

# REPORT OF THE 50<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE ITC JOINT ADVISORY GROUP MEETING

Geneva, 04 July 2016



International  
Trade  
Centre

TRADE IMPACT  
FOR GOOD

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ITC enables small business export success in developing and transition countries by providing, with partners, sustainable and inclusive trade development solutions to the private sector, trade support institutions and policymakers.

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# Report of the 50<sup>th</sup> session of the ITC Joint Advisory Group Meeting

Geneva, 4 July 2016

## Opening Session

### **Opening Remarks by the Chair of the 49<sup>th</sup> session: H. E. Ms. Patricia O'Brien, Ambassador, Permanent Mission of Ireland to the United Nations Office and Specialized Agencies at Geneva**

1. Her Excellency Ms. Patricia O'Brien, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations Office and Specialized Agencies at Geneva and Chair of the 49<sup>th</sup> session of the Joint Advisory Group (JAG), opened the 50<sup>th</sup> session of the JAG.
2. Ambassador O'Brien remarked that, in the context of a changing international environment, ITC has remained adaptable and innovative in its interventions, proving to be a 'best in class' organization. The opening of the ITC Innovation Lab is an example of ITC's commitment to finding novel solutions to meet demand. Other examples are the SheTrades initiative, the thinking on how to address the trade angle of the refugee crisis, and the youth trade accelerators. She also underscored ITC's pioneering work on SME competitiveness and its leadership on the policy and practice around e-commerce and digital solutions. ITC's programmatic approach and the related theories of change for each of its programmes was commended, as was the bottom-up and transparent approach to the development of Operational Plan 2016.
3. Ambassador O'Brien confirmed her commitment to have Ireland continue as an active supporter of ITC.

### **Opening Remarks by the Chair of the 50<sup>th</sup> session: H. E. Mr. Negash Kebret Batora, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Mission of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to the United Nations Office and other International Organization**

4. Incoming Chairperson, His Excellency Mr. Negash Kebret Batora, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations took up his position as Chair of the 50<sup>th</sup> session of the Joint Advisory Group.
5. In his opening remarks, Ambassador Batora emphasized ITC's key role in the Geneva trade hub, highlighting its practical and action-oriented approach. In 2015, ITC positioned itself to contribute and participate in all of the major decision making UN and WTO events. ITC has not only contributed to outcomes and thought leadership, but also brought innovative solutions to drive growth and development in all of its beneficiary countries.
6. ITC's programming along its six focus areas has been directly aligned with the post 2030 Global Goals for Sustainable Development and to supporting the outcomes of the WTO Nairobi Ministerial Conference. ITC provided value added support through connecting SMEs from developing countries to global markets, enhancing economic opportunities for women, youth and marginalized segments of societies, including refugees. ITC has fostered global partnerships with other international organizations, regional and national institutions and the private sector to deliver maximum impact and to develop and implement sustainable and innovative solutions.
7. Ambassador Batora highlighted that investment in innovation has been a key theme of ITC's work in 2015. ITC developed new tools and mechanisms to scale up its interventions and respond to the changing needs of its beneficiaries. He referred to initiatives such as the ITC Export Potential Map, the SME Competitiveness Outlook and the SheTrades initiative.

8. 2015 was the first year of implementation of ITC's Strategic Plan for 2015-2017, and ITC exceeded many of the ambitious targets it had set for itself. This delivery has continued in the first half of 2016 despite some unexpected disruptions in the receipt of Window 1 funds. The Chair urged funders to continue to invest in ITC given its demonstrated value for money.

### **Statement by Mr. Roberto Azevêdo, Director-General, WTO**

9. Mr. Roberto Azevêdo, Director-General of the World Trade Organization, stressed that ITC's mandate is closely interlinked to that of the WTO. ITC works to ensure that the private sector in developing countries, especially SMEs, can take advantage of the market opportunities made possible by WTO Members' agreements.
10. ITC and the WTO have continued to work closely together in 2015, also in partnership with UNCTAD, on issues such as climate change and sustainable development. ITC's annual report clearly highlights the productive year ITC has had, with targets not only being met, but on many occasions exceeded.
11. Looking ahead, 2016 will be another busy and exciting year for the WTO and ITC in enhancing collaboration to deliver on common goals. On Aid for Trade, ITC is a valued partner in delivering and analyzing trade related technical assistance. The WTO has begun preparations for the next Aid for Trade Global Review, focused on 'Promoting Connectivity' and scheduled to take place in mid-2017. The WTO relies on ITC to provide support to this initiative and invited the organization to highlight its work on e-commerce and the digital economy to build connectivity.
12. Mr. Azevêdo stressed that ITC and the WTO must continue to work together for implementing the Trade Facilitation Agreement. ITC has played an essential role in working with developing countries to help them take advantage of the benefits of the agreement. ITC will hopefully continue to support the WTO on the Trade Facilitation front.
13. The third area of collaboration concerned providing support to micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs). Mr. Azevêdo emphasized the potential of MSMEs to foster inclusive growth. Fixed costs related to non-tariff measures (NTMs) and tariff barriers are significant and affect MSMEs disproportionately. In addition, MSMEs struggle to access trade finance. WTO members are showing growing interest in exploring initiatives to respond to these challenges and ITC will be essential in this area. The WTO Director General congratulated ITC for its work in this area, highlighting the SME Competitiveness Outlook and role of the organization in providing valuable and reliable trade information.
14. ITC and the WTO share the responsibility to ensure that trade continues to play its full role in the development agenda and in improving lives around the world. Mr. Azevêdo expressed his wish that ITC and the WTO, together with UNCTAD, will continue to work together.

### **Statement by Mr. Joakim Reiter, Deputy Secretary-General, UNCTAD**

15. Mr. Reiter, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), highlighted that the JAG was a valuable opportunity to take stock of progress as well as of the broader global context in which ITC and its parent organizations operate. In 2015, trade growth was only 2.8%, the fifth consecutive year with growth below 3%. More and better trade is needed to foster worldwide development and ITC's work is as relevant as ever, as it is central to supporting trade-led growth and development.
16. ITC was created in the 1964 as a subsidiary body of GATT and UNCTAD/UN, based on the recognition that trade alone was not enough to solve the problems faced by developing countries. Trade rules do not automatically lead to country competitiveness. Since its creation, ITC has faithfully pursued its mandate, helping businesses take advantage of opportunities in the global trading system. Today, no one disputes that building capacity constitutes a core element of a modern trade strategy.
17. Mr. Reiter confirmed that 2015 was a record breaking year for ITC and highlighted the areas where

ITC collaborated with UNCTAD, such as on trade information, trade facilitation, and on training.

18. On trade information, UNCTAD and ITC have teamed up with the African Development Bank and the World Bank on the 'Transparency in Trade Initiative'. This project collects trade data on tariff and non-tariff barriers, making it easier for businesses to acquire information. On trade facilitation, UNCTAD's traditional cooperation with ITC was broadened to include the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). With common objectives, the partners can respond more quickly to technical assistance requests in a cost-effective manner. In other areas, such as training, ITC has been collaborating with UNCTAD's Virtual Institute since 2007.
19. As members of the Geneva trade cluster, ITC, UNCTAD, and the WTO have been working together to develop and track trade-related indicators for the SDGs. Moreover, the three organizations have collaborated on trade-related reports and briefs that have contributed to Agenda 2030 and the Financing for Development process.
20. UNCTAD's Deputy Secretary-General congratulated ITC on its excellent Annual Report 2015. He highlighted '4 C's' which are testimonies to the importance and quality of ITC's work: (1) Content - ITC's message has always been strong, yet lately ITC has added even more valuable content to its work. Content provides purpose for donors and partners to relate to ITC; (2) Communication - Many are questioning the basic tenets of trade and the benefits it brings. ITC provides much needed support in explaining and communicating the importance of trade; (3) Capacity - ITC has presented a record expenditure and proved to be an essential delivery channel for trade capacity building. ITC is practical and action oriented; (4) Complementarity/Cooperation - that drives the efficiency by which ITC implements much of its capacity building. For these factors, ITC must be strongly commended for the great progress made during the past few years.

### **Statement by Ms. Arancha González, Executive Director, ITC**

21. ITC Executive Director Ms. Arancha González opened her overview of ITC's work in 2015 and its future priorities by thanking delegates and the heads of the WTO and UNCTAD for the support and trust they placed in ITC to deliver to its members.
22. Ms. González highlighted that in 2015 ITC had its highest delivery ever. Extra-budgetary expenditures reached a record of US\$ 55 million - more than 40% higher than in 2013. ITC invested a record US\$ 1.2 million in business development - transforming each dollar invested into US\$ 16 in new funding. ITC delivered close to 80% of its interventions in priority countries - LDCs, sub-Saharan Africa, Small Island developing states, small vulnerable economies and post-conflict states. This was well above the original commitment of 70%.
23. Structural reforms have allowed significant scaling up of ITC's delivery, allowing the organization to meet client demand and performance targets. In 2015, ITC launched a New Project Portal that facilitates performance tracking and simplifies reporting. The SDGs have become ITC's compass with the 2030 agenda fully embedded into ITC's programming.
24. ITC has delivered tangible results in areas such as trade and market intelligence; building a conducive business environment for trade; trade and investment support institutions; SME connection to value chains; mainstreaming inclusive and green trade; and supporting regional economic integration and South-South links.
25. ITC focuses strongly on innovation. Constant innovation is critical to "doing more and doing it better". A small Innovation Lab was created as a forum to spur ideas and novel thinking, working with educational and scientific institutions, other UN agencies, and think tanks. Notable examples of ITC's innovations in 2015 include: The SheTrades app, which helps women in business to e-connect to markets; the E-Solutions package, which supports SMEs to e-trade; Pilot projects with partners in refugee camps to explore how connecting refugees and displaced communities to trade can help them earn incomes and build skills for the future; and Geo-location numbers and "big data" usage to support farmers and agro-business companies to ensure traceable and more sustainable agriculture value chains. She noted that some of these innovations will also help with assessing the impact of ITC interventions, as they will generate repositories of comparable information which, over time, will help ITC make evidence-based determinations of change.

26. ITC has also invested in other new results assessment methodologies, including: the Respect Invest Sustain Empower (RISE) methodology - a benchmarking, monitoring and impact measurement approach to examine the poverty reduction effects of interventions targeting micro-entrepreneurs; a methodology to assess the impact of Trade and Investment Support Institutions through the AIM for Results programme; a methodology to analyse the international competitiveness of SMEs through the SME Competitiveness Outlook and a partnership with CBI and Dutch academic institutions to assess the impact of two value chain development projects.
27. In 2015 ITC has implemented the new UN-wide Enterprise Resource Planning system – UMOJA – and continues to work on leveraging the system’s transparency and varied reporting structures to fully cost ITC operations across all budgets in 2016.
28. Ms. González recognized that staff is the strongest asset of ITC. ITC has delivered greater geographic diversity - 82 nationalities in 2015, up from 74 in 2013. In 2015 there were more staff members and JPOs from developing and least developed countries and women are also better represented – having won 45% of competitions to recruit fixed-term staff, a slightly higher share than in 2014, and well above the 13% figure registered in 2013. ITC continues to incorporate policies to reach gender parity across professional levels by 2020. A staff engagement survey was conducted in 2015 which provides a baseline for future improvements in areas such as perception of fairness, well-being, information-sharing and personal commitment.
29. In conclusion, the Executive Director acknowledged that despite the successes of the past year, challenges are foreseen for 2016. ITC’s expected extra-budgetary resources for the year are lower than in 2015. These reductions are concentrated in un-earmarked contributions, limiting ITC’s ability to innovate and respond to changes in the operating environment. Contributions are made on a short-term, year-to-year basis, which makes it difficult for ITC to plan with its partners and build long-term capacity. However, ITC’s healthy post-2016 project pipeline confirms that funders trust the organization to deliver sustainable Aid for Trade solutions.
30. Ms. González appealed for JAG members’ continued commitment to ITC as an implementer of Aid for Trade projects to promote inclusive growth and sustainable development and to deliver trade impact for good. She thanked ITC’s staff and the senior management team led by Deputy Executive Director, Ms. Dorothy Tembo.

## General Statements by Delegations

31. Regarding the reports presented, delegates expressed appreciation for the comprehensive nature and quality of the documents, as well as for the transparent and inclusive consultative processes involved in their development.
32. Commenting on the **2015 Annual Report**, delegations expressed appreciation for ITC’s efforts in making trade an engine for development. Despite unforeseen challenges, in 2015, ITC had its largest delivery in history, achieving most of its revised targets. The results in terms of volume and reach of delivery demonstrated the organization’s commitment to efficiency, effectiveness and impact in delivering its work as well as its practical approach to action on the ground.
33. ITC was commended for adopting the 2030 agenda as an umbrella framework; delegates said it was well placed to assist developing countries in implementing the SDGs. Delegations also acknowledged ITC’s commitment to help those who need it most – especially those in the bottom billion - as demonstrated by the delivery of almost 80% of ITC’s work in priority countries, i.e. LDCs, LLDCs, SIDS, sub-Saharan Africa, small vulnerable economies, and post-conflict states.
34. Delegates urged ITC to continue to focus on LDCs and to provide more detailed information on the exact distribution of resources allotted to priority countries.
35. The Group of Latin American Countries presented a special request for ITC to increase its support to their countries due to high levels of economic inequality in the region. The group urged ITC to include this request in its corporate planning, including in its resource allocation.
36. Considering ITC’s **thematic focus**, delegates repeatedly commended ITC’s work on the economic empowerment of women and on promoting employment opportunities for young people. In



addition, delegations from beneficiary countries expressed appreciation for trade-related technical assistance in areas such as: SME competitiveness, value chain development, market access, trade in services, trade facilitation, trade intelligence and trade information, improving the business environment – including non-tariff measures and inclusive export strategies.

37. Several delegates also underscored ITC's work in regional integration and South-South cooperation. ITC's support to the development of trade and investment linkages among developing countries has presented impressive results and helped expand the scope of multilateral cooperation. Delegations highlighted the importance of triangular cooperation (involving a donor country, an emerging economy and ITC) to enhance productive capacity of SMEs in LDCs and expressed a desire to see increased adoption of this approach in future ITC work.
38. Also on thematic focus areas, delegates demonstrated interest in learning more about ITC's approach to the current displacement/migration crisis and urged ITC to address issues related to climate change and sustainable development. Delegates additionally requested ITC to further disaggregate data based on gender, to allow them to better understand the impact of ITC's work on women's economic empowerment and gender equality.
39. Addressing ITC's **offer of services and products**, delegations highlighted the importance of ITC's global public goods, with special mention of the SME Trade Academy, ITC's trade and market intelligence tools and the multiple trade information platforms made available by the organization.
40. There was, furthermore, strong commendation for ITC's **leadership and innovativeness** in addressing key development challenges in 2015. Underscored initiatives included the SheTrades platform and related call for action, the ITC SME Competitiveness Outlook, and the e-commerce programme.
41. More generally, regarding **ITC's work**, delegations highlighted that the organization offers good value for money and is a reliable partner for donor countries. They noted that ITC is unique in the Geneva trade hub, as it is the only technical assistance agency focused on fostering growth and development through increased competitiveness of SMEs in international markets. SMEs play an essential role in inclusive growth, as engines of job and income generation for developing countries, particularly for LDCs. ITC's distinctive approach to internationalization through value chains sets it aside as a leader in the field of Aid for Trade, as does its expertise in working with SMEs, Trade and Investment Support Institutions and policymakers.
42. A number of member countries, especially LDCs, LLDCs, Small Island Countries and Sub-Saharan African countries highlighted the fundamental role of ITC through the Enhanced Integrated Framework and Aid for Trade Programmes and called for increased support to the organization.
43. With respect to **ITC's personnel**, numerous delegates applauded the team for its professionalism and commitment and conveyed appreciation for the skilful and diligent leadership of senior management. Many JAG members specially commended the ITC Executive Director, Arancha González, for her work.
44. Regarding **efforts in 2016**, delegates stressed that ITC's Operational Plan was made available quite late in the year. Delegates urged ITC to ensure that the next Annual Report is published earlier and that the new Strategic and Operational Plans are developed well in advance. They also requested that member countries be involved early in the development process through constant consultations.
45. Some delegates expressed concern regarding ITC's capacity to reach its fundraising goals and urged ITC to continue exploring alternative sources of funds. Delegates remarked on the importance of multi-stakeholder partnerships for achieving the SDGs. It is essential for ITC to strategically explore cooperation with key stakeholders, including with the objective of diversifying and broadening its funder base. ITC is, notably, in a privileged position to engage the private sector in development efforts and to promote innovative approaches to work in partnership. Several delegations expressed a desire to see future efforts by ITC in this direction and to have more information on ITC's plan to expand its donor base and strengthen its partnerships, especially with businesses, for the implementation of the 2030 agenda.

46. Finally, concerning the provision of data in the following years, delegations highlighted that it is important for donors to clearly understand the linkages between results achieved and the cost involved in achieving it. In this direction, delegates requested ITC to provide information on the internal allocation of resources to allow them to better understand the portion of the overall budget that is used for classical management and oversight functions.
47. The points raised by the delegates were later addressed by the ITC's Executive Director, Arancha González, during her response to the statements provided.

### **Partnership ITC-eBay: Signing of Agreement by Ms. Arancha González, Executive Director, ITC and Mr. Eben Sermon, Vice President, eBay Greater Europe**

48. Ms. Arancha González, Executive Director of ITC, and Mr. Eben Sermon, Vice President of eBay Greater Europe signed a partnership agreement between the two institutions. Partnering with eBay will allow ITC to scale up its e-Solutions programme and boost the capabilities of SMEs in developing countries and LDCs to participate in global digital commerce.
49. The Executive Director noted that ITC and DHL signed a partnership agreement a few months earlier. The MOU with eBay confirmed ITC's outreach to the private sector, she added. She stated that the e-Commerce Caravan was an early example of the partnership between ITC, eBay and DHL, which will help entrepreneurs use digital solutions to reach new markets. eBay brings its expertise in e-commerce promotion, placement, research and training to support e-commerce expansion to eBay customers in 190 countries.
50. Mr. Sermon stressed that the collaboration with ITC would allow eBay to connect with enterprises in developing countries that are currently absent from the world of e-commerce. The partnership is a model for connected commerce that can contribute to better trade and economic growth where it is most needed, and it will open up a world of new products for eBay customers across the world.

## **ITC Evaluation**

### **Reporting and policy, Ms. Dorothy Tembo, Deputy Executive Director, ITC**

51. Ms Dorothy Tembo, Deputy Executive Director of ITC, opened the session by stressing that ITC places great importance on improving its evaluation function. She stressed that the independent evaluation, as well as other evaluation related aspects, are of great importance to help ITC better understand its work.
52. The DED highlighted that ITC has strengthened the strategic role of its evaluation functions to provide credible information to management and has invested in robust and credible evaluation methods. ITC has also enforced the implementation of the independent evaluation recommendations; of a total of 48 sub-recommendations, 38 have been implemented and the remaining 10 are currently in progress. ITC will continue its efforts to implement the recommendations and to report on progress made.
53. Mr. Miguel Jiménez Pont, Head of ITC's Evaluation Unit, presented the 2015 Evaluation Synthesis Report, which provides a summary of the work carried out by the Unit in the previous year, the results of ITC and external evaluations, and the results of the Joint Inspection Unit's reports in relation to ITC. He highlighted four main messages:
  - (1) There was a need to better organize and mobilize partners in countries, and enhance coordination with other technical assistance providers who participate in large projects.
  - (2) Findings confirmed that ITC had successfully mainstreamed good gender practices in ITC activities, and ITC staff was capacitated to include a gender perspective in project work. Furthermore, the gender dimension had been embedded within ITC's HR systems and reporting.
  - (3) The evaluations recommend improving the theories of change to move towards

measuring outcomes and impact. The efforts by ITC to improve its programmatic approach, including theories of change as well as impact evaluation go a long way in addressing the shortcomings. ITC's new programmatic approach focuses accountability on its contribution to partner- and client-focused performance. It is organized as a coherent and integrated map of intermediate outcomes and related expected changes in the behaviour of ITC partners and clients.

(4) Finally, with regards to the implementation of evaluation recommendations, ITC has implemented 69 per cent of the recommendations. The evaluation recommendations have been largely internalized by the programmes and projects to progressively improve design and implementation, to strengthen partnership and ownership with funders and clients, and to enhance their monitoring and reporting system. The Evaluation Synthesis Report also shows how JIU recommendations have been complementing those of project and programme evaluations.

## Professional Peer Review of ITC's Evaluation Function

54. Ms Anne Claire Luzot, member of the UNEG/OECD DAC Professional Peer Review Panel presented the results of the Peer Review conducted at the request of ITC, between December 2015 and June 2016, which assessed the independence, credibility and utility of ITC's evaluation function. She highlighted the positive engagement of stakeholders throughout the process and ITC's management high-level commitment to the Peer Review and to the evaluation function.
55. The Peer Review found that ITC has created a distinct institutional space for its Evaluation Unit and that it is in line with the United Nations evaluation principles and United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), evaluation quality standards. The organization has also put in place an earmarked operational budget and critical minimum staff to carry out its annual plan of work. The Evaluation Function is generally respected by the programme and technical departments as credible and useful and the 2015 Evaluation Policy represented a leap forward in terms of alignment with UNEG norms and standards.
56. The Peer Review also found that regarding the independence of the evaluation function, there is still scope for greater independence. The Evaluation Policy presents no guidance on principles of structural and functional independence of the Evaluation Unit. Thus, there is only a nuanced functional independence supported by the integrity of the current management. Regarding credibility of the evaluation function, the review found that the institutional quality assurance mechanism could be strengthened, especially when it comes to the evaluations that are not undertaken directly by the Evaluation Unit. The level of finance of the evaluation function is still inadequate compared to the variety and depth of its responsibilities. Regarding the utility of the function, the review found that substantial efforts have been made to make evaluations widely accessible internally and externally, that evaluations conducted in the past three to five years were generally useful, and that there has been an increase in the uptake of recommendations. Yet, the, small number of evaluations limits the influence of evaluation results on policy and programmes.
57. Along the independence, credibility and utility criteria, the Peer Review presented recommendations that have been accepted by ITC's Senior Management.

## Statements on ITC Evaluation Response by Delegations

58. Delegates expressed appreciation for the comprehensive report on ITC's management response to the **independent evaluations** and on the progress made in the **implementation of the recommendations**. Delegates also welcomed the presentation on the results of the Peer Review exercise.
59. ITC has demonstrated commitment in the implementation of the recommendations, confirmed by the significant progress made and the results shown in 2015. There is a broad agreement regarding required actions in order to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the evaluation function. Delegations urged ITC to continue implementing and reporting on the recommendations.
60. Delegates remarked that the independent ITC evaluation (2014) had found weak synergies among

individual projects. It is important for ITC to continue the efforts regarding the programmatic framework to address this gap. Some delegates expressed desire to see further discussions on the links between the corporate score card, programmes, log-frame and finalized programme-specific theories of change.

61. Delegates expressed desire to learn more about the results of the **peer review evaluation**, about ITC's management response to the recommendations presented and on how the information provided will be incorporated into ITC's activities. They were informed that the full reports were available on-line, and in hard-copy, outside the meeting room.
62. Members commended ITC for its **investment in impact assessment** and efforts to improve its evaluation function. Several delegates urged ITC to continue investing on enhancing its result based oriented work to demonstrate ITC's value for money, especially in light of the increasingly challenging international financial environment.
63. Delegates acknowledged that ITC had started the process to create a more flexible structure that allowed lessons learned to be integrated into ITC's work, yet they requested ITC to ensure that this and all other initiatives aimed at improving efficiency, effectiveness and impact are fully followed through.

### **Response Ms. Arancha González, Executive Director, ITC**

64. Ms. González thanked members for the feedback provided to ITC regarding the evaluations and took the opportunity to provide information on ITC's management response to the Peer Review. She highlighted that ITC engaged in the UNEG/OECD-DAC Peer Review voluntarily. Recommendations will be fully addressed. Concerning the independence of the Evaluation Unit, an analysis was required regarding the recommendation. The ED highlighted that it is essential to ensure that the Unit is independent in carrying out its work, but that ITC considers the Unit better placed within the Strategic Planning, Performance and Governance section in order to ensure internal synergies. ITC will ensure that the independence of the Evaluation Unit is well reflected in the organization's rules.
65. The ED assured that ITC will continue its efforts in the implementation of the recommendations of the multiple evaluations. Member States will receive information from ITC containing information on the new programmatic framework, theories of change and connection to ITC's corporate log-frame. Regarding the Strategic Plan beyond 2017 as well as the Operational Plan 2017, consultations will be conducted again in a transparent manner. ITC will continue its work on improving impact and will continue to focus on making progress in collecting results data, as well as developing methodologies and testing them in interventions.
66. In the area of costing, the ED highlighted that the costing system will be embedded in UMOJA, but ITC is still in a transition period and adapting to the new system's functionalities. The ED underscored, furthermore, that costing must not be delinked from value for money. ITC is working on providing more information on how much value ITC brings to partners, including by engaging private sector actors.

The ED stated that ITC will respond to the specific requests of the member countries regarding the provision of disaggregated data and of ITC services to key regions. The SheTrades initiative will be presented in the Fall to all members in ITC's new meeting room facilities.

### **Announcement of the contributions to the ITC Trust Fund**

67. Many delegations from beneficiary countries encouraged funder countries to continue and, where possible, increase their contributions to ITC, especially for interventions in LDCs. Delegations from beneficiary countries stressed the importance of making longer term financial commitments as a means of better leveraging ITC services and ensuring sustainable impact.
68. Several funder countries announced or confirmed their voluntary contributions for 2016, or multi-year contributions.

## Closing Session

### Chair's Report

69. His Excellency Mr. Negash Kebret Batora, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Mission of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations, and Chair of the 50th session of the JAG, presented the Chair's report on proceedings of the session.
70. Ambassador Batora thanked delegations for their interventions, and thanked the WTO Director-General, the UNCTAD Deputy Secretary-General and the ITC Executive Director. He said the heads of the WTO and UNCTAD set the stage for the constructive and substantive discussions that followed by pointing to ITC's role in connecting trade opportunities to actual trade flows and inclusive growth, and emphasising the importance of ensuring that the benefits of trade flow to developing countries, especially to the least integrated countries and the least empowered groups within them, such as women and young people. Their interventions demonstrated the complementarity between the work of the WTO, UNCTAD and ITC. Cooperation on trade information, trade facilitation and on developing and tracking trade related indicators for the Sustainable Development Goals are just a few examples of how these synergies operate in practice.
71. Ambassador Batora pointed out that the fact that in 2015 ITC had its highest-ever delivery demonstrates how the organization has grown to meet increasing demand for its services. Many members had praised ITC's capacity to remain innovative in the thematic areas of its work, as well as in the strategies it uses to better and more efficiently address the needs of its clients. Delegations had also voiced appreciation for ITC's focus on measuring impact and efforts to become more efficient and effective. The Chair commended ITC's ability to galvanize partnerships, including with the private sector, and its work to complement traditional aid for trade with investment for trade and other private-sector contributions.
72. On the two external evaluations of ITC's work, substantial progress had been made towards implementing the recommended reforms. ITC demonstrated its commitment to continued improvement by requesting peer review from the UN Evaluation Group and the OECD. Members commended ITC for the work that it had undertaken to respond to the evaluations and for its transparent approach to the process.
73. On behalf of ITC, the Ambassador thanked members for their commitment to ITC's work in a spirit of true partnership as well as their continued trust, support and engagement with the organization. Finally, Ambassador Batora expressed gratitude for everyone's active participation in the 50<sup>th</sup> JAG.



The International Trade Centre (ITC) is the joint agency of the World Trade Organization and the United Nations.

**Street address:** ITC  
54-56, rue de Montbrillant  
1202 Geneva, Switzerland

**Postal address:** ITC  
Palais des Nations  
1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland

**Telephone:** +41-22 730 0111

**Fax:** +41-22 733 4439

**E-mail:** [itcreg@intracen.org](mailto:itcreg@intracen.org)

**Internet:** <http://www.intracen.org>

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