

ITC, Joint Advisory Group 4 July 2016

Norway

Thank you, Chair.

Norway would like to commend ITC for taking the 2030 Agenda as the framework for its activities. The Sustainable Development Goals are highlighted in the introduction of the Annual Report 2015. The SDGs also constitute the strategic background for the Operational Plan 2016.

Achieving the SDGs will require an unprecedented collective effort. We are pleased to see that ITC intends to shoulder its part of our common responsibility.

Norway will be among the first to report progress on the SDGs at the High-level Political Forum in New York later this month. We will seek to ensure that the goals can be implemented across economic, social and environmental sectors. We also expect our cooperation partners to demonstrate how they can contribute to the implementation of the goals.

It is clear that we need to do more to promote economic growth and employment opportunities in the least developed countries. We know that a thriving private sector is essential for developing countries to become middle-income countries. The technical assistance that ITC provides for small and medium-sized enterprises is a valuable contribution.

If we don't succeed, we risk that the poorest countries will permanently lag behind. It is therefore a matter of concern to us, that statistics show that Aid for Trade targeted at the least developed countries, as well as at African countries, decreased from 2013 to 2014. This trend needs to be reversed. The Norwegian government will give priority to those most in need of assistance. Both in our development cooperation and in our trade policy this means giving priority to the least developed countries.

We are pleased that a large amount of ITC's technical assistance in 2015 was provided to LDCs. If possible, we would appreciate getting a breakdown of the delivery to ITC's priority countries, to give us an even clearer picture of how much of the funding actually goes to LDCs.

We applaud ITC's efforts for promoting the economic empowerment of women. It is crucial to keep in mind the gender perspective in our policy for economic growth, business development and trade. On the Norwegian side, our Foreign Minister will soon present a new and updated Action Plan for women's rights and gender equality. This has been a priority and a cross-cutting issue in our development cooperation for many years, but we strive do to even better.

In closing, I would like to join others in thanking Arancha Gonzalez and the rest of the ITC secretariat for their dedication and hard work.

Thank you.