

Statement by the delegation of Sri Lanka
at the 54th Session of the ITC Joint Advisory Group
on 25th November 2020 (virtual session)

Thank you Chairperson,

At the outset Sri Lanka joins others in extending its warm congratulations & best wishes to Ms. Pamela Coke-Hamilton for assuming the office of Executive Director of ITC from 1st October 2020 and Her Excellency the Ambassador of Botswana for assuming the Chair of the 54th Session of the Joint Advisory Group. Our thanks also goes to Her Excellency the Ambassador of Finland, the outgoing Chair of the Group for her excellent leadership given during her tenure.

Sri Lanka also thanks the ITC for its comprehensive annual report made available prior to this meeting, which describes what ITC delivered during 2019. Our thanks also goes to the ITC team for the excellent cooperation they extend with regard to trade-related capacity building in developing countries. Work of ITC is not possible without the generous contribution of Donors. Therefore, our equal appreciation goes to all the donors, who enable the ITC to continue what it does in terms of trade-related capacity building and technical assistance in developing and least developed countries.

ITC is one of the most effective development agencies that is fully dedicated to supporting the internationalization of small and medium-sized enterprises in the developing countries and LDCs. Through an array of instruments & tools, the agency has been able to assist SMEs in developing countries to become more competitive and connect to international markets for trade and investment, thus raising incomes and creating job opportunities, especially for women, young, and poor communities.

Under different trade-related development projects, ITC has been involved successfully in Sri Lanka for many years as the lead agency executing the development plans on behalf of the donor agencies and countries. It's currently implementing a 4-year project for trade-related capacity building in Sri Lanka with the funding assistance of the European Union, which is now at its last phase. We greatly appreciate the EU for having granted this assistance and recognize that this project has been immensely beneficial in increasing the trade competitiveness of Sri Lankan Small and Medium Size Enterprises (SMEs) in regional and EU markets.

This project has brought together a wide cross-section of stakeholders, who represent both the private and the state sectors. A comprehensive national export strategy was formulated with an extensive technical support provided by the ITC under this project. Furthermore, ITC is assisting the Department of Commerce of Sri Lanka in operationalizing the trade remedy unit, by

providing technical support in drafting of trade remedy regulations and technical documentation, as well as continuous training to the officers in this area.

In the area of trade facilitation, ITC is providing support to develop a step-by-step trade procedures functionality embedded into the Sri Lanka Trade Information Portal, which maps import and export procedures in a user-friendly manner. It has also strengthened the institutional and technical capacity of the NTFC to drive trade facilitation reforms of the country.

ITC has also assisted Sri Lankan SMEs in the ITO-BPO sector in connecting to the international markets by facilitating participation at trade fairs and B2B events and business meetings with potential buyers. On E-commerce front, ITC developed 'Guidelines for Online Traders' which was used by the Consumer Affairs Authority of Sri Lanka for formulating a National Compliance Guidelines for Consumer Protection.

It is noteworthy that at the end of most of the projects facilitated by ITC, it ensures ownership of the projects by country stakeholders for sustained development by providing tools and skills for replication and sustainable use by project beneficiaries. It also ensures to explore opportunities for cooperation with other projects for continued support beyond the project end.

Sri Lanka, therefore, looks forward to the continuation of this project under renewed objectives with the generous support of the EU in taking forward the country's trade agenda.

All this cooperation has been possible due to the generous contribution extended by the donor community. My delegation, therefore, wishes to place on record its sincere gratitude to both donors and the ITC team for the great cooperation they together have been extending to Sri Lanka.

Thank you Madam Chairperson.