Thank you for giving me the floor to make a few points on Australia’s engagement with ITC and the 2012-15 Strategic Plan.

Australia welcomes ITC’s ongoing focus on its core mandate of private sector development and engagement with SMEs. ITC’s efforts to increase the capacity of developing country SMEs so they can take advantage of integration into the global economy makes an important contribution to economic growth, employment and poverty reduction.

ITC’s strength in this area was the key reason for Australia’s decision to announce a contribution of $3 million to ITC at the 8th WTO Ministerial Conference in December 2011.

Chair, this is the first time Australia has made a significant, multi-year contribution to ITC.

We have made this commitment because we believe that ITC has a strong record of success in its activities.

Of course, ITC’s work can only achieve the best possible results if it is supported by a strong, open multilateral trading system, and ITC must continue to ensure that its work complements those of other organisations engaged in aid for trade. This is why, at the 8th Ministerial Conference, Australia’s announcement in funding for ITC was accompanied by commitments to the WTO’s technical assistance programs, the Enhanced Integrated Framework, and the World Intellectual Property Organisation - $18 million in funding in total.

Chair, the 2012-15 Strategic Plan sets out a good path for ITC to follow so the organisation can build upon its record of achievement.

The Strategic Plan identifies engagement with Least Developed Countries as a priority for ITC’s work. Australia strongly supports this, given the ongoing challenges LDCs face in maximising the economic growth and poverty reduction potential offered through integration into the global economy.

The Strategic Plan also makes reference to the needs of SME exporters in Small Island Developing States, including in the Pacific. ITC has already made some valuable contributions to meeting the considerable needs of the Pacific, including through its engagement in the WTO accessions of Vanuatu and Samoa. Further extending the coverage of ITC’s activities in the Pacific will continue to be a focus for Australia and, subject to the final arrangements being formalised, this will also be a focus of our funding contribution to ITC.

We look forward to ongoing discussions with ITC, along with our Pacific island country colleagues and other donors, on how ITC can continue to address the considerable demand for its services in the Pacific.

Chair, Australia also welcomes ITC’s ongoing efforts on results based management. We recognise the hard-won progress that the organisation has achieved in this area. Although the design and implementation of a results-based management system can, at times, appear highly technical, we see it as essential for an organisation like ITC to deliver its programs as effectively as possible.

To conclude, Australia commends ITC on its work, and we look forward to developing a new and stronger partnership with the organisation in the years ahead.