

Secretary-General UNCTAD, Mr. Mukhisa Kituyi

JAG 2019 Intervention

Ambassador Terhi Katrina Hakala – Chair of the meeting;

Director-General Azevedo;

Executive Director Arancha;

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

May I also express my appreciation from the outset (for the convening of a very successful JAG this year) to you Arancha and members of your management.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I associate myself with the sentiments expressed by Mr. Azevedo, about the critical tripartite relationship between WTO, ITC and UNCTAD.

And we are looking for concrete progress in living the spirit that we can find synergies, at a particularly challenging time. Before I turn to the specific areas of our collaboration with ITC, I also share the sense that the unique circumstances of multilateralism today (the unique and tenuous relationship between trade and development - and particularly the shifting trade networks, shortening global value chains, and rerouting of production networks around the world), pose new challenges for those who want to see development delivered by trade. And this poses even more astounding challenges for those who want to see the stake of small and micro business, in this constantly changing environment.

I very much appreciate the effort of Arancha individually, but also of ITC as a collective in seeking relevance and aligning new strategies with the changing circumstances globally – on how we can deliver on the core business of connecting small business to global markets and to the delivery of benefits from international trade.

These difficult times unfortunately have been accompanied by a dialogue that is not sufficiently talking to the challenge for the vulnerable. Both Arancha and Azevedo were present at the G20 meeting of Trade and Digital Economy Ministers in Japan a few weeks ago, when I raised the concern that if you have the G20 Ministers as the main theatre discussing digital inclusion for small business, and you are talking about inclusion, predominantly of businesses in countries that are not members of G20 – you run the risk of development paternalism (which belongs to the last century).

And therefore, a constant effort has to be made. The principal that the main target groups that are vulnerable, those being left behind by globalisation and its disruptors have to be at the table (when discussing the solutions to their challenges).

Similarly, those of us in institutions that pledge to help deliver development out of international trade must not only work together on trade facilitation, but also increasingly facilitate dialogue for those who seek solutions to their challenges involvement through trade.

And I want to express my appreciation for our partnership with ITC in a number of practical ways in dealing with this challenge. As mentioned by Roberto, we have jointly initiated the Global Trade Helpdesk, whose management board we share. And I am glad to note that UNIDO, FAO, the World Bank Group, and a few others, are joining us in working to develop a better version of the Global Trade Helpdesk Portal, which will be presented at a joint event later on in the year.

And we hope that this is the basis of an expanded, open source data trough that will help the most vulnerable to access (at competitive cost), information that is critical for their using opportunities available in the marketplace.

And I very much look forward to a closer coordination even in the data collection for non-tariff measures, which is another frontier where we share concrete interest and possibilities.

We are also pleased for the role that ITC continues to play in supporting WTO and UNCTAD in our work on statistics work for monitoring progress against targets of the 2030 Agenda. In fact, I am very much looking forward that this collaboration which started in the days of the Millennium Development Goals and has been growing under the SDG Agenda – can get even more firmed up, as we develop web tools for better coordination on our work with this.

Last week, we launched the UNCTAD SDG Pulse – a live statistical portal that gives constant improved data on every country in the world on targets and what they have been doing. And, we want to dedicate this as a shared facility that can also benefit from the statistical work being generated at ITC, the WTO, and can inform our shared audiences on how far we are falling behind on keeping the promise of Agenda 2030.

We also appreciate the continued collaboration in areas of trade facilitation in concrete ways.

Thank you, Arancha and senior management of ITC, for very strong participation in the first National Trade Facilitation Committee’s Conference for Africa that I hosted in Addis Ababa last December. Thank you again for moderating our session in Kigali three months ago, as follow up to the E-Commerce week for Africa.

In a concrete way, can we find not only normative, but practical solutions and can we find a way of sharing and sequencing our work in a way that we reduce duplication, we improve efficiencies, we strengthen collaboration, and we deliver with impact.

This to me, and to us, remain very concrete areas where we can work together.

Two years ago, UNCTAD undertook the first comprehensive study on a gender perspective in regional integration initiatives, by assessing the impact of the procedures and practices of the East African Common Market on women traders. We found very astounding statistics – some of which I have shared at an earlier venue. When small-scale women traders cross borders with small commodities, they are called smugglers, and when city-based traders cross with 40-foot containers, they are called traders “living the dream of regional integration”. Seeking a way of decriminalising the actual owners – and potentially the main target of regional integration through trade – is going to be a collective challenge that goes beyond the written word to normative change among the implementers of regional integration policies.

For Africa particularly, this comes alive from next week – this weekend, when the African Continental Free Trade Area is formally launched at a summit in Niamey. And we are very much looking forward that your ingenious ways of innovatively looking at: “how can we exploit this space for micro and small businesses in a concrete way?” – is going to be very important in delivering in the promise that we have all been making generally.

Finally, I want to associate myself with the wishes that the important work – particularly on connecting small business to global trade, that has been done so effectively over the past year and the past years – will continue to be so successful at ITC and we look forward to greater partnership with you.

Thank You