

53rd Session of the ITC Joint Advisory Group, 02 July 2019 at WTO

At the outset let me thank the ITC for its comprehensive annual report made available prior to this meeting, which describes what ITC delivered during 2018. Sri Lanka also wishes to express our sincere thanks to Mrs. Arancha González, the Executive Director of the ITC, for the excellent leadership that she demonstrated over the past 6 years leading this institution and her able team for the excellent cooperation they extend with regard to trade-related capacity building in developing countries. Our similar appreciation goes to all the donors, who enable the ITC to continue what it does in terms of trade related capacity building and technical assistance in developing and least developed countries. Sri Lanka has been a beneficiary of the ITC cooperation for many years.

The ITC is currently implementing a 4 year 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. Sri Lanka Export Development Board, the premier export promotion agency in the country formulated a national export strategy for the country with an extensive technical support provided by the ITC under this project. Furthermore, ITC is assisting the Department of Commerce of Sri Lanka in operationalizing the trade remedy unit, by providing technical support in drafting of trade remedy regulations and technical documentation, as well as continuous training to the officers in this area.

In the area of trade facilitation, ITC is providing support under EU-Sri Lanka Trade related project to include additional functionalities to the Trade Information Portal which was launched earlier this year with the support of World Bank and Austrade. To complement the work done by World Bank in preparing blue print for National Single Window, ITC conducted a series of public-private dialogues that generated an informed debate and a set of recommendations on areas of functionality, operational model, governance and deployment of implementation.

The ITC and the STDF 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 second phase of this project recently concluded a partnership agreement between an Italian dried-fruit giant and Lanka Fruit and Vegetable Producers, Processors and Exporters Association. The objective of this partnership is to help Sri Lankan fruit and vegetable producers and exporters to comply with international food quality and safety requirements, enabling them to sell their products to Europe.

ITC's market intelligence tools enable 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', 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 have been benefitted.

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 team for the great cooperation they together have been extending to Sri Lanka.

Let me conclude by sharing one recent encouraging remark on the working experience with ITC, made by one of the Ministers of Sri Lanka who had extensively engaged on national export strategy formulation— it was not only the prime outcome that we benefitted from ITC through working with them, but also their systematic working methodologies which are outcome oriented.

ENDS.