

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Good morning, everyone. As the Deputy Director-General of the WTO responsible for development, technical assistance, accession and coordination with ITC, I am very pleased to attend the 56th session of the Joint Advisory Group of ITC.

Actually, I was in last year's JAG. For this year's session, DG-Dr. Ngozi had planned to attend. Unfortunately, she was unable to join us as Ambassador Bekkers explained.

So in her place, I will read out the statement that Dr. Ngozi was planning to make.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen.

This is the first time I'm taking the floor in Geneva since last Thursday, so I want to take a moment to extend my sympathies to the delegation of the United Kingdom on the passing of Her Majesty the Queen. Her embodiment of service and duty will long be remembered far beyond Britain's shores.

I also want to express my condolences to Geneva delegates, in particular those from Africa, on the death of H.E. Mr. Léopold Ismael Samba, ambassador of the Central African Republic.

Turning from that sad note to today's business, it is an honour – and a pleasure – to join you for this 56th session of ITC's Joint Advisory Group.

Thank you, Ambassador Bekkers, for your support for ITC and its important mission. And welcome, Ambassador Dwarka-Canabady, in your role as the incoming JAG chair.

Let me at the outset congratulate Executive Director Pamela Coke-Hamilton and the entire ITC team for their good work, as reflected in the annual report.

I always say that trade and the WTO are about people. But sometimes, to tap into international market opportunities, people need help. That help is what ITC provides. You operate on the ground to deliver things that people don't necessarily associate with global trade - or with the WTO.

- Last year, you enabled people and businesses from 130 countries to connect to international markets.

- You empowered them to use trade to raise incomes, create jobs, and improve lives and livelihoods, especially for women and young people.
- And you did so amid difficult contexts at both the domestic and global levels.

The world is not in a good place. We confront multiple, interlocking challenges:

- Rising geopolitical tensions.
- The continuing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The war in Ukraine and its impacts on food, fertilizer, and energy prices.
- The World Bank estimates that as many as 95 million more people have been pushed into extreme poverty by the crises of the past two years. The World Food Programme estimates 200 million more people will face acute food insecurity.
- Inflationary pressures are squeezing households everywhere, especially in poor countries.
- Tightening monetary conditions are deepening debt distress in many developing economies, and together with higher prices could widen trade finance gaps.
- Virtually all of these problems are being made worse by rampant climate change, with virtually all continents now being ravaged by fire, floods, heat, or drought.

A question for us to examine today is: how does ITC navigate this world?

I remain firmly convinced that trade is part of the solution to the problems we confront: putting poverty back on a downward trajectory, mitigating and adapting to climate change, making supply chains and food systems more resilient, and preparing for future pandemics.

At MC12, WTO members took some important steps forward – on ocean health, and in response to COVID-19 and the food crisis. But that success is no excuse to sit on our laurels – or on our hands. We need to go further to keep the WTO fit for purpose. That means updating the rulebook on agriculture and concluding the second wave of fisheries subsidies negotiations. It means building on efforts to facilitate the entry of women owned businesses and micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises into regional and global value chains. And it means coming fully to grips with the future of trade – which is digital, services, and green.

The future of trade must also be inclusive. That's why I think ITC's focus on women and MSMEs is the right one.

Partnering with local organizations is another way ITC multiplies its impact across all developing country regions, whether it's increasing cotton yields in Zambia, improving access to finance in rural Pakistan, helping Ukraine export berries to the EU, enabling Colombian farms to obtain export certification, or supporting women entrepreneurs in the Middle East.

But I'm not here today just to say nice things about ITC. Since we are talking about the road ahead, I also want to challenge you about the scale and depth of ITC's work.

Having witnessed the impact of ITC projects on the ground – I saw how getting international certification transformed the lives of women shea butter producers in Nigeria – I strongly feel that the things ITC does well need to be scaled up. This is about going from touching dozens or hundreds or even thousands of people's lives to hundreds of thousands and millions. SheTrades has started to move in this direction. Existing donors should step up, but I think there is scope for ITC to do much more by consciously working with additional partners that can bring the requisite financing to the table.

At the same time, for an organization of ITC's size, working in 130 countries comes with the risk of spreading oneself too thin. There is a case for consolidation around the most impactful activities.

I also want to challenge UNCTAD and the WTO to raise our own game. There should be better coordination among ITC and its two parent organizations. This is not to cast blame – and certainly not on this generation of leadership. For the first time, all three parts of the Geneva trade hub are currently led by women. We should treasure this coincidence, which might not happen again any time soon. But we – and the organizations we lead – need to do more with it. The three of us have indeed met to try to see how our agencies can work better together. But overcoming built-in inertia and old ways of doing things is not easy. So we need to keep sending strong signals to our own teams – and to each other's.

We need to cooperate more effectively. Instead of the siloes that continue to separate us – instead of working in parallel - it should become natural for teams within each of our respective organizations to reach out to their counterparts at

the other two. The more we are able to leverage our unique and complementary strengths, the greater impact we will collectively have. Donors have a responsibility here too, to step up on aid for trade despite tough economic times.

Delivering together would mean, as ITC puts it, delivering more trade impact for good. So let's all get to it.

Thank you.