

Thank you Chair,

At the outset, we would like to congratulate you on the chairmanship of the Joint Advisory Group and thank the outgoing Chairman,. My delegation wishes to express its appreciation for the opportunity to discuss the work of the ITC and to contribute to its strategic direction in going forward. We are further pleased to be joined today with our colleagues from the Qatar Development Bank to take part in the proceedings of the Joint Advisory Group. The ITC has played a critical role in supporting the work of the Geneva Trade Community and we commend the multistakeholder approach it has adopted and for the concerted priority that has been allocated to issues concerning developing countries, LDCs, and small and vulnerable economies. To this end, allow me to congratulate the ITC for the substantial progress achieved in 2017 and the first half of 2018.. we found that the annual report showcased ITC's efforts in a clear and consistent manner, confirming that the ITC is on track to bring its Strategic Plan to full fruition. Furthermore, we recognize the ITC for utilizing objective impact assessments in realizing its projects and the significant progress made in the six focus areas of the Strategic Plan.

Chair, I would like to applaud the level of competence and professionalism displayed by the ITC's staff in our joint endeavors and on the able leadership of the executive director, Ms. Arancha Gonzalez. We find the dedication and conviction of the ITC's staff and senior management as truly exemplary. The ITC holds great importance to the members of the Geneva trade community, and we would consider the relationship built between Qatar and the ITC is of a truly special nature.

Over the last five years, ITC's expanding relationship with Qatar was built on a broad range of initiatives and technical assistance programs including programs covering capacity building in Market Analysis, training on enterprise competitiveness tools, undertaking assessments among other areas of value added services. In 2015 Qatar and the ITC jointly held the WEDF and signed an MOU aimed at enhancing SME competitiveness, we expect this relationship to continue growing in the coming years with joint projects in the fields of E-Commerce and Market intelligence. In this regard we extend our sincere gratitude to the ITC for the indispensable support provided.

Looking to the future, we encourage further work in helping SMEs benefit from the multilateral trading system, including in areas such as non-tariff barriers, standardization regulations and access to finance. Initiatives similar to the 'Trade Dialogs' held by the WTO this year could benefit SME's in conducting their trade operations and to discuss how to better their engagement with the multilateral trading system. Thus we would recommend a broader multi-stakeholder approach with Small to Medium enterprises in developing countries, particularly those from LDC's and SVE's. The relationship between trade and development is part of a heritage we all share, we encourage the ITC to further develop the understanding of this relationship particularly through examining the application and adherence to the Sustainable development goals in the negotiating function of the WTO, this would help in bringing alignment to discussions in the different multilateral fora.

To conclude, we would like to state our gratitude regarding the ongoing partnership Qatar enjoys with the ITC. We look forward in continuing to support the ITC's work both in Geneva and elsewhere and we wish the ITC a fruitful and productive JAG.

Thank you,