Norwegian statement at the 46th session of the Joint Advisory Group (JAG) on the International Trade Centre (ITC), 21-22 May 2012.

- We would like to thank this morning’s speakers for their opening remarks as well as for the reports presented by the ITC.

- We also wish to commend the management and staff of ITC for their excellent work during the past year.

- Norway is amongst the larger donors to the voluntary trust funds of the ITC. Our contribution to ITC is an important part of our Aid for Trade portfolio, not least because ITC delivers 100% trade-related assistance.

- An independent evaluation of Norwegian trade-related assistance through multilateral organizations and agencies was carried out last year. The assessment of ITC was particularly positive with regard to the broad focus on women and trade. We appreciate that ITC has developed a gender mainstreaming policy. This is an important advantage for ITC compared to organizations which have not yet done so. We strongly believe that women’s rights and situation in the formal and informal economy must be improved. “Gender as Smart Economics” is more than just a slogan. ITC has an important role to play in this regard.

- Another important aspect of the work of ITC is that approximately half of the activities are aimed at the Least Developed Countries. The LDCs need special attention. The objective is that trade should become an effective tool for poverty reduction.

- Norway also appreciates that ITC has a stronger focus on the private sector than many other multilateral agencies and organizations. It is a fact that in all societies throughout history, the private sector has been the very motor that drives the creation of productive capacity, jobs, incomes and increased welfare. This is also the case in developing
countries today. If they are to succeed in reducing poverty, they will need thousands of new businesses that boost value creation, productivity and employment. This is why the ITC’s focus on the private sector is so important.

- Norway was pleased to note that ITC established an Evaluation Policy and Annual Evaluation Programme in 2008. It is important that ITC has a policy for evaluation as well as explicit guidelines on how evaluation reports should be structured. Unfortunately, the level of outputs in terms of independent evaluations of the projects and programmes has been limited. We expect to see more independent evaluation reports in the time to come.

- Mr. Chairman, let me conclude this intervention by reiterating Norway’s continued support to the ITC.