

Opening remarks by the Chair of the 53rd session

Statement on behalf of the Chair of the 53rd Session: H.E. Ms. Kirsti Kauppi, Ambassador, Permanent Mission of Finland to the United Nations Office and International Organizations at Geneva

Executive Director Pamela Coke-Hamilton
Secretary-General Mukhisa Kituyi
Deputy Director-General Yonov Frederick Agah,
Excellencies,
Members,

On behalf of Finland as the outgoing Chair of the Joint Advisory Group, I would very much like to welcome you all to the 54th session of the JAG meeting. ITC's first virtual JAG!

A special welcome goes to ITC's new Executive Director, Pamela Coke-Hamilton. I have great confidence in your skills and experience in continuing to steer ITC into the future and I also would like to thank ITC's Deputy Executive Director, Dorothy Tembo, for her able leadership during the transition period.

This year we have all been dealing with this period of extraordinary crisis. The impact on ITC's core clients- the MSMEs- was devastating. But it is clear that the recovery will need to have MSMEs at the centre. So never before has the work of ITC been more needed. Now is not the time to pull back- now is the time to fully lean in.

ITC's work to support MSMEs during these trying times remains so important to us. With its unique focus on growth through trade and competitiveness, ITC contributes to ensuring that women, youth and marginalized groups have economic stability. This is very important from the perspective of Finnish development policy. ITC has reported impressive results in its Annual Report for 2019. These include generating \$1 billion in estimated export and investment value resulting from ITC's market intelligence, business connections and support to trade and

investment support institutions. In 2019 ITC delivered its highest ever delivery and was poised to better this in 2020.

But then the pandemic came and the disruptions it caused amplified the economic and social impact, particularly for the LDCs, landlocked developing countries, small island developing states, small, vulnerable economies, and fragile and post-conflict states. ITC's undeterred focus on the base of the pyramid, quick response to the crisis, and flexible approach in adapting its delivery mechanisms demonstrated how well ITC really is fit for purpose.

Before I hand over my role as the Chair of the JAG to Her Excellency Ms. Athaliah Lesiba Molokomme, Ambassador and Representative of the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Botswana to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations at Geneva, I wish to reiterate Finland's ongoing support for the work of ITC in the coming years, particularly as we will continue to brace ourselves to face and respond to the social, environmental, economic and health challenges at a global scale. I equally encourage all members and partner organizations to continue their collaboration with ITC in its quest to realize good trade and build resilience.

Thank you.