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Draft Donors' Statement

58th Session of the ITC Joint Advisory Group

25th June 2024

Chair, Director-General Ngozi, Secretary-General Grynspan, Executive Director Coke-Hamilton, excellencies, distinguished participants and fellow delegates, it is my pleasure to deliver this statement on behalf of the group of ITC donors.

Allow me to start by thanking Ambassador Nadia Theodore of Canada for her service as Chair at the 57th Session of the Joint Advisory Group, and congratulate the Ambassador of Qatar, Her Excellency Hend Abdelrahman al Muftah on assuming the Chair of the 58th session. On behalf of donors, Ambassador, I wish you every success in your new role. We look forward to a constructive and productive discussion with ITC and its partner countries at this year's JAG.

Activities in 2023

1. Donors would like to express our thanks to Executive Director Pamela Coke-Hamilton for the presenting ITC's results over the past year. We also want to extend our thanks to the ITC staff for all its hard work and for preparing a comprehensive Annual Report 2023, focused on the theme of boosting MSME competitiveness and mitigating MSME fragility.
2. It has been a very productive year for ITC as it continued to deliver on its goals of supporting trade policy makers and empowering businesses, especially women and youth, to take advantage of global trade.
3. Donors want to acknowledge some of ITC's accomplishments such as supporting the creation of jobs; enhancing the capacity of thousands of MSME's around the world to participate in digital trade and e-commerce; providing grants to enable MSME to adapt cleaner/greener technologies and practices, just to name a few of those accomplishments.
4. It is inspiring and daunting to read the analysis in the ITCs SME Competitiveness Outlook (SMECO). As you said in the annual report and I quote, "The report takes a global look, seeing how fragility and conflict-affected settings make it harder for small, informal, and women- and youth-led MSMEs to survive, much less grow. The research also reinforces that every situation has its own nuances and complexities, and that in an increasingly fragile world, everyone involved must be ready to play the long

game.” End quote. The donor community applauds this focus on bespoke solutions to complex problems.

5. ITC’s Market Analysis Tools, such as the Global Trade Helpdesk platform, continue to provide crucial trade information to tens of thousands of enterprises, especially to micro, small and medium-sized enterprises helping them make informed business decisions for export and import. The numbers behind the suite of tools remain impressive - 1.4 million regular users who have reported catalyzing an impressive \$194 million in trade. A very good average. But as we know the G20 has challenged ITC to further develop and improve access to the Global Trade Helpdesk, in the Jaipur Call to Action. We know the ITC is up for this challenge and we welcome the G20 Jaipur Call for Action Implementation Plan of May 2024 outlining the future platform’s enhancements.
6. As the world continues to be beleaguered with conflicts and crises, ITC’s work becomes ever more challenging and relevant. This context also underlines the importance of ITC’s 2022-2025 Strategic Plan. It provides the needed direction and its emphasis on inclusivity, sustainability, digitalization, resilient value chains and regional integration has the right focus for ensuring MSMEs will be competitive for the future.
7. ITC has demonstrated results through the data and case studies highlighted in the annual report. For example, how ITC work matched tech solutions to help Ghana’s cocoa farmers find new markets. It is impressive to see that local cocoa buyers could be enabled through technology to crowdsource cocoa beans from up to 100,000 farmers. The same tech start-up will also facilitate traceability and instant payments. In this respect we underline the importance to assist farmers with traceability and other requirements of legislation by countries and trade blocks such as ITC efforts related to CS3D.
8. It is easy to be inspired by the story of Shazia Mateen in Pakistan, a women entrepreneur who has grown her business and added much needed equipment to sort and store mangoes at her plant with ITCs help. While she initially struggled to be taken seriously and be viewed as a decision maker, her perseverance and hard work have paid off. Ms. Mateen is now responsible for 300 employees and hopes that her work can inspire other women entrepreneurs to access greater opportunities.
9. In the Caribbean, ITC has developed an “alliance for action” with small holder farmers and other businesses to adopt climate smart technologies and agricultural practices to create sustainable livelihoods. The project has already helped 5000 farmers and businesses.

10. In Ukraine, ITC is working with internally displaced people to build digital skills and create economic resilience. Hundreds of individuals have applied for these programs but 63 were accepted, 49 completed their training and a dozen have been able to find new jobs as a result of their training. The program has also enabled 216 MSMEs reach international markets through information technology training.

Donor contributions

11. The world continues to face challenges that increase the competition for funds. While trade related technical assistance may not always be a top priority for political decision makers, ITC donors continue to see both the value and the need for supporting the work of ITC.

12. ITC's work contributes to reaching the SDGs, supporting improvements for people, prosperity and the planet, contributing to peace and partnerships. With 2030 fast approaching there is a need for even more concerted and coherent efforts to achieve the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

13. ITC Trust Fund donors strengthen ITC's flexibility to react to partner needs and to bring forward topics of priority. Window 1 funding enables stability and predictability for internal planning process and it can serve as innovative seed funding. Earmarked funding for Window 2 allows targeted projects that serve both the priorities of donors and partners.

14. Donors commend ITC's successful efforts to diversify its funding. We encourage ITC to continue its outreach to potential new partners and supporters. We also encourage you to expand your work with LDCs to meet your targets.

Further issues

15. ITC has been an important voice for the needs of MSMEs, which are the backbone of developing countries' economies, not only in the recipient countries, but also in the multilateral dialogue. For example, ITC has supported the active participation of MSMEs at COP 28 and its first ever trade day. We encourage ITC to bring the voices of SMEs to forefront in Geneva as well, where nearly every day is "trade day."

16. Donors appreciate the ITC has made strong efforts to address staff concerns and seized the opportunity to "move forward". We commend ITC – both management and staff - for working together on improving the working conditions for everyone at ITC. We would appreciate concrete follow up reporting using measurable indicators, such as a decrease in the number of

short-term contracts. We appreciate the ongoing, transparent dialogue with the donors.

17. Let me conclude by thanking ITC for all its great work, for cooperation based on partnership, and for your dedication lifting partners up and striving for inclusive, sustainable and prosperous economies. We look forward to our continued collaboration.