
PRESS RELEASE: 06.05.2013

ITC continues to assist economies expand amid global economic turmoil, increases impact

Over the last seven years, the International Trade Centre (ITC) has become more focused and its interventions more impactful, said outgoing Executive Director Patricia Francis, addressing the 47th annual meeting of ITC's Joint Advisory Group (JAG) on Monday 6 May in Geneva.

A stronger focus on results and an increase in transparency have led to a greater level of trust and confidence among ITC's donors and beneficiaries alike, resulting in higher delivery of trade-related technical assistance, said Ms. Francis, whose term will end on 3 June. 'Today we can see the fruits of the decision to use large multi-year projects as a way to increase the value, impact and volume of ITC's technical assistance to beneficiary countries,' she said.

Turning to 2012 and 2013, she described the economic environment as 'fragile,' which has led to an increase for ITC's services in developing and transition economy countries. Ms. Francis told delegates that the challenge for developing countries was to better understand and exploit the economic potential of emerging markets, where most of the economic growth is taking place.

ITC delivered USD 40 million in trade-related technical assistance in 2012, she said presenting the organization's [Annual Report](#). 69% of country- and region-specific delivery went to priority countries, in line with ITC's [strategic plan](#) to focus on the most vulnerable economies, including least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, small island developing states and sub-Saharan Africa. The amount of assistance provided by ITC was lower than in 2011, in line with earlier predictions, as several large, multi-year programmes were winding down. The 2011 delivery volume of USD 48 million will be matched in future years as new programmes are implemented, she said. The organization's goal is to maintain or increase the high ratio of priority-country delivery even as overall volume increases, she said.

Ms. Francis drew delegates' attention to the external impact evaluation report of ITC's [Ethical Fashion Initiative](#), which found that the programme's operations in Kenya had 'proven impact on poverty alleviation for its beneficiaries'. The Ethical Fashion Initiative connects the fashion business with artisans in Africa and Haiti.

ITC has also become a well-known champion of women's economic empowerment, Ms. Francis said. She emphasized that through the [Women and Trade programme](#), ITC has mainstreamed a gender-sensitive approach to project design and implementation. A major outcome of the programme has been the establishment of the [Global Platform for Action on Sourcing from Women Vendors](#), which aims to increase the share of corporate, government and institutional contracts awarded to women-owned businesses, she said.

'In just two years, the platform facilitated the export of more than USD 20 million worth of goods by 200 women-owned SMEs from the developing world,' said Ms. Francis. 'We continue to believe that providing equal opportunities to women is not only the morally right thing to do: it is also good development policy.'

Mr. Pascal Lamy, Director-General of the World Trade Organization (WTO), told JAG delegates that ITC remained ahead of the curve and ahead of the multilateral trade rule book in several areas,

including trade in services, specifically tourism, as well as in value-chain analysis, the green economy and in advocating for the economic empowerment of women.

Mr. Lamy also commended ITC's joint work with the WTO within the Aid for Trade agenda. 'Here I must make specific mention of the work on value chains, which offer an opportunity for developing countries and the SMEs within their borders. This must continue to be a centrepiece of ITC's work in the future,' he said.

ITC continues to be seen by policy-makers and policy-users around the globe as an implementer of real-world policies and as an organization that has its fingers on the pulse of the needs and priorities of the private sector, Mr. Lamy said, thanking Ms. Francis for her leadership over the last few years.

Dr. Supachai Panitchpakdi, the Secretary General of UNCTAD, reminded JAG delegates of the importance of ITC's work on identifying and reducing non-tariff measures (NTMs) in international trade. Talking of ITC's survey in 27 countries, he said 'these activities carried out by ITC are a useful complement to UNCTAD's work with official NTM data – a good example of synergy.'

ITC Deputy Executive Director Jean-Marie Paugam underlined the importance of resource mobilization and project generation for ITC to maintain its momentum. The organization needs to raise USD 40 - 45 million in order to fulfil its commitments to beneficiary countries over the coming years, he said.

Mr. Paugam highlighted the fact that the USD 750,000 ITC invested in project idea development over the last two years has already generated projects with a combined total of USD 20 million in new donor funding, with a further USD 12 million worth of projects still under negotiation.

'This is a very respectable return on investment for our seed-funding,' he said. 'We intend to sustain this effort of seed-funding investment to leverage and innovate products and services of the future.'

In addition to reviews of ITC's programmes and priorities, the two-day JAG meeting will also feature updates on ITC's performance in 2012.

ITC is the joint agency of the World Trade Organization and the United Nations. ITC assists small- and medium-sized enterprises in developing and transition economy countries to become more competitive in global markets, contributing to sustainable economic development within the frameworks of the [Aid for Trade agenda](#) and [the Millennium Development Goals](#).

Contact: Jarle Hetland
Media Officer
P: +41 22 730 0145
E: hetland@intracen.org