

Finland's statement at 56th JAG, 13 September 2022

- Thank you, Madam Chair, for the opportunity to say a few words on behalf of the Finnish delegation. Let me first convey our warmest congratulations to you for being elected as the Chair of this JAG.
- First, I would like to say that Finland values its close partnership with the ITC. We have been a staunch supporter of ITC for several years. ITC's work and priorities are well in line with Finland's Aid for Trade priorities. These include a strong focus on micro, small and medium-sized enterprises; empowerment of women entrepreneurs; and making trade inclusive and sustainable. ITC plays an important role in providing the tools, particularly for the least developed countries, to participate and benefit from international trade.
- The past couple of years have been particularly difficult for developing countries that are facing multiple crisis, including the Covid-19 pandemic and the climate crisis. Unfortunately, we are not in the clear yet. Rising inflation, the energy crises and food shortages caused by Russia's illegal war on Ukraine have a negative impact on developing countries.
- Finland commends ITC for your excellent work and results you have achieved during these challenging times. This is an indication of your commitment and agility to adapt to changing circumstances. Your work continues to be extremely relevant in supporting developing countries.
- Finland would like to thank ITC for preparing an excellent annual report. The report is rich in detail and brings out the flavor of ITC's work by showcasing the various countries, sectors, value chains and people that ITC works with. We are particularly pleased that the contribution of Window 1 – donors is recognized in the report, as Finland is a major donor to this trust fund.
- ITC's focus areas - or pivots – 'sustainability', 'connectivity' and 'Inclusivity' are well chosen. They are an excellent framework for implementing ITC's agenda. Let me make a couple of observations from Finland's point of view.
- We need to keep in mind that sustainability includes environmental, social and economic dimension. It is not enough to ensure environmental sustainability. Responsible businesses take into account the rights of the people who work for them as well as the communities that they operate in. This is becoming an increasingly crucial issue for companies that are looking to connect to global value chains.

- Another issue that I would like to highlight is “inclusivity”. ITC is doing excellent work particularly in making trade more inclusive for women and youth. However, it is important to dig deeper to reach the most vulnerable people in societies. One such sizeable group are the persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities account for some 15% of the world’s population, around 1 billion people. If we are serious about reaching the SDG’s, we need to make trade more inclusive for persons with disabilities.
- To conclude, Finland would like to thank Executive Director Pamela Coke-Hamilton and the entire ITC team for their excellent work to empower MSME’s to embrace international trade in order to meet the SDGs. Finland looks forward to working with you on this journey.