Join others in thanking Ms. Francis for her able leadership of ITC. We appreciate the progress during the past years. Norway regards ITC as one of our most important partners in trade-related technical assistance.

On the Norwegian side, we are now in the process of updating our current Action Plan on Aid for Trade. We will continue to give clear priority to Africa and the LDCs. Thus, we support the ITC Strategic Plan for 2012 – 2015 with its emphasis on African partner countries and LDCs. In our view, the main challenge is to ensure that Aid for Trade actually contributes to an improved quality of life for the poorest people.

The Norwegian Government has recently presented a White Paper to Parliament. The title of this White Paper is “Sharing for prosperity”, and it is focusing on more targeted efforts to promote democracy, human rights and transparency, and reducing inequality.

Despite many countries experiencing strong economic growth, poverty does not disappear. Instead, the disparities between rich and poor within countries are often increasing as long as poor people are excluded from that growth.

Creating decent jobs is the best way of lifting people out of poverty and ensuring fair distribution of social goods. Regular income is the single factor that has the greatest impact on people’s living conditions. We believe that ITC’s efforts to help small and medium-sized enterprises, support south-south trade and ethical trade are prime examples of programmes that can create decent jobs.

Promoting women’s participation in economic activity and trade is crucial to obtain equal opportunities and a more fair distribution. The gender mainstreaming policy of the ITC is an important achievement, and we believe that several organizations could learn from and copy the ITC in this respect. We will also continue to support the Women and Trade Programme in particular.