

# REPORT OF THE 52<sup>ND</sup> SESSION OF THE ITC JOINT ADVISORY GROUP MEETING

Geneva, 10 July 2018



International  
Trade  
Centre

TRADE IMPACT  
FOR GOOD

**ITC mission:**

To enhance inclusive and sustainable growth and development in developing countries, especially least developed countries, and countries with economies in transition through improving the international competitiveness of MSMEs.

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# **Report of the 52<sup>nd</sup> session of the ITC Joint Advisory Group**

**Geneva, 10 July 2018**

## **Opening session**

### **Opening remarks from the Chair of the 51<sup>st</sup> session**

1. H.E. Ms. Frances Lisson, Ambassador, Permanent Mission of Australia to the World Trade Organization (WTO), and Chair of the 51<sup>st</sup> session of the Joint Advisory Group (JAG), opened the 52<sup>nd</sup> session of the JAG.
2. Ms. Lisson remarked that 2017 was a strong year for export and import growth, but a more delicate one for multilateral cooperation on trade. Against this challenging backdrop, ITC has continued to work to ensure that micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) are better equipped to take advantage of market access opportunities and integrate into global trade. Further, ITC played a key role in driving the Buenos Aires Declaration on Women and Trade and has continued to contribute to discussions under this initiative in the WTO in 2018. Indeed, women's economic empowerment has been a key theme running through the full range of ITC's work, in particular, through the expanding SheTrades programme.
3. Ms. Lisson noted that ITC has supported exports and investments valued at \$646 million through its market intelligence, business and institutional support including tools such as the Global Trade Helpdesk and the Export Potential Map. She pointed to ITC's 2017 SME Competitiveness Outlook publication as providing valuable information and ideas around promoting inclusive trade through regional integration initiatives. ITC was also encouraging new types of cooperation, particularly to boost African trade and investment with China and India through partnerships with trade and investment promotion agencies.
4. She added that ITC's strong partnerships with governments are central to its work in promoting trade, which creates positive and inclusive economic, social, and environmental impacts. ITC has continued to evolve and increase its focus on addressing trade challenges in post-conflict and fragile states and worked to improve the skills and employability of vulnerable segments of society, including migrants, refugees and internally displaced people. She concluded by thanking Executive Director Arancha González for inviting her to take up the JAG Chair role over the past year and called on funders to continue working with ITC in support of this important work.

### **Opening remarks by the Chair of the 52<sup>nd</sup> session**

5. H.E. Mr. Alvaro Cedeño Molinari, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Costa Rica to the World Trade Organization, took up his position as Chair of the 52<sup>nd</sup> session of the JAG.

6. In his opening remarks, Mr. Cedeño Molinari said that within the Geneva trade community, ITC's role was to make trade happen. Through building MSME competitiveness, ITC had enabled trade, innovation, and business to flourish, even at a time where some were questioning the benefits of multilateralism and trade.
7. Through its projects on the ground, trade and market intelligence tools and thought leadership, ITC had contributed to making trade work for all. He highlighted examples of coffee producers from Tanzania, Malawi and Zambia who received higher prices through online auctions, and Colombian cocoa farmers who earned price premiums for sustainable production practices, underscoring the symbiotic relationship between good trade and sustainable development.
8. In order to do its work, he pointed out that ITC collaborates with a wide range of partners, including in his own country of Costa Rica, where ITC has worked with trade and investment promotion agencies to help them measure and improve their own performance. ITC had also brokered triangular cooperation through which Costa Rica's investment promotion agency could share best practices with counterparts in four African countries. He referred to the *ITC Annual Report 2017* as a snapshot of exceptional results of what ITC delivered in 2017.
9. The Ambassador concluded by highlighting objectives of the JAG meeting as an opportunity for participants in the trade and development community to examine ITC's work, commend the good and highlight areas for improvement.

### **Statement by Secretary-General of UNCTAD**

10. Mr. Mukhisa Kituyi, Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), said that ITC continued to play an important role in the integration of small businesses into the global economy. This work has made a useful technical contribution to UNCTAD's larger political goal of gainful integration of developing countries into the global economy.
11. Mr. Kituyi added that ITC technical support for small businesses complemented intergovernmental deliberations, research analysis and technical cooperation on entrepreneurship and enterprise development. As an example, he mentioned that UNCTAD and ITC are working together in Bangladesh on promoting the transparency of administrative procedures applicable to export.
12. The Global Trade Helpdesk led by UNCTAD, ITC and WTO continued to be the global source for trade data. This initiative reflected well the complementarity of the three trade and development organizations. Collaboration included areas such as non-tariff measures (NTMs) where they coordinated their data collection efforts and harmonised their methodologies. As part of the UNCTAD-led Multi-Agency Support Team, ITC had helped in the maintenance and revision of the NTM classification in order to better reflect the changing regulatory environment and allow for better integration of the respective databases.
13. ITC is a proven technical partner in UNCTAD's broader support to Trade Facilitation, declared Mr. Kituyi. UNCTAD and ITC continued to develop National Trade Facilitation Portals in East African Community (EAC) member states and other countries. Following the success of the first International Forum for National Trade Facilitation Committees (NTFCs) in 2017, ITC joined UNCTAD and the United Nations Economic Commission for

Europe (UNECE) and co-organized a side event on National Trade Facilitation Committees at the Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum in September 2017, with financing from WTO.

14. He added that UNCTAD's National Trade Facilitation Committees Empowerment programme has jointly conducted two courses with ITC for National Trade Facilitation Committees in Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire. He said that UNCTAD and ITC had delivered assistance to Sri Lanka in the categorisation of commitments of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, which were notified to the WTO in February 2018.
15. He closed by saying that with the uncertainty facing the trade community, it was useful that ITC is playing a stronger role, together with UNCTAD, in the wider United Nations reforms. With the new United Nations Country Teams emerging to support the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at country-level, UNCTAD welcomed ITC's support and ever closer partnership.

### **Statement by WTO Deputy Director-General**

16. Mr. Yonov Frederick Agah, Deputy Director-General of WTO, said the meeting was an important date for the trade community to look back on ITC's activities over the past year and to look forward and discuss its mandate to make trade work as a tool for prosperity and development.
17. In 2017, ITC delivered strongly on its projects, Mr. Agah told the meeting. He cited examples such as Guinea, where ITC facilitated the country's first shipment of air-freighted mangoes; Nepal, where it supported the cashmere industry; and Lesotho and Tanzania where ITC assisted fruit and vegetable growers in raising their incomes through increased productivity and value addition. The SheTrades initiative continued to connect women entrepreneurs to markets. Overall, an additional 15,200 enterprises improved their international competitiveness. These concrete activities highlighted the relevance of ITC for small businesses in developing countries, as well as the complementarity of the work of the two parent institutions, WTO and UNCTAD.
18. Mr. Agah explained that the collaboration between ITC and its parent institutions spanned a wide range of areas and projects including the Cotton Portal, ePing – an online alert mechanism for new Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures and Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) notifications and the longstanding partnership with the STDF – the Standards and Trade Development Facility. He noted that their collaboration aimed to help developing countries and least developed countries (LDCs) benefit from trade, within the context of a strong multilateral trading system.
19. Mr. Agah explained that an informal working group on MSMEs was set up at the WTO Buenos Aires Ministerial Conference and the work of this multilateral group will be of great interest to ITC.
20. Attaining the SDGs by working closely with private enterprises was important for ITC and WTO. Technology was driving economic change, which meant governments must think of new ways to support and train their workers. Institutions underpinning multilateralism, including the WTO, must also evolve. He emphasized that strong collaboration between ITC and its parent institutions must continue to ensure that trade genuinely contributes to improving people's lives.

## Statement by Executive Director of ITC

21. ITC Executive Director Ms. Arancha González thanked the Secretary-General of UNCTAD and the Deputy Director-General of WTO for their continued support of ITC. She then summarized how ITC worked with its partners around the world in 2017 to ensure that trade remains a driving force for development.
22. Ms. González emphasized that despite the current challenges testing multilateralism, efforts should be made to render it more transparent, inclusive and efficient. She framed ITC's work as tangible proof of the value of cooperation and solidarity on trade. She stressed that ITC transforms funders' contributions into market-based economic opportunities for MSMEs and people at the base of the pyramid, resulting in improved livelihoods, reduced poverty, and progress towards achieving the SDGs. She added that ITC's work demonstrates that alliances across borders can advance women's economic empowerment and youth entrepreneurship and also create opportunities for refugees and displaced communities.
23. ITC had shifted gears while maintaining its focus in 2017, said Ms. González, and was now 'accelerating forward'. She added that the new *Strategic Plan 2018-2021* maintained ITC's focus on six areas of interventions. Moreover, ITC had aligned its internal structures to deploy staff and expertise as efficiently as possible. These improvements allowed ITC to deliver market intelligence, technical assistance and capacity-building support worth \$85.6 million last year, in line with its performance in 2016, with both years shaped by funding challenges.
24. She stressed that last year funders had made the largest annual extra budgetary contribution ever to ITC with over \$100 million in new agreements, and an additional \$60 million by June this year. Ms. González was confident that funding challenges were now behind ITC. She estimated that ITC support in 2017 resulted in close to \$650 million of additional export and investments globally – amounting to \$14 of exports and investments for each dollar invested in ITC in extrabudgetary funding.
25. In 2017, Ms. González said, ITC reached its target of connecting 1 million women entrepreneurs to international markets originally scheduled for 2020, resulting in a new target of connecting 3 million women by 2021.
26. Furthermore, she said, 86% of ITC's country-specific interventions focused on priority countries of LDCs, sub-Saharan Africa and landlocked developing countries (LLDCs), small island developing states (SIDS), small, vulnerable economies (SVEs) and post-conflict states. ITC also bolstered regional initiatives, from West Africa to the East African Community (EAC), Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), African, Caribbean, and Pacific Group of States (ACP) and the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) as well as the Aid for Trade Initiative for the Arab States (better known as AfTIAS). Through its global programmes and global public goods, it enhanced its footprint everywhere from Latin America to Asia. ITC was committed to working in fragile environments, giving true meaning to its 'base of the pyramid' focus, proven by its interventions in Afghanistan, Syria, Libya, Gaza, Colombia and along the Guatemalan border.

27. In 2018, Ms. González said ITC intended to increase its delivery by nearly 20%. She added that the average size of grant agreements increased from about \$467,000 in 2015 to nearly \$1.5 million in 2017, and 84% of the funds committed to ITC were for multi-year agreements, compared with 41% in 2015. The number of Window 1 funders with multi-year agreements rose from three in 2014 to six in 2018, and the number of grant agreements signed with the private sector nearly doubled in 2017 compared to previous years.
28. In 2017, ITC unveiled new market intelligence tools including the SME Trade Helpdesk, a one-stop-shop for MSMEs seeking information about tariff, non-tariff, and documentation requirements in target markets -- a joint initiative of ITC, the WTO, and UNCTAD. To make progress toward the SDGs, Ms. González said the Export Potential Map had been refined and the Market Price Information tool developed to provide free access to real-time price and market information for more than 100 agricultural products. She described how SME competitiveness and benchmarking work helped trade and investment support institutions (TISIs) and policymakers target their resources to help businesses connect to international markets. She stressed the indispensable role that un-earmarked funding played in assisting ITC to devote talent and time to developing new tools and approaches as well as to innovate.
29. Looking forward, Ms. González said ITC had progressed towards its goal of achieving gender balance across professional levels by 2023. ITC's greatest asset remained its staff of about 300 people from 83 different countries.
30. ITC had revised its ITC Evaluation Guidelines and embarked on making ITC compliant with the standards of the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI), a further step in ensuring 'we do better' but we also do it 'more transparently', she explained.
31. 2018 had started well for ITC, with a successful SheTrades Global event held in Liverpool in June as well as ITC's second year piloting the global messaging on United Nations International day for MSMEs. ITC would continue making the case for open markets and work to enable businesses in developing countries to take advantage of opportunities where they exist, said Ms. González. Its fourth annual flagship report – the 2017 edition of the *SME Competitiveness Outlook* – provided an in-depth look at how to build the business ecosystems that MSMEs need to compete in the new digital era.
32. In closing, Ms. González thanked the entire ITC staff for their hard work and dedication, while extending special appreciation to the senior management team led by Deputy Executive Director, Ms. Dorothy Tembo. She drew participants' attention to a new ITC app - ITC At Hand – which would allow users to get up to date news about ITC projects and events.

### **Placing the Spotlight on Youth Entrepreneurship: Perspectives from the Field**

33. Ms. Hala Zarrok, Founder of the event management company 'Mariage', from Libya, thanked ITC Executive Director, Ms. González, for the opportunity to speak at the JAG.
34. Ms. Zarrok explained that Libya had a rich history of civilizations and was brimming with wealth and potential but that economic activity had been paralyzed, especially due to its dependence on oil, accounting for more than 80% of the government's revenues. She said the unemployment rate had jumped from 13% to 19% and had led to a rise in emigration and prompted more youth and women to start their own businesses.

35. Ms. Zarrok said that according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the private sector accounts for only 5% of Libya's GDP, indicating a need to strengthen and support MSMEs. Projects encouraging private sector development would not only have a direct effect on beneficiaries' capacities and job creation but would also have an indirect effect on the diversification of Libya's economy and hence its long-term development.
36. As a Libyan female entrepreneur in the field of organization and management of events, she said her success and expertise depended on intuition and on learning through trial and error. She emphasized that the Libyan Entrepreneurship programme developed by ITC in partnership with Expertise France, and funded by the European Union would enable young entrepreneurs to easily access relevant information specifically tailored to the Libyan context, and to learn how to start and manage a successful business from experts.
37. She explained that in 2016 the pilot phase of this project saw 1,074 participants enrolled and 303 certified, leading to the programme's enlargement with more substantial educational resources, including training, information, and other forms of assistance which would make a concrete difference for young entrepreneurs.
38. She concluded her remarks by stressing that support from the international community continues to be greatly needed in Libya's transitional phase.
39. Mr. Michael Ocansey, co-founder of AgroCenta, a technology-based company working within the agriculture value chain in Ghana, thanked the entire ITC and Ms. González for the opportunity to participate in the JAG.
40. He explained his entrepreneurial journey in founding AgroCenta, recalling that the company started with two co-founders in 2017 and has grown to 37 staff since then.
41. Mr. Ocansey described how he and his co-founder had failed at their first start-up and decided to pursue a business in the agricultural space, requiring travel to the northern part of Ghana where most of the farming population lives. He explained how he was troubled by the level of the farmers' poverty, even though they grew food for most of Ghana and some neighbouring countries. There was a clear need for the farmers to trade in a better way to profit from their labour.
42. Mr. Ocansey and his partner were prompted to devise a for-profit solution. He said they currently work in three out of the 10 regions of Ghana and have a network of 12,000 smallholder farmers. He explained that 4,000 of that number have experienced a 40% increase in revenue by trading through AgroCenta's platform. The firm's goal, he added, was to expand into six regions and to 50,000 farmers by the end of this year.
43. Mr. Ocansey credited his firm's success to a willingness to learn from others. Working with communities and farmers directly had helped him and his colleagues to understand the farmers' actual needs and thus also to identify untapped areas in the market.
44. His goals, he explained, were for farmers to expand their holdings and increase their income for the benefit of their families. It was also to allow more women to have access to land for farming.
45. Mr. Ocansey said key technical support had led to improved offers and greater visibility for AgroCenta. The WEDF Young Entrepreneurs pitching competition, organized by ITC in Budapest in 2017, had kick-started their successful participation in other competitions, such as the Seedstars Global Summit competition which awarded \$500,000 in equity

investment. He closed by saying that young entrepreneurs needed to be given both the support to succeed as well as the space to fail.

## Statements by delegations

46. Delegates commended ITC for the excellent results in promoting inclusive and sustainable trade and economic growth, and noted that these efforts were necessary for sustainable development and for highlighting the effective contribution of trade to the achievement of the SDGs. Delegates welcomed ITC's new *Strategic Plan 2018–2021*.
47. Multiple delegates praised ITC as a valuable and reliable partner in the field. ITC was described as open to dialogue. It was also effective in overcoming obstacles to working with trade partners and foreign investment in order to provide information on new business and trade opportunities. This helped lead to market access. Delegates looked forward to strengthening their continuous cooperation with ITC and encouraged ITC to be fully involved in the reform of the United Nations Development System.
48. Referring to ITC's services and products, delegates said they highly valued ITC's solutions such as ePing, Export Potential Map, SME Trade Helpdesk, Market Analysis Tools, Market Price Information portal and other tools and maps. They noted the importance of these global public goods to allow policymakers and MSMEs to have crucial access to market intelligence. The Latin American and Caribbean Group of countries (GRULAC) praised ITC's coordination with other international agencies in order to join efforts to provide the most up-to-date information and commended the development of the Global Trade Helpdesk.
49. ITC was highly appreciated by many delegates for its interventions in post-conflict areas and fragile states and for placing priority on its work with MSMEs at the base of the pyramid in LDCs, SIDS, LLDCs and SVEs. They urged ITC to continue working in these regions, adding that both local ownership and the local business ecosystem were important to a broader stakeholder approach. They underlined the significance of having in place good capacity assessment methodologies and risk management systems.
50. Strong endorsement and recognition by many delegates were given to ITC's leadership and actions regarding women's economic empowerment and gender equality. The SheTrades initiative was highly valued and several delegates requested more work in this area. One delegate suggested SheTrades could be developed into a certificate with a criteria and verification mechanism as with the Fairtrade certification. GRULAC acknowledged the important achievements of the SheTrades initiative, which had already been launched in some countries in the region, and said it looked forward to the initiative's greater outreach in the near future. Regarding ITC itself, one delegate reminded of the goal to achieve gender parity also in the category of P5 and above levels.
51. Several member states encouraged ITC to continue placing importance on bolstering youth entrepreneurship in an effort to reduce unemployment, adding that youth programmes strengthen empowerment. They said that start-ups required the flexibility of new funding.
52. Several delegates highlighted the high potential of e-commerce, especially for countries at the base of the economic pyramid as well as fragile or post-conflict states.

53. The importance of trade facilitation was underlined by several delegates, who thanked ITC for its support on the implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement. Delegations requested additional assistance on Trade Facilitation and on the WTO post-accession process.
54. In addressing NTMs, delegates appreciated that ITC's NTM surveys and technical assistance helped countries to understand the challenges of MSMEs and the obstacles they face in trading. Some delegations raised the importance of follow-up actions on NTM surveys to help countries in addressing the identified challenges and bottlenecks.
55. Delegations highlighted the importance of institutional strengthening and ITC's work in setting up institutions and building their capacity to provide better services to businesses. They expressed the need to allocate adequate time-frames for interventions that address institutional capacity building in order to have sustainable impact. One delegate called for leveraging potential synergies between the Sustainability Map and the TISI programme.
56. There was clear support for ITC's work on value chain development and integrating MSMEs into global value chains by developing their competitiveness and connecting them to markets. Some delegates identified agriculture as a crucial sector in which ITC has significant experience and success in linking agrarian businesses to global value chains. The 2017 edition of the *SME Competitiveness Outlook* was commended for its focus on regional trade. One delegate requested ITC's help in value chain strengthening.
57. Delegates gave good feedback on projects under the *South-South Trade and Investment* programme and praised the visible results. One delegate noted that the *Partnership for Investment and Growth in Africa* (PIGA) project had helped beneficiaries increase investment-led exports, foreign investments and partnerships -- in particular in agro-processing and light manufacturing. The *Supporting Indian Trade and Investment for Africa* project (SITA) was cited as another initiative which had led to new business deals, investment leads, and knowledge transfer.
58. Most delegates expressed positive feedback on the ITC 2017 *Annual Evaluation Synthesis Report* and added that they supported the recommendations. One delegate highlighted areas for improvement, including sustainability, impact, objective setting, beneficiaries' buy-in and baseline data. Another delegate said evaluators and donors were aligned regarding additional efforts on methodology for measuring and reporting on cost-effectiveness, not just globally but also for beneficiaries and clients on the ground, at the country level.
59. One delegate suggested that collecting better data would contribute to designing better projects with longer-term impact. Other delegates called for ITC to continue efforts to achieve maximum impact by focusing on how particular interventions affected trade. Mainstreaming approaches and lessons learned from SheTrades and Trade for Sustainable Development in ITC's overall work was encouraged by another delegate who added this was necessary to have an impact at the hoped-for scale.
60. Delegates called for ITC to strengthen risk management and monitoring and make additional efforts in developing a methodology for measuring and reporting on cost-effectiveness, both globally and on the ground.
61. In terms of funding, several delegates urged funders to continue their support of ITC and, in particular, to contribute un-earmarked funds to allow the organization to plan for the future, highlighting the importance of ITC's work.

62. Delegates commended Executive Director Arancha González for her leadership and ITC staff for their dedication and professionalism.

### **Presentation of the 2018 Annual Evaluation Synthesis Report**

63. Mr. Miguel Jimenez-Pont, Head of the Independent Evaluation Unit (IEU), presented the *ITC 2018 Annual Evaluation Synthesis Report* (AESR). The report conveyed the critical learning points generated through evaluations conducted over the past year and contributed to an informed debate on how to improve ITC's performance to deliver sustainable development through trade-related technical assistance.
64. Regarding this year's key learning theme, Mr. Jimenez-Pont said the AESR addressed the ongoing challenge of sustainability and innovation, as well as the link between the two. Fundamentally, the challenges that affect sustainability are related to the insufficient appreciation of local conditions and the necessary engagement of partners and beneficiaries when designing and implementing a project. With regard to innovation, the report also emphasized the connection between ITC's own cycle of innovation and that of ITC's beneficiaries and partners, as one reinforcing the other.
65. In terms of what works well, ITC is recognized as a reliable agency that generates positive change and improved performance of its partners and beneficiaries. MSMEs increase their exports and competitiveness and TISIs improve their performance through training, coaching and information systems development.
66. In terms of lessons learned, the report's high-level recommendation was to further incentivize innovation in projects in a more widespread and systematic way. The report, Mr. Jimenez-Pont said, showed that ITC is heading in this direction and that funders, partners and beneficiaries also have a role to play.

### **Tools and Methodologies: Launch of Market Price Information Portal**

67. Mondher Mimouni, Chief of ITC's Trade and Market Intelligence section, presented the Market Price Information portal, the first free of charge tool that allows farmers, MSMEs, policymakers and TISIs to access real-time market price information.
68. Mr. Mimouni explained that in modern markets, access to trade-related information was crucial for dynamic competitiveness. This included knowing what regulations and standards are applicable to a specific product in a specific target market, who the competitors were and what technological developments were upcoming. He said that for many years, ITC had been improving market transparency.
69. He explained that the Market Price Information portal covered more than 300 agricultural products, showing for example, current prices in destination markets, the minimum price a specific product should be sold at in local and international markets, as well as the latest international market news for a product that could affect its prices or demand.
70. Thanks to contributions from Thomson Reuters and other data sources, the Market Price Information portal provides daily and historical data, which covers detailed prices according to many characteristics and is complemented with the latest news on the sector

or product. Mr. Mimouni added that ITC is already working on expanding the portal, and was customizing national versions that would allow TISIs, cooperatives and producers to upload and consult local market prices related to their product. This unique combination of local and international prices would keep them better informed when dealing with buyers.

71. Using mangoes as an example, Mr. Mimouni demonstrated the tool to the JAG, showing aspects that allow users to see market prices by origin, variety, quality and location. For instance, Peruvian Kent mangoes are more expensive in the Netherlands than the ones from Côte d'Ivoire.
72. Mr. Mimouni closed by saying that the portal added to ITC's expertise in its global public goods program. He said ITC's ultimate aim was to offer MSMEs reliable and transparent market information, to help them reinforce their international competitiveness and contribute to adding more jobs, increased skills and better wages.

## **Closing session**

### **Chair's summary**

73. Ambassador Alvaro Cedeño Molinari presented the Chair's report on the proceedings of the session.
74. He thanked the UNCTAD Secretary-General, WTO Deputy Director-General, ITC Executive Director and special guests Ms. Hala Zarrok and Mr. Michael Ocansey. He said UNCTAD and WTO had worked with ITC to enhance the impact of trade as a driver of economic growth, development, and job creation. The three organizations continued to collaborate on trade information, statistical analysis, and implementing solutions to enable MSMEs to trade. Both speakers of UNCTAD and WTO had emphasized the importance of multilateral cooperation to achieving the SDGs and addressing the political challenges that many confront today.
75. Referring to the remarks of ITC's Executive Director, Mr. Cedeño Molinari highlighted how ITC was accelerating forward, with \$100 million in new extrabudgetary funding commitments, how partnerships are playing an increased role and how ITC was acting at home to foster innovation, improve risk management and evaluation systems, as well as work towards gender parity.
76. The two special guests, said Mr. Cedeño Molinari, highlighted the importance of supporting youth entrepreneurs for private sector development, growth, and job creation – even in challenging contexts.
77. Many delegations expressed support and appreciation for ITC's trade-related technical assistance, he said. Specific areas of work singled out for praise ranged from ITC's trade and market intelligence tools like the Global Trade Helpdesk and Sustainability Map, to the non-tariff measure surveys and country-specific projects to boost value addition, export competitiveness, and environmental sustainability. ITC was also praised for its focus on its priority countries.
78. Several delegations praised ITC's effective advocacy and thought leadership on women's economic empowerment, through the SheTrades initiative and the process that led to the Buenos Aires Declaration on Trade and Women's Economic Empowerment. Many called

for further scaling up the SheTrades initiative. One delegation urged ITC to explore the development of a SheTrades certification to both incentivize and reward good practice.

79. Multiple delegations indicated that ITC's thought leadership and analytical work as demonstrated through publications such as the *SME Competitiveness Outlook*, had positioned ITC as a reference for policymakers in both developed and developing countries.
80. While commending ITC for its evaluation work, some delegations offered suggestions that ITC further refine its theories of change to increase responsiveness to local circumstances. ITC was also urged to build on its momentum towards gender parity at all professional levels.
81. Many delegations pointed to the importance of Window 1 funding, with some announcements of future contributions to ITC.
82. On the 2018 *Annual Evaluation Synthesis Report*, ITC presented the key learnings from 2017 evaluation work, and explained how ITC was using this evidence base to inform future interventions and enhance accountability to funders and beneficiaries alike.
83. ITC was leveraging technology to help MSMEs trade, and he reminded delegates that many had mentioned the Global Trade Helpdesk. In addition, the Market Price information portal would provide free access to real-time price and market data to help MSMEs stay up to date on market movements.
84. He said that the meeting confirmed that ITC was an organization that continuously engages with its stakeholders and beneficiaries to deliver new and innovative initiatives to make trade sustainable and inclusive.
85. In closing, Ambassador Cedeño Molinari thanked the JAG members for their continued trust, support and engagement with ITC.

### **Executive Director's Closing Remarks**

86. In closing, as a parting gesture, ITC Executive Director Arancha González requested delegates to download ITC's new mobile application 'ITC at Hand', which contained all the information concerning the event, including reports and photographs.
87. She requested delegates to let all stakeholders know about ITC's innovations and communicate to their governments and TISIs about the new ITC tools which could ensure better impact for their trade.

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