



Joint Advisory Group Meeting (JAG), 14 – 15 December 2009

PRESS RELEASE: GENEVA

16.12.09

ITC MEMBERS ENDORSE WORK PROGRAMME - DONORS RENEW FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The members of the International Trade Centre (ITC) this week endorsed the organization's work plans for the coming year and also its Strategic Plan for the next four years at the annual meeting of ITC's Joint Advisory Group (JAG).

Many delegates stressed the importance, in the current economic climate, of ITC's interventions, which focus on support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the private sector in the world's poorest countries, in an effort to integrate them into regional and global trading systems in keeping with the Aid for Trade agenda.

ITC's Strategic Plan specifies priority emphasis on the least-developed countries (LDCs), land-locked developing countries (LLDCs), small island developing states (SIDS), and sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). At the same time the agency, a joint initiative of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), is committed to supporting efforts of countries to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Delegates at the two-day JAG meeting were particularly supportive of ITC's efforts to focus on assisting women entrepreneurs in developing countries, and pointed out that the vast majority are still confined to the informal economic sector and not integrated into national or international value chains.

They also emphasized the link between ITC's activities in developing the capacity of poor communities to engage in international export trade and poverty reduction strategies.

The opening session of the JAG meeting was attended by Pascal Lamy, WTO Director-General, and Petko Draganov, Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD. Mr Lamy announced that WTO's Budget, Finance and Administration Committee last week approved increases in its budget contribution to ITC of 8.21% in 2010 and 5.86% in 2011.

He told the meeting he welcomed ITC's focus on improving export competitiveness, but that at the same time it was essential that developing countries themselves should mainstream trade into their development strategies.

ITC's Executive Director Patricia R. Francis said the essential ingredients for market success and maintaining competitiveness were long-term strategic planning, flexibility and agility to respond to



change and embrace innovation, and establishing regional, intra-regional and public-private partnerships and alliances.

She announced that for the third year running, ITC was publishing the results of its Client Survey. This showed that satisfaction with the agency's performance had improved from just 38% in 2007 and 43% in 2008 to 56% in 2009. This was encouraging but indicated that much work still remained to be done.

Many delegations underlined the importance of WTO's Aid for Trade initiative, in which ITC focuses in particular on the private sector. They also appreciated the work done to improve the performance and effectiveness of trade support institutions in developing countries and a new programme launched by WTO and ITC to assist LDCs seeking to join WTO in dealing with the complex accession process. It is envisaged that countries can utilize resources in the Enhanced Integrated Framework to access this new programme.

There was considerable discussion of progress being made in the reform of ITC and its management approaches over the past three years, with the introduction of results-based management. Some countries urged the organization to move forward more quickly and to focus on the impact of its programmes, not just associated activities. It was important to establish clear baselines and indicators to facilitate effective monitoring, evaluation and reporting.

At the end of the meeting, several donor countries announced continuing financial support for the organization. After the substantive business of the JAG was concluded, there was a special informal session on the importance of developing export strategies.

The formal report of the JAG was adopted by member states and this and further information can be seen on our website www.intracen.org/jag2009/

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