

Philippine Statement on the 56th Session of the ITC Joint Advisory Group
13 September 2022, 10am

Thank you, Madam Chair.¹

The Philippines congratulates you on your assumption as Chair of the 56th Session of the Joint Advisory Group (JAG) extends its well wishes to H.E. Mr. Paul Bekkers for successfully steering the previous session. We also thank the ITC for organizing this annual meeting to update Members on ITC's activities and exchange views on its work program.

The ITC plays an institutional role in supporting developing countries to realize the benefits from an open and fair multilateral trading system and plays a critical role in our shared objective of improving MSMEs' global competitiveness and participation in international trade.

The Philippines is pleased to have established a robust partnership with ITC in strengthening the integration of our business sectors and fostering the participation of our MSMEs in the global market. MSMEs are the backbone of our economy as they comprise the majority of business establishments and employ more than half of the country's workforce.

We have successfully collaborated with ITC in various projects in the past and we look forward to our continued partnership through ongoing initiatives, such as the Global Trade Helpdesk, the SheTrades initiative, and the EU-funded ARISE Plus project.

¹ H.E. Ms. Usha Chandnee Dwarka-Canabady, Ambassador, Permanent Representative to the WTO, Permanent Mission of the Republic of Mauritius to the United Nations Office at Geneva

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The Philippines is glad to continue our cooperation on the SheTrades initiative, which reinforces our country's commitment to promoting women's economic empowerment, and has provided women entrepreneurs and women-owned SMEs with a unique network and platform to connect to markets. We remain open to sharing good practices such as our Startup Pinay initiative, recently highlighted in the Outlook report, and look towards intensified collaboration in the SheTrades Global event. We are also supportive of the ongoing creation of a global network of government focal points to further strengthen and institutionalize work on trade and gender.

We look forward to continued collaboration with ITC on the ARISE Plus Philippines to foster inclusive economic growth through improved international trade performance and competitiveness. We note the early successes of this partnership through work on start-ups and youth entrepreneurship and express our interest to explore capacity building on digital trade, sharing of best practices on investment facilitation, and maximization of trade agreements – for instance, business guidebooks to increase preference utilization rates. Likewise, as our new administration has increased its focus on climate mitigation and adaptation by proposing more than a 50% increase in its climate change related expenditure, we would likewise look towards complementary support that would embed green business practices among our MSMEs.

The Philippines also continues to support the WTO Informal Working Group on MSMEs recommendation to support the operationalization of the Global Trade

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Helpdesk, which has the potential to enhance MSME engagement in the global marketplace.

In closing, the Philippines remains committed to our collaboration with ITC. We appreciate ITC's partnership with the Philippines, and we look forward to continuing working together with you in helping MSMEs reach their full potential in the global market and in building an inclusive and sustainable path forward.

Thank you, Chair.