

Chair closing: CHAIR'S CLOSING STATEMENT

Excellencies, distinguished participants, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Let me start by thanking the Secretary-General of UNCTAD, the WTO Deputy Director-General, and those beneficiaries who appeared by video from Ethiopia, Bhutan, Ghana and Guinea.

This was an unprecedented JAG. It was held for the first time using the remote meeting technology that we have all come to know so well in this unprecedented year.

I want to thank the many delegations that joined us from outside the room. I am grateful for their feedback on ITC's recent and future work.

We heard from UNCTAD about areas of collaboration with ITC that have yielded positive results with reference to the eTrade for Women initiative, work on NTMs and the Global Trade Helpdesk, among others.

We also heard from WTO, who commended ITC for its focus on MSMEs in the multilateral trading system, and noted its partnership on a number of joint projects.

Several speakers recognized that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic had been devastating and that an inclusive and sustainable recovery will need to have MSMEs at the centre. They said that ITC would play a vital role in supporting businesses in developing countries, including least developed countries and small island developing states, to become more resilient and respond to various new global challenges, including the coronavirus crisis. Here there was a call for

enhanced cooperation amongst all agencies and actors to have greater impact on ground particularly in the covid context.

Several speakers noted the agility and innovative response of ITC during the pandemic period, and praised its “build back boldly” approach.

Speakers commended ITC on its focus on digital means of trade, including support for virtual trade fairs, and e-commerce. A number of speakers recommended that ITC expand and enhance this focus.

A number of speakers looked forward to engaging on ITC’s new strategic plan and welcomed the addition of SDG 13 on climate change to its portfolio of indicators, ITC’s new ‘Green to Compete’ strategy and the greater focus on small island developing states.

ITC’s efforts to boost women’s economic empowerment through its SheTrades programme, including SheTrades Commonwealth, local chapters and SheTrades Outlook, were noted in several interventions.

Many speakers appreciated ITC’s efforts to support youth entrepreneurship in developing countries.

Several speakers praised ITC’s work on export development, diversification and connecting MSMEs to global value chains.

Several speakers hailed ITC’s work at sector level in several regions, including textiles, agriculture and tourism. They also noted ITC’s efforts to promote South-South trade.

Many speakers recognized the role that ITC played in the AfCFTA and called for an acceleration of this work, including the ongoing development of the African Trade Observatory and other support measures.

Several speakers also appreciated ITC's range of online tools, including its platform monitoring COVID trade measures, and work on NTMs, SPS, TBTs and other cross-cutting trade topics relevant to helping MSMEs reach their full potential.

We are also grateful for the report of the 2020 Annual Evaluation Synthesis Report.

Speakers encouraged ITC to continue to listen closely to the needs of its beneficiaries on such topics as services trade, building closer partnerships, and improving capacity and infrastructure of developing countries for digital trade. A special call was made to put gender equality at the forefront of COVID-19 response.

Once again, I thank all delegations for their valuable input, and would now like to invite Executive Director Coke-Hamilton to close the meeting.