

**Joint Advisory Group on the International Trade
Centre
Fifty-fifth session
Geneva, 2 November 2021, Issues to be raised by
Gambia during Member States intervention**

Excellencies
Distinguished Representatives
Ladies and gentlemen

Thank you for giving The Gambia the opportunity to comment.

The Gambia wishes to thank H.E. Ms. Athaliah Lesiba Molokomme, Ambassador, Permanent Mission of Republic of Botswana the Chair of the 54th Session and congratulates the Chair of the 55th Session, H.E. Mr. Paul Bekkers, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and thank UNCTAD and WTO for their statements.

Our delegation commends the ITC Executive Director, Ms. Pamela Coke-Hamilton for her statement and thank the ITC for the comprehensive report, and the good work it is doing in our countries, LDCs by making trade become more relevant for our SMEs and welcome the inclusion of women and youth in the delivery of aid for trade initiatives.

ITC is a very strong partner of The Gambia and our collaboration has resulted in very significant and tangible benefits for small businesses and in particular for young entrepreneurs and women-owned businesses.

The Gambia has a very youthful population so ITC projects like the Youth Empowerment Project, and the Jobs Skills and Finance project, both funded by the European Union, are absolutely fundamental in helping transform the youth bulge into a demographic dividend.

In the last 18 months, more than 1,000 students graduated from vocational training programmes supported by ITC. In the same period, over 1,500 businesses received support to improve their competitiveness. In this period, we have recorded 1500 new jobs created and improved with the support from ITC.

We also thank ITC and its funders to be among the first responders when we were hit by the pandemic. In that regard, we have worked with ITC to redirect resources to produce PPEs, which not only helped save lives, but also created hundreds of jobs in the process. Thanks to the ITC support we also saw a boost in new technologies such as 3D-printing which led to the production of 3D printed face shields for frontline workers.

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ITC together with the Ministry of Trade came up with a program to address supply chain disruptions triggered by COVID-19. The program focused on perishable horticultural produce and helped connect rural producers to relevant markets generating much needed income for the most vulnerable groups.

We also want to mention the COVID-19 Relief Fund that ITC put in place alongside the crisis resilience coaching for small businesses. 255 entrepreneurs received financial support under the Relief Fund, which allowed 91% of grantees to keep all their employees. Thanks to the Shetrades Gambia which is supported by ITC, EIF and the OPEC Fund we were able to achieve sales worth more than 3m USD by women-owned companies who were able to connect to opportunities in public procurement.

As we continue our efforts to recover from the pandemic and build forward better, the challenges remain daunting. The tourism industry which accounts for more than 20% of the Gambian economy still has a long way to recover. Prices of basic commodities are high and international markets remain volatile. The Gambia is also part of the Sahel and every day we feel the effects of climate change. It affects the productivity of our farmers, reduces income, creates stress, and increasingly, is at the source of social tension and conflict.

Against this backdrop we need ITC's support more than ever. Cooperation with ITC helps us create sustainable pathways in the recovery effort, with an empowered private sector and small businesses leading the way. The investments that ITC has put into environmentally friendly technologies and socially inclusive, market-led business models have already demonstrated their transformative power. For instance, the work that ITC is doing together with the WFP and UNFPA, under the UN's Peacebuilding Fund to address climate conflict, has not just helped vulnerable communities to diversify their income but has also brought much needed peace to communities in need.

On that note The Gambia thanks the ITC and the community of funders in helping us realize our goal for a better future for The Gambia and its people and wish to take this opportunity to call for increase support and new support from our development partners to the work of the ITC.