

57th Joint Advisory Group (JAG) Meeting of the International Trade Center (ITC)
On 20th July 2023
Statement by the Delegation of Sri Lanka

We congratulate you Madam Chair for your appointment as the Chair of the 57th ITC's Joint Advisory Group.

We thank Madam Usha Canabady, Ambassador of Mauritius for her excellent contribution during the previous year.

At the outset, Sri Lanka would like to commend the excellent work carried out by the ITC during 2022. We all know that the world is currently undergoing numerous challenges including global pandemics, food insecurity, debt crisis, climate change, rising living costs, natural disasters and many other issues. MSMEs in the developing countries have been hit hard by all these challenges. The ITC 2022 report well reflects that it has made a remarkable contribution by carrying out many activities to help MSMEs in the developing countries.

Madam Chair, Sri Lanka has been a beneficiary of ITC's trade-related technical assistance since its creation in 1964. ITC has long-term partnerships with the Department of Commerce of Sri Lanka, the Export Development Board (EDB) and other government agencies, as well as private sector institutions including Chambers of Commerce.

ITC, as a close development partner of Sri Lanka, has provided support in many key areas for trade development including trade policy and trade facilitation, women and youth entrepreneurship empowerment, value chain development, compliance with international standards and quality management, market analysis and research, institutional strengthening and increased SME competitiveness in export-oriented sectors.

Sri Lanka has a lot of success stories with ITC partnership. Let me highlight some of them.

- The set-up of a new e-Certificate of Origin System at the Department of Commerce has resulted in an astounding 93% reduction in processing time, significant cost savings, effectively reducing expenses for businesses to zero.
- Thanks to the development of an e-payment gateway at the National Plant Quarantine Service, exporters and importers can now make payments from wherever they are located, significantly reducing the time and cost of receiving phytosanitary certificates.
- ITC's support allowed to fully digitalize the registration and certification of organic agriculture-related stakeholders.
- The Step-by-Step Functionality of the Sri Lanka Trade Information Portal (SLTIP) directly contributes to simplify export procedures for the benefit of Sri Lankan MSMEs, with export management procedures for a total of 60 products.

In addition, in 2022-2023, as part of its global programme for business support institutions, ITC has provided support to the digital and ICT sector in Sri Lanka, by strengthening the capacities of the sector association SLASSCOM.

ITC has also delivered trainings in market analysis, supported the formulation of the National Policy for Industrial Development, and assisted in mainstreaming of green and digital perspectives into policies. ITC is also planning to provide support to exporters of organic products.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to thank the donors, especially the European Union including the German Government and also the United Kingdom for their valuable financial contributions.

Sri Lanka looks forward to having similar financial assistance along with the technical support of the ITC in the future as well with particular focus on MSMEs, digital and green development.

Such financial and technical assistance will certainly help Sri Lanka to integrate into the multilateral trading system in an effective manner, while safeguarding the interests of the weaker sections of its community.