. Ms. Frances Mary Lisson  
Ambassador  
Permanent Mission of Australia to the World Trade  
Organisation

H. E. Mr. Negash Kebret Batora, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Ethiopia to the United Nations, the Outgoing Chair,  
Mr. Roberto Azevêdo, Director-General of WTO,  
Dr. Mukhisa Kituyi, Secretary-General of UNCTAD,  
Ms. Arancha González, Executive Director of the International Trade Centre (ITC),  
Excellencies, Distinguished participants,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to Chair the 51<sup>st</sup> Session of ITC's JAG. I thank Ambassador Batora for his warm welcome.

As an important actor in 'the Geneva trade hub', ITC continues to deliver. Its mandate of improving the competitiveness and access of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) to the global trading system has never been more important and it continues to meet and in many respects exceed its targets.

In the last year, ITC has enjoyed noteworthy successes as both a thought leader and a practical implementer, undertaking projects on the ground which deliver trade impact for good.

The spotlight on aid for trade and thus, on ITC's work has never been greater. Through both its work and its advocacy, ITC has provided ample evidence of the drafters wisdom in incorporating trade and aid for trade into the Sustainable Development Goals. Closer to home, the recent outcome documents of the WTO Ministerial Conference and UNCTAD 14's Maafikiano [pronounced Maafik-yano] stressed the centrality of aid for trade's role. ITC is important to that effort, and I

hope I speak for both DG Azevedo and SG Kituyi when I say it is a credit to its parent organisations.

With that said, the challenges faced by MSMEs today are daunting, and the challenges of tomorrow may be even more so. It is therefore so encouraging to see ITC is working diligently to refine its existing delivery modalities and find new ways to advance its mandate. By pioneering innovative approaches like SheTrades and ethical fashion, finding new ways to link MSMEs to markets, and always looking at the next big wave of opportunity, ITC is laying the groundwork for helping MSMEs

tackle the challenge of the future.

You have before you ITC's 2016 Annual Report. It is a snapshot of what ITC delivered in 2016 and how the organisation continues to evolve and respond to a changing global environment.

The results of the report speaks to offer much to celebrate:

- ITC delivered more than \$85 million worth of technical assistance, and capacity building;
- 2016 saw ITC's training courses and SME Trade Academy reach record high numbers;
- ITC market intelligence, business connections and support to TISIs generated more than \$685 million in estimated export and investment value;
- Positive client feedback reached 97%, a record high; and
- ITC advanced considerably in its goal to fully mainstream gender into its work, with 51% of the businesses supported by ITC owned or operated by women.

These results, and others, make the 2016 Annual Report an enjoyable read for those looking for some good news in turbulent times.

This meeting offers the multilateral community an opportunity to guide the work of ITC, suggesting areas where the Membership sees room for even further improvement. I know the Executive Director welcomes such inputs. For my part, there were elements in the report, which suggested areas of special focus for ITC going forward. With limited resources and high levels of demand, ITC must focus more precisely than ever on its areas of comparative advantage. Moreover, with a growing portfolio of diverse programs, projects and initiatives, ITC will need to further strengthen their efforts to ensure deliverables remain localized and tailored to the regional contexts of their clients. I have full confidence that Arancha and her

management team will do their utmost to make this happen, and listen closely to other suggestions proffered today.

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before closing, allow me to remind us of the immediate objectives of today's meeting:

- First, to take stock of ITC's work throughout 2016 and during the first half of 2017;
- Second, to receive updates on the continued implementation of the recommendations of the independent evaluation of the International Trade Centre as well as its annual evaluation synthesis report; and
- Third, to discuss the outline of ITC's new Strategic Plan for 2018 – 2021.

We are also honoured to have three guest speakers with us:

- the Minister of Trade, Industry, Regional Integration and Employment of The Gambia, Dr. Isatou Touray, who will be addressing us on how The Gambia is investing in women and youth as part of their aim to grow through trade and SME competitiveness.
- H.E. Ambassador Albert Muchanga, the African Union Commissioner for Trade and Industry
- Engr. Khurram Dastgir Khan, Minister of Commerce of Pakistan

I thank you for your attention.