

Thank you to Denmark for delivering the donors statement.

In the interest of time I will not repeat what has already been said so eloquently by previous speakers about the excellent results and thought leadership that ITC provides.

Most importantly, I would like to reiterate, once again, a message of great appreciation and congratulations from the EU to Executive Director Gonzalez and her team.

The ITC continues to be one of our most trusted partners, implementing projects together across the globe and across thematic areas. As a result of the updated EU Aid for Trade Strategy of 2017, we are linking our Aid for Trade operations even further to the market, and that requires all stakeholders to understand markets better. ITC has proved to have the right approach and skills for that. As EU instruments evolve to leverage investments, such as the External Investment Plan, we look forward to ITC's contribution in supporting the connection between Governments-donors-private sector to make the most of trade and investment opportunities.

We hope to be continuing our excellent collaboration with ITC as our trusted partner in the years to come.

I would also like to congratulate the Executive Director for taking on the position of Chair of the International Gender Champions Board, and thank her and the ITC team for driving and supporting the implementation of the Buenos Aires Declaration on trade and women's economic empowerment, and specifically the workshop on women and digital trade that we co-hosted yesterday with Trinidad & Tobago and Senegal. Judging by priorities flagged in statements by the distinguished speakers today, the topic was particularly timely and relevant.

Indeed, I also salute and thank her excellency the SG of COMESA and the Commissioner of ECOWAS for their insightful interventions. I reiterate the EU's commitment to mutual cooperation with COMESA and ECOWAS, as well as with the African Union in the framework of our strategic partnership. A partnership that is also supported by the ITC.

I would also thank his excellency Deputy Minister Aung Htoo from the Ministry of Commerce of Myanmar for his kind words regarding collaboration with the EU and I also take this opportunity to thank all of our partners and underline the EU's commitment as a major provider of aid for trade.

As I am taking the floor later than expected, it gives me the opportunity to congratulate you on the MoU just signed to contribute towards youth empowerment, a particular EU priority, and what sounds like a fund project.