

## 55<sup>th</sup> Joint Advisory Group (JAG) meeting

2 November 2021

### Introductory remarks

**Pedro Moreno, Director, Office of the Secretary-General, UNCTAD**

Madam Chair of the 54<sup>th</sup> session of the JAG: H.E. Ms. Athaliah Lesiba Molokomme,

Mister Chair of the 55<sup>th</sup> session of the JAG: H.E. Mr. Paul Bekkers,

Mr. Xiangchen Zhang, Deputy Director-General of the WTO,

Ms. Pamela Coke-Hamilton, Executive Director of ITC,

Dear delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

A warm welcome to the 55<sup>th</sup> joint advisory group meeting!

Secretary-General Rebeca Grynspan is currently attending COP 26 and Deputy Secretary-General Isabelle Durant is unfortunately sick. I thus have the pleasure to represent UNCTAD in today's meeting.

This **meeting is important to exchange on our joint work and ensure that we use our mutual strengths and efforts for common objectives**. Each of our institution has a different role, and each is much needed, especially in the current context. We need to make the best use of our resources and synergies to support member states to recover from the COVID crisis.

The meeting happens at a **critical moment**: We have just completed our 15<sup>th</sup> ministerial conference which culminated in a new mandate for UNCTAD – the Bridgetown Covenant. The WTO will hold its 12<sup>th</sup> ministerial conference at the end of this month. This is thus a time where our member states set out their priorities and we realign our activities.

Let me say a few words on the **Bridgetown Covenant** which is our compass for the next years:

- The mandate focuses on **four transformations** required to build a more resilient, inclusive and sustainable world. The four transformations are: i) transforming economies through diversification; ii) transforming to a more sustainable and more resilient economy; iii) transforming how development is financed; and iv) transforming multilateralism.
- The mandate has a **strong focus on recovery** given the current context and the characteristics of the period from here to our next ministerial conference in 2024.
- **Compared to our previous mandate**, the Bridgetown Covenant has a much stronger emphasis on climate change and environmental degradation, digitalization and investment.
- The mandate emphasizes the importance for UNCTAD to rely on its three pillars of work: analytical work, intergovernmental consensus building, and technical cooperation.

UNCTAD and ITC have continued to **collaborate on many fronts in 2020-2021**. I would like to provide you some highlights:

- **G20:** Together with the World Bank Group, UNCTAD and ITC are lead agencies supporting the outcome on MSMEs in the 2021 Italian presidency of the G20. In this context, the agencies supported the Italian presidency to develop a non-binding MSMEs Policy Toolkit.
- **Implementation of Trade Facilitation Portals:** This collaboration follows Article 1.2 of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement. Over the past two years, UNCTAD and ITC have established and/or launched 17 trade facilitation portals in Africa, the Middle East, Central Asia, South Asia and South-East Asia.

- **World Tariff Profiles:** Our three agencies leverage capacities to collect, process and analyze trade-related information. We jointly publish the World Tariff Profiles which provide comprehensive information on tariffs and non-tariff measures imposed by over 170 countries and customs territories. It is a powerful instrument for policymakers seeking accurate market access indicators to design national and regional market access policies and strategies.
- **Non-tariff measures (NTM) information:** We collaborate to harmonize data collection and dissemination efforts in the context of the Multi-Agency Support Team with the WTO.
- **Global Trade Helpdesk:** Our collaboration in this area has been particularly valuable in the COVID context as the single online portal enabled MSMEs to obtain often changing trade and business information at a relatively low cost.
- **SDG Trade Monitor portal:** Through this portal, we jointly promote and monitor progress towards trade-related targets of the 2030 Agenda.
- **e-trade:** In early 2021, we collaborated on a workshop for French-speaking African countries on their eTrade readiness assessments. ITC is also a partner in UNCTAD's eTrade for Women initiative, and contributes to joint events.
- **Several thematic studies:** For example, we conducted an impact study of LDC graduation on the textiles and clothing sector in five Asian LDCs (contribution to upcoming LDC5 Conference).
- **Joint Initiative on cotton by-product development for African LDCs:** A programme document was presented to stakeholders during the WTO cotton days and is expected to attract donors interest for funding.

- **Trade and gender:** Under the framework of the International Gender Champions Trade Impact Group and the WTO Informal Working Group on Trade and Gender, our three agencies have continued to cooperate towards the implementation of the Buenos Aires Declaration on Women and Trade.
- **Sustainable trade, in particular biotrade:** Under the framework of the Global BioTrade programme, UNCTAD and ITC collaborate on the BioTrade self-assessment tool, which is hosted at ITC's Sustainability Map. We have co-organized several events and webinars, and also collaborated on a publication on biotrade.
- **Sustainability standards:** We jointly participated in the United Nations Forum on Sustainability Standards (UNFSS) along with UNEP, UNIDO, and FAO. ITC participates in UNCTAD's Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS) Academic Advisory Council; and we prepared a joint proposal to develop Green Export Strategies in the Caribbean. The proposal is currently considered by donors.
- **Thought leadership:** ITC participated in the UNCTAD World Investment Forum on financial inclusion and policy support for MSMEs. The agencies also jointly organised a panel discussion within the World Summit on the Information Society Forum 2021 on the global and regional implications of COVID-19 on e-commerce.
- **UNCTAD 15:** ITC participation in the Youth Forum and the Gender and Development Forum.

Ladies and gentlemen,

ITC-UNCTAD collaborations are broad and of immense value.

**Looking ahead,** it is important that **we align our joint work with the Bridgetown Covenant.**

This also implies that we build on our respective expertise and core competencies. As a technical agency, ITC brings a wealth of experience in technical cooperation on SME's export capacities, and a broad network in this regard. This is very valuable for translating UNCTAD and WTO research findings into tools and benefits on the ground.

On our end, the mandate is broad in terms of thematic scope (e.g. debt management, investment, customs administration, technology and innovation, port management, trade and environment to name a few).

**To make the best use of resources**, it is important to avoid duplication and promote complementarity between the institutions. A good example of where we can deepen collaboration is, for instance, the EMPRETEC programme.

The breath of the challenges of these times require all our efforts. We look forward to continuing our longstanding collaborations.

I thank you for your attention.