

52nd Session of the ITC Joint Advisory Group, 10 July 2018 at WTO

At the outset let me thank the ITC for three comprehensive reports presented to the Group. Sri Lanka also wishes to express its sincere thanks to Mrs. Arancha González, the Executive Director of the ITC, for the excellent leadership that she demonstrated over the past 5 years leading this institution and her able team for the excellent cooperation they extend with regard to trade-related capacity building in developing countries. We would also like to convey our deepest gratitude to all the donors, who enable the ITC to continue what it does in terms of trade related capacity building and technical assistance. Sri Lanka has been a beneficiary of the ITC cooperation for many years.

The ITC conducted the first of its NTM Survey series on Sri Lanka in 2010. The survey highlighted a number of NTMs encountered by our business community on both sides of the border. The survey findings laid an excellent platform in launching Aid-For-Trade projects in Sri Lanka. Based on the survey results, the ITC and the STDF have initiated a joint project, which aims at improving the existing SPS infrastructure in Sri Lanka, particularly for the benefit of the fresh fruits and vegetable sector. More than 500 farmers of fruits and vegetables were trained to upgrade agricultural practices, to improve their ability to comply with importing country regulations.

The ITC is currently implementing a nation-wide project for trade-related capacity building in Sri Lanka with the funding assistance of the European Union Delegation in Colombo. This has brought together a wide cross-section of stakeholders, who represent both the private and the state sectors. Under this project the ITC has assisted Sri Lanka Export Development Board, the premier export promotion agency in the country in drafting a national export strategy for the country.

Moreover, the ITC's market intelligence tools such as Trade Map, Market Access Map, and Standards Map enables users, in particular exporters, importers, researchers, policy makers, journalists, and others to navigate the constantly changing landscape of international trade and regulations. The initiatives in

particular 'She Trades' for empowering women entrepreneurs and the 'Youth Empowerment Project', indeed add greater value in strengthening women and youth participation in international trade. Under She Trades initiative, the tourism and IT sectors of Sri Lanka has been benefitted. A recently conducted ITC survey on E-commerce reveals important findings with respect to regulatory issues and capacity constraints faced by SMEs in developing countries compared to that of developed countries. I believe, this is a good reference of proof for the digital divide we discuss at present.

On Trade Facilitation, the ITC, together with the UNCTAD extended technical assistance in establishing and strengthening the functioning of the National Trade Facilitation Committee in Sri Lanka.

All this cooperation has been possible due to the generous contribution extended by the donor community. My delegation, therefore, wishes to place on record its sincere gratitude to both donors and the ITC for the great cooperation they together have been extending to Sri Lanka.