

Statement of the Philippines
52nd Session of the Joint Advisory Group (JAG)
10 July 2018, WTO

Thank you, Mr Chair.

On behalf of Ambassador Manuel A. J. Teehankee, our delegation congratulates you on assuming the Chairmanship of this Meeting.

The Philippines thanks the ITC for organizing the 52nd Session of the Joint Advisory Group. Our delegation fully recognizes the important role played by ITC in promoting trade of developing countries as a means to spur their economic development. In particular, we commend the ITC for its work in helping developing countries strengthen the integration of their business sectors and improving the international competitiveness of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises or MSMEs.

For many companies around the world, meeting technical regulations and product standards has become an increasingly important part of doing business, whether internationally or at home. MSMEs, particularly in developing countries such as the Philippines, often struggle with the costs of complying with complex and changing quality requirements in target markets.

To better understand the regulatory and compliance challenges faced by Philippine MSMEs in global trade, the ITC, in collaboration with our Department of Trade and Industry or DTI, conducted an NTM Business Survey in 2015 and 2016. The surveyed businesses reported that burdensome technical requirements and conformity assessment procedures remain obstacles to export success and impede their ability to trade. Almost 60 per cent of the export obstacles reported pertain to regulatory measures such as product certification, testing and labeling requirements. While the regulations that businesses find burdensome typically originate from trading partners, many of the domestic procedures associated with cross-border trade were also found to be unnecessarily complicated.

The ITC and DTI later used the results of the business survey to formulate concrete recommendations to address the trade obstacles identified, with a focus on improving the compliance of Philippine products with foreign regulations, technical standards, and conformity assessment procedures. The recommendations, which called for technical assistance and capacity upgrading for MSMEs to comply with testing, certification, fumigation, and labeling requirements, fed into the Philippine government's export development plan, which is aimed at rebalancing the economy away from consumption towards investment and exports.

The Philippines is also grateful for the ITC's assistance and collaboration with the Philippine Trade Training Center that led to the establishment of the ASEAN SME Academy. For MSMEs thinking of going global, building their capacity starts with retooling and learning skills necessary to engage in international trade. The ITC has been instrumental in developing the curriculum and content of the SME Academy, and we look forward to ITC's continuing support for this initiative.

As the Philippines further deepens its trade and economic relations, we are keenly interested in further leveraging ITC's expertise and experience, not only towards sustaining our ongoing

Check against delivery

joint initiatives, but also in strengthening our engagement in new and emerging markets, as well as in new areas of trade.

We deeply appreciate the ITC's partnership with the Philippines, and we look forward to working more closely with the ITC in helping MSMEs reach their full potential in the global market.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.
