

CHAIR SUMMARY

Excellencies,

Distinguished participants,

Ladies and gentlemen.

Let me start by thanking the WTO for hosting the JAG here. We are also grateful to the many delegates who have joined us today – both in person and online – and who have shared their views and appreciation of ITC's work. Through the fruitful exchanges today, we have seen a clear picture of the value that ITC delivers in 130 countries, in the face of multiple, ongoing crises. We also learned which aspects of ITC's operations are particularly important to delegates and what future work they wish ITC to take on.

Allow me to congratulate you, **Executive Director** Pamela Coke-Hamilton, on a successful session of the JAG. You mentioned this morning that a time of crisis is a time for change. You shared with us your positive outlook on the future of trade, despite the challenges all our countries continue to face.

In response to global instability, you shared how ITC remained focused on its core mission to help small businesses access international markets and contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals. You highlighted how ITC is adapting to deliver results for those most in need, in particular women, young people and members of vulnerable communities.

It was clear that ITC could only deliver based on the strong partnerships of all the development partners, sister organizations and the wider UN family. Thank you for the timely reminder that partnerships must remain at the heart of our efforts to build resilience and emerge stronger, leaving no one behind.

At the start of today's session, we heard from the **WTO**, through Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, that trade is about people and that trade must work for people. This is where ITC steps in, by supporting small businesses to compete in international markets. The Director-General reminded us that trade is part of the solution to confronting common global challenges, such as climate change.

We were encouraged to work more closely together to raise resources and scale up successful projects to serve those who need it most, including women and those in priority regions, for example, across Africa in the context of the African Continental Free Trade Area.

We heard from **UNCTAD**, through Secretary-General Rebeca Grynspan, about the importance of working together to ensure small businesses can compete in global trade. The Secretary-General highlighted three priority areas to pay attention to, in our future work:

- Making the digital revolution work for all, including women and people in rural areas;
- Ensuring the low-carbon transition is a just one; and
- Integrating small businesses into global value chains.

She shared examples of collaboration in areas such as e-commerce and market intelligence, for example, through the Global Trade Helpdesk, an initiative of ITC, UNCTAD and the WTO.

During the course of the day, we heard 46 statements from **delegates**. Many of the contributions alluded to how ITC continued delivering results at a time of multiple crises, in line with the JAG theme of “new trade routes, new opportunities”.

Against this backdrop, delegates voiced their support for the work of ITC. They underlined the importance that trade-related assistance can play in helping to bring their economies back on the path towards recovery. Delegates praised successful implementation of the first year of the new strategic plan and ITC's business model of making small businesses more competitive and ensuring that everyone can benefit from trade. Delegates also commended the success stories featured in the Annual Report and the Annual Evaluation Synthesis Report.

Delegates referenced ITC Moving Forward, the roadmap to building a stronger ITC, tackling prohibited conduct and creating a better workplace. Delegates appreciated ITC's efforts to improve the working environment and expressed appreciation for the transparent dialogue and updates, saying they were reassured by the steps taken and looked forward to updates going forward.

Delegates referenced ITC's areas of work as timely and well-chosen, including the focus on sustainability, inclusivity and digital trade. They also praised ITC's flexibility in light of the challenges of COVID, climate change, conflict and cost of living.

I think this is a testimony to the high dedication and professionalism of the ITC staff, which the Executive Director highlighted in her opening statement.

While Geneva is made up of agencies – these large building with budgets and building and mandates – it really comes down to the people charged with delivering those mandates.

What I heard today was a clear validation of the passion and dedication of ITC staff to advancing the cause of small businesses – especially those led

by women and youth – to make the low-carbon transition, reach new markets including through online platforms, and contribute to sustainable trade-led development of their countries.

But the meeting was not all unqualified praise. Delegates were challenging ITC and the membership to do more. For example, Director-General Okonjo-Iweala spoke of the need for ITC to keep scaling up its interventions and continue collaborating with other agencies – a recommendation echoed by other delegations.

Delegates asked ITC to keep focusing on the neediest and most vulnerable, from least developed countries to countries on the frontlines of climate change, including small island developing states.

Delegates called on donor governments to continue their investments in ITC, and especially asked for more unearmarked funding to Window 1 of the ITC Trust Fund, as it guarantees flexibility of ITC's programming.

All in all, at today's event, we heard numerous examples of how ITC's projects helped entrepreneurs on the ground become more competitive, how it connected vulnerable populations into global trade, and how it supported small businesses to realize their full potential.

As Chair, I am encouraged that ITC's programming is on the right track to meet the ongoing and rapidly changing needs of small businesses in developing countries.

As the UK Ambassador shared, referencing the doubling of funding to the United Kingdom Trade Partnerships Programme despite a tight budget, ITC "brings realism" to policy instruments and has the ability to get close to what really matters to small businesses, worldwide.

Together, through close cooperation with partners, including the WTO and UNCTAD, I believe that trade will continue to have a transformative and positive impact on jobs, economic resilience and poverty reduction.

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for your time today and for your engagement in shaping the role that ITC has and can continue to have to build trade capacities in your respective countries.

I now turn to invite Pamela Coke-Hamilton, ITC Executive Director for closing remarks. Pamela, the floor is yours.