

Chair Report

Excellencies,

Distinguished participants,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me begin by thanking the WTO for hosting this year's 58th JAG Session, and to thank the delegates who joined us today, who have painted a truly compelling portrait of what ITC is making possible in over 140 countries.

We've heard about what ITC means to countries around the world, and why its work is needed, now more than ever, as we enter the final years of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

We've heard about how ITC never shies away from a challenge, and has never faltered in its profound commitment to ensuring small businesses can thrive, even amid increasing fragility.

We've heard about ITC's dedication to collaboration, and its firm belief in a truth that is all too easy to forget: that trade is a human story. That's the spirit that makes us excited, on the occasion of ITC's 60th anniversary, for what its next 60 years might bring.

I would like to congratulate you, Executive Director Pamela Coke-Hamilton, for today's successful JAG Session, particularly your inspiring reflections on why we must all put small businesses front and centre.

You've reminded us that small business leaders—people like Michael Louzé of Vanuatu—are some of our most important teachers, and are now counting on us more than ever.

We began this session with equally timely reminders from WTO Director-General Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala and UNCTAD Secretary-General Rebeca Grynspan about the challenges we all face, and the vital importance of the “sisterhood” among the WTO, UNCTAD, and ITC in working together for the common good.

Throughout today's JAG, 48 delegations took the floor, in person or online, to share what ITC's work has meant for them, and where it could go next.

We heard delegations talk about what fragility means for their own MSMEs, and why governments care so deeply about connected, sustainable, and inclusive trade.

We heard delegations urge ITC to craft even more tailored technical assistance and capacity building support for its priority countries, including least developed countries.

We heard delegations celebrate ITC's four moonshots on digital, gender, youth, and green, and encourage them to keep going.

We heard delegations urge ITC to ramp up its efforts to diversify its funding sources, where it has already made big strides, and continue on its progress towards an even more geographically-diverse workforce.

We heard delegations welcome the progress already achieved on ITC's Moving Forward Action Plan, while encouraging ITC to take to heart the valuable feedback from the Annual Evaluation Synthesis Report.

I would like to congratulate the whole ITC team for its work throughout 2023, for its preparations ahead of today's JAG, and for its 60 years of showing us what aid for trade can and should look like.

Looking back, it's clear that ITC has much to be proud of.

Looking ahead, it's clear that in ITC, small businesses have a powerful advocate on their behalf, one that always places their best interests first.

As Chair, I am excited to see ITC usher in the next chapter of its history, and I urge them to keep shooting for the moon in everything they do.

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