

CHAIR SUMMARY

Excellencies,

Distinguished participants,

Ladies and gentlemen.

Let me start by thanking the WTO for hosting the JAG here in hybrid format. We are grateful to the many delegates who have joined us today – both in person and online – and who have shared their views and appreciation on the ITC’s recent and future work. Through the fruitful exchanges today, we have seen a clear picture of the value that ITC delivers in its various countries of operation. We also learned which aspects of ITC’s operations are particularly important to delegates and what future work they wish ITC to take on.

Allow me to congratulate you, **Executive Director**, on your third successful session of the JAG. Today, you have shared with us your positive outlook despite the challenges all our countries are facing. You shared with us how ITC was able to remain focused on its core mission to help small businesses go global and contribute to the SDGs. You shared the heightened and renewed focus on the constituencies and communities most in need, particularly women-owned businesses, young entrepreneurs and vulnerable communities. Indeed, it was clear that ITC could only deliver based on the successful partnerships of all the development partners, sister organizations and the wider UN family. Thank you for the

timely reminder that partnerships must be at the heart of the recovery efforts and remain at the center for building resilience.

At the start of today's session, **UNCTAD**, through Secretary General Rebeca Grynspan gave an account of the way in which the socio-economic crisis, climate change and inflation are causing increased challenges for small businesses. We heard of the 'cascading crises', which put global peace and security under threat – and how, in this environment, multilateralism needs to continue its important work to bring prosperity and development to countries.

We heard from the **WTO**, through DDG Xiangchen Zhang, who reminded us that trade is about people and that people need help. This is where ITC steps in. DDG Zhang reminded us that trade is a part of the solution to confronting the multiple inter-connected challenges facing countries around the world. We were encouraged to work more closely together and away from siloes.

And we heard in about 44 statements from **delegates**. Many of the contributions alluded to the challenging global context that encompasses ITC's work. Delegates pointed to the socio-economic challenges, including the fallout of the global pandemic and inflation. They pointed to climate change, with the increasing need for adaptation measures in countries, as well as growing security challenges.

Against this backdrop, delegates voiced their support for the work of ITC. They underlined the importance that trade-related assistance can play in helping to bring their economies back on the path towards recovery. They praised the themes of ITC's work as timely and well-chosen, including the focus on sustainability, inclusivity and digital trade. Delegates praised the new strategic plan and ITC's business model of making small businesses more competitive and ensuring that everyone can benefit from trade. Delegates also commended and raised a number of questions on the well-structured Annual Report and the Annual Evaluation Synthesis Report.

Delegates also praised ITC's flexibility, adaptation and excellent work in light of the challenges of COVID-19 and climate change last year. I think this is a testimony to the high dedication and professionalism of the ITC staff which the Executive Director highlighted in her Opening Statement.

I think the Executive Director herself deserves our praise for her passion, her vision and her dedication to advancing the cause of small entrepreneur and women as well as youth and the environment.

But – to echo my sister from Botswana – the meeting was not all unqualified praise. Delegates were challenging ITC and the membership to do more. DDG Zhang spoke of the need for ITC to keep scaling up its interventions, avoid overstretching and continue collaborating with other agencies. This is a challenge in itself as overstretching is really what you

would like to do as you see more and more problems and would like to do more.

Delegates asked ITC to keep focusing on the neediest and most vulnerable, from least developed countries to persons managing disability. And I pointed out earlier that ITC, while seeing the difficulty of countries, also had the sensitivity to understand the case of a dates planter in Pakistan. And we hope that at the 57th session to hear more about how he has been helped. We know you cannot help everybody individually and that it must be really a request from governments. But the very fact that you mentioned it, I think, was to your credit that you could actually be sensitive to individual situations.

Delegates called on donor governments to continue their investments to ITC, and especially asked for more unearmarked funding to Window 1 of the ITC Trust Fund, as it guarantees flexibility of ITC's programming.

All in all, today's event, or as referred to by one delegate – the rendez-vous between ITC's two parents – took stock of ITC's performance. We heard countless examples of how ITC's projects helped entrepreneurs on the ground become more competitive, how it connected vulnerable populations into global trade, and how it supported MSMEs to realize their full potential.

As Chair, I am encouraged that ITC's programming is on the right track to meet the ongoing and rapidly changing needs of MSMEs in developing

countries. Together, through the close cooperation with other partners, including the WTO and UNCTAD, and those who would like to participate like the ACP, I believe that trade will continue to have a transformative impact on employment, increased economic resilience and overall poverty reduction.

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for your time today and for your engagement in sharing the role that ITC has and can play to build trade capacities in your respective countries.

I will add a sentence on myself to say that the praise we heard today was not something we should forget about – we rarely hear it for international organizations. When we hear it, we should be content and know that we can commit funds as our funding is being well spent. This is what Miguel [Jimenez-Pont, Head of the Evaluation Unit] would say, ‘value for money’.

I now turn to invite Pamela Coke-Hamilton, ITC Executive Director for closing remarks. Pamela, the floor is yours.