

Opening statement 49th session of the ITC Joint Advisory Group (JAG) meeting
By Elsbeth Akkerman, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of the
Netherlands to the WTO

26 June 2015

Thank you very much, Madame Chair,

Let me begin by congratulating you on your appointment as Chair of this 49th session of the Joint Advisory Group of the International Trade Centre. You can count on our full support.

I would furthermore like to take this opportunity to thank Ms. Mariam Salleh, Ambassador of Malaysia for her efforts as Chair of the 48th session of the Joint Advisory Group.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Kingdom of the Netherlands would like to thank ITC's management for its annual report. Whilst reading this report we were pleasantly surprised by (1) its forward looking style and (2) the strategic description of ITC's interventions. As a large donor of ITC we would like to congratulate ITC with this improvement. The Kingdom of the Netherlands is a great supporter of forward looking strategic interventions and policies and of course related impact assessments. However, we have to ensure that the big changes that are often suggested by text will truly be delivered. Helping SMEs is about impact on the ground.

The "Aid for Trade" organizations in Geneva continue to play an important role in the implementation of the Dutch strategy on Aid, Trade and Investment. These organizations show us day by day that trade serves as a platform for growth, development, poverty reduction, and employment. Many SME's in developing countries still lack possibilities to benefit from getting connected to international value chains. Particularly, as we will see next week, trade costs are often too high.

We see ITC as a valuable partner in the field of the export promotion efforts in developing countries. We have therefore continued our collaboration through the Centre for the Promotion of Imports from Developing Countries, CBI, with several programs in for example Bangladesh, Uganda and Kenya but also at the corporate level in areas such as market intelligence. We believe that ITC operates in a niche market where interventions are small and meaningful. So, Arancha, keep up the good work!

We highly value ITC's Non-tariff measures (NTM) surveys and the National Export Strategies, which serve as good starting points for export programmes of implementation partners such as our CBI. We were pleased to note that implementation is playing an increasingly important role as part of the process of the realisation of the National Export Strategies.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands appreciates the clarity provided through the clustering of ITC's projects/programmes under six focus areas. We would however recommend mapping out how and when these six pillars come together under ITC's overarching output and impact targets. This would provide a very clear picture of ITC's intervention logic.

Furthermore, we see opportunities for better involvement of the importing private sector already at the stage of the programme design and implementation. These importing firms know the constraints and can often contribute to the solution thereof.

When it comes to results measurement, we noted that results are often measured on input and output level, presented in the form of anecdotal case studies or are based on perceptions of beneficiaries. Of course this provides insight in the work of ITC, but we still lack insight in the outcomes and impact at the corporate level through (independent) evaluations. PRIME would be an example of such an independent evaluation, but currently it only covers two NTF programmes. Furthermore, the report includes results at different levels of the results chain. For some of the focus areas it is difficult to assess the outcome of the activities that are reported, or the intended logic behind them.

I am not finished yet. In a decent speech you always need to make space for some critical remarks. I therefore would like to finish with some detailed questions on the annual report:

1. We note that USD 35,06 million of extra budgetary expenditure is carried forward from 2013 to 2014. This is 66% of total extra budgetary expenditure in 2014. How come? And what is ITC management undertaking vis-à-vis donors to decrease this number?
2. In the annual report we read that, according to qualitative research, many clients consider ITC tools as helpful in increasing their exports. Notwithstanding the way these results were collected, we are wondering what activities ITC undertakes to provide disappointed customers with better results?
3. ITC presents an increased number of followers on social media. It is not only about followers though. It is also about your message and influence. Is there a social media code or policy within ITC?

4. Can you provide us with three concrete examples where you already see coherence among projects, programs and ITC strategic objectives as a result of ITC's new programmatic approach?
5. Will numbers resulting from impact measurement be included in future ITC annual reports?
6. Finally. We noticed a sharp increase in partnerships. Are they all operational?

I am looking forward to your answers! Thank you very much.

ITC Evaluation: reporting and policy

Thank you Madame Chair. We are pleased to note and very much appreciate the efforts ITC management has been taken with regard to the implementation of the results of the evaluation at ITC. Again: Arancha keep up the good work!

With regards to results, outcome and impact we are very pleased and excited that ITC participates in PRIME through our CBI. Via this project we are literally "Pioneering Real Time Impact Monitoring and Evaluation in small and medium sized enterprises". We are looking forward to successful collaboration in this regard.

Thank you for your attention.