

**55<sup>th</sup> Joint Advisory Group (JAG) Meeting of the International Trade Center (ITC)**  
**On 13<sup>th</sup> September 2022**  
**Statement by the Delegation of Sri Lanka**

Thank you, Mr. Chair for giving me the floor to deliver a statement at the 55<sup>th</sup> Joint Advisory Group Meeting of the ITC.

Mr. Chair, the ITC is a very close development partner of Sri Lanka which has been closely working for decades with key agencies in Sri Lanka such as Department of Commerce, National Plant Quarantine Service, Export Development Board and also with Business support organizations and Chambers of Commerce.

The ITC successfully completed a 4-year EU-funded project ‘EU-Sri Lanka Trade-Related Assistance Project’ in February 2021. This was one of the biggest projects by the ITC in Sri Lanka. My delegation wishes to extend Sri Lanka’s gratitude to the European Union, the donor of this project, for its financial support, and also to the ITC for its proactive role in coordinating the project for its meticulous implementation and successful completion.

The ITC is currently implementing another big project ‘Trade Facilitation for SMEs in Sri Lanka’ jointly with the GIZ. This project is funded by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany. The project commenced in October 2020 and is expected to be completed by June 2023. This project is aimed at improving Sri Lanka’s business environment for international trade and strengthening the participation and competitiveness of Sri Lankan SMEs in international markets.

The project operates under six components:

**No. 1: To Increase the user-friendliness of Sri Lanka Trade Information Portal:**

In line with the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, Sri Lanka implemented a Trade Information Portal in 2018 with the financial and technical assistance of the World Bank and Australia. Later in 2021, the ITC launched a Step-by-Step Functionality of the trade Information Portal under the ‘EU-Sri Lanka Trade-Related Assistance’ project. The Step-by-Step Functionality has increased the user friendliness of the portal immensely. It is commendable that the ITC has also conducted many workshops around the country on the Trade Information Portal and its new addition i.e., the Step-by-Step Functionality.

**No.2: To Map procedures of additional agricultural products in the step-by-step functionality:**

The ITC has mapped 27 new product categories and published them in the Step-by-Step Functionality of the Trade Information Portal. As a result, a total of 60 product categories are now available in the portal including transit, re-export, and temporary import procedures.

**No.3: To strengthen SMEs representation in National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC):**

Monitoring and managing the TFA has proven to be a complex and resource intensive task for the NTFC of Sri Lanka.

The ITC is supporting the NTFC to develop an online Progress Reporting Tool for the Implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement. This web-based platform would enable the border agencies to connect with the NTFC sharing the required information virtually. It would also provide an opportunity for the private sector to view the progress made and provide inputs on trade facilitation activities, and also for the donor community to easily identify where support is provided or where further assistance is required.

**No.4: To facilitate automation of the formalities related to the issuance of Certificates of Origin:**

Under the TFA, members are required to review formalities and documentation requirements to minimize their complexity. The Certificate of Origin is one such important document issued by the Department of Commerce, which should be reviewed. Currently, most of the formalities relating to issuance of this certificate are carried out manually. Accordingly, work has already been undertaken to implement an Electronic Certificate of Origin system. The full system is expected to go live in the 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter of this year.

**No.5: To Support the National Plant Quarantine Service (NPQS) to have an Electronic Payment Gateway:**

Current practice by the NPQS is to collect all payments manually at the entry points. Therefore, the ITC is now coordinating an activity to facilitate simplification and harmonization of documents at the NPQS. The ITC has already initiated preparatory work on the e-payment gateway for the NPQS.

**No.6: To facilitate automation of Registration & Monitoring of Organic Agriculture-Related Stakeholders at the National Organic Control Unit**

Currently the registration and monitoring of organic agriculture-related stakeholders at the National Organic Control Unit is carried out manually due to which many SMEs engaged in this sector have to face numerous difficulties. In order to find a solution to these issues, the ITC is now developing a registration, monitoring and e-payment system for Organic Agriculture-Related Stakeholders.

Mr. Chair, the ITC has done and is doing a great deal of work in Sri Lanka. My delegation believes that trade-related technical assistance provided by the ITC in Sri Lanka through various projects funded by the donors have been beneficial for stakeholders throughout the country, in particular SMEs, to explore market opportunities and establish business linkages.

Therefore, the ITC is an inseparable development partner of Sri Lanka, whose services will be sought after for many decades to come.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to thank the donors and the ITC for the valuable financial contributions and the technical assistance extended towards Sri Lanka and looks forward to having similar assistance in the future as well, so that Sri Lanka could integrate into the multilateral trading system in an effective manner, while safeguarding the interests of the weaker sections of its trading community.

I thank you Mr. Chair.