

**Friday 7 October: Informal Session**

### **Trade, Gender and Technical Cooperation – From Ideas to Implementation**

"Keeping Gender on the Agenda"

The 2004 Executive Forum global debate addressed for the first time the gender dimension of trade competitiveness in a special session and explored 'best practice' scenarios to include the gender dimension in export strategy formulation. Experience-sharing and discussions during the session underlined the need to:

- Build the knowledge base about what businesswomen contribute to their national economies.
- Promote role models and mentoring for women exporters (including the creation of Award schemes and wider dissemination of success stories).
- Focus on the "missing middle", i.e. on women in management and business that have acquired the capacity to really contribute to the economic development process and reduce poverty through backward linkages with the rural producers.
- Strengthen public-private partnerships, coalitions among associations of businesswomen and partnerships among development partners to create a more conducive environment for businesswomen and strengthen their contribution to the strategy-making process.
- Facilitate access to trade credit (including through innovative community or group-based mechanisms involving the banks).
- Build up clusters, value chains and consortia among women in international trade as well as national and international networks for trade capacity development.
- Offer gender-sensitive business development and trade support services for women entrepreneurs and managers (sector specific, flexible with respect to timing and mode, confidence building).

Stimulated and encouraged by the lively debate, a number of initiatives took shape during the past year, among them "ACCESS – for African Businesswomen in International Trade", and the Award for the "Best Women Entrepreneurs' Club". The "ACCESS" programme strengthens the support infrastructure for small and medium-sized enterprises owned by African women, enhances enterprise competitiveness and promotes concrete business opportunities. The very active networking initiated by the Club for Women Entrepreneurs in Switzerland and in Bulgaria during the 2004 Executive Forum culminated in the Swiss "Best Women Entrepreneurs' Club" Award for 2004/2005 being given in September 2005 to the Club of Women Entrepreneurs and Managers in Bulgaria.

It is estimated that over 75% of women-owned businesses are in the service sector worldwide – and women open businesses with export potential predominantly in the services sector. "Export of services" has, consequently, been singled out as a key area for ITC's "Strategies and Approaches for Gender Mainstreaming in International Trade" since 2001.

In follow-up a one-day training programme has been developed for women exporters in the service sector, addressing export-preparedness; enterprise development; linkages and networking within the mainstream business community; creative leadership; and roles and economic empowerment for women entrepreneurs. Workshops for several hundred women entrepreneurs from the service sector have been organized in Nigeria, Mauritius and Mozambique, offering practical advice on international partnering, relationship marketing and effective networking techniques.

ITC proposes to build on these initial activities and to “keep gender on the agenda”. During, and immediately following this year’s Executive Forum debate, three steps will be taken.

### **1. Gender and the Export of Services – from ideas to implementation**

An informal session will take place on 7 October 2005, 12.45 to 13.45 hrs, during the Executive Forum, open for all Executive Forum participants, moderated by the ITC Focal Point for Gender and Trade, to introduce ideas for increased gender sensitivity in support for the export of services. The objective of this session is to launch an intensive round of discussion on how best technical cooperation agencies, such as ITC, should approach the services trade and gender issue from the standpoints of national strategy-making and the development of an adequate support structure for women exporters in the service sector. This initial session should ensure that the ongoing discussion is "client driven" and reflects stakeholders' priorities.

### **2. The Gender Perspective in Trade – focus on results**

As the Executive Forum Network represents an important cross section of ITC's partners and stakeholders, selected participants will be invited to a more focussed planning session directly AFTER the closure of the Executive Forum, in the afternoon of Saturday, 8 October in Montreux, to identify practical steps to accelerate progress towards more gender sensitive projects and technical cooperation activities against the backdrop of current challenges and emerging global trade issues. Executive Forum participants invited to attend and participate in this session will have had direct involvement in the "Gender and Trade" discussion and will be asked to come prepared with specific ideas.

### **3. Gender and Trade in Action - exploit the opportunities**

A one-day session will take place at ITC headquarters on Monday, 10 October 2005, during which up to 10 key members of the Executive Forum Network will be invited to assist ITC in drawing up and validating "bankable" gender-related initiatives. This one-day workshop will refer to, but go beyond, the areas of export of services and national export strategies, addressing the application of a gender perspective in ITC's technical cooperation activities at the corporate level.