



## Trade for Sustainable Development 2024 Concerted Action for a Sustainable Future

### Background:

The relationship between the International Trade Centre (ITC) and Switzerland spans six decades since ITC was first established in 1964 at the Village Bocage in Geneva. In the 60 years since, ITC has worked with developing countries around the world to transform their economies through trade, evolving from a technical assistance agency to an all-round trade-led development agency supporting sustainable development through small businesses. The Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) has been a key partner in these efforts, with a strong commitment to sustained economic growth, high employment, and fair working conditions through the right regulatory, economic, and foreign policy framework.

During ITC's 60th anniversary year, ITC and SECO are co-organizing the Trade for Sustainable Development (T4SD) Forum 2024. The event will bring together key stakeholders from multilateral organizations, governments, and the private sector to contextualize the changing needs of small businesses in contributing to sustainable development vis-à-vis the current geopolitical and regulatory environment and highlight various solutions we can develop through concerted action to address this demand at different levels through capacity building, global public goods, and private sector partnerships.

### Why attend the T4SD Forum?

Our current era is marked by multidimensional challenges, many of them unprecedented in scope and scale: from the rapidly evolving world of generative artificial intelligence and technological change to the escalation or outbreak of armed conflicts and growing political uncertainty that brings disruption and uncertainty to the economic outlook. But perhaps the biggest challenge of all is the existential threat of climate change. The global challenges are also a threat to the progress of a sustainability agenda by stifling cooperation and diverting resources to other priorities. While different actors, such as multilateral organizations, policymakers, the private sector, and civil society, are making concerted efforts towards sustainable development, these actions are often fragmented and lack cohesion for effective implementation.

Amid these competing pressures, there is a notable trend in favour of making production processes more sustainable and inclusive, and for companies to prove their sustainability bona fides to consumers and policymakers alike. To that end, policymakers are increasingly implementing mandatory sustainability regulations, while more consumers are willing to pay more for sustainable products with high-quality and environmentally friendly packaging. Switzerland is a prime example of this trend, with more than half of its residents demanding proof of sustainability from companies and the state. It's increasingly clear that, from a supplier perspective, implementing sustainable practices are a de facto license to operate. This growing trend, however, has implications for commodity exporters, brands, and importers in developing countries. What do these changes mean for global supply chains, from the producer to the consumer? What does the future of sustainable trade look like? The discussions will highlight how trade is a driver of transformational change in mainstreaming sustainability across global supply chains.

## PROGRAMME AT A GLANCE

<b>09:30 - 10:00</b>	<b>Welcome &amp; Registration</b>
<b>10:00 - 10:10</b>	<b>High-level Opening Remarks</b>
<b>10:10 - 10:30</b>	<b>Fireside Chat</b>
<b>10:30 - 11:45</b>	<b>Panel 1 – EMPOWER: Small Businesses for Big Impact</b>
<b>11:45 - 12:00</b>	<b>Spotlight on innovative approaches towards transformational changes in sustainable textile value chains</b>
<b>12:00 - 13:00</b>	<b>Lunch</b>
<b>13:00 - 14:15</b>	<b>Panel 2 – LEVERAGE: Private Sector Partnerships</b>
<b>14:15 - 14:45</b>	<b>Coffee</b>
<b>14:45 - 16:00</b>	<b>Panel 3 – ACCESS: Unlocking the Potential of Global Public Goods</b>
<b>16:00 - 16:15</b>	<b>Spotlight on ITCs latest global public goods solutions</b>
<b>16:15 - 16:30</b>	<b>Inspiring Closing Keynote</b>
<b>16:30</b>	<b>Networking Cocktail Reception</b>
<b>Onwards</b>	

## AGENDA

**09:30 - 10:00**     **Welcome & Registration**

**10:00 – 10:10**     **High-level Opening Remarks**

**10:10 – 10:30**     **Fireside Chat**

A dialogue between the heads of ITC and SECO, reflecting on the need for concerted action and partnerships in achieving ambitious targets for a sustainable future.

**Speakers:**

- **Pamela Coke-Hamilton**, Executive Director, International Trade Centre (ITC)
- **Helene Budliger Artieda**, Director, State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO)

**10:30 – 11:45**     **Panel 1 – EMPOWER: Small Businesses for Big Impact**

Small businesses make up 90% of companies worldwide. They are change-makers with the potential to drive sustainable production. While they show clear motivation to move in this direction, they often face numerous challenges in mainstreaming environmental and social sustainability into their business strategies. These include access to finance, technical expertise, and the ability to compete in new markets. The changing regulatory landscape increases uncertainty, compliance burdens and costs. In this session, we will hear the perspectives of small business owners from producing countries to understand where the gaps in technical support are and what the key challenges are in maintaining their license to operate.

***Speakers to be confirmed soon.***

**11:45 – 12:00**     **Spotlight on innovative approaches towards transformational changes in sustainable textile value chains**

This session will include a presentation on the Global Textiles and Clothing Programme which supports small and medium-sized enterprises and business support organizations working in textile and clothing industry in developing countries to increase export competitiveness.

**12:00 – 13:00**     **Lunch**

**13:00 – 14:15**     **Panel 2 – LEVERAGE: Private Sector Partnerships**

A dynamic private sector is a key driver for reducing global poverty. In developing countries, the private sector generates nine out of ten jobs. To drive sustainable development through trade, it is imperative to foster multi-stakeholder partnerships

to develop innovative solutions and mobilize private sector finance. How do we create a business-enabling environment? How are the international buyers adapting to the upcoming sustainability regulations? How do we enable partner-country engagement and connect buyers with small producers with sustainability credentials? How do we leverage private sector partnerships? This session seeks to answer these questions.

***Speakers to be confirmed soon.***

**14:15 – 14:45**     **Coffee**

**14:45 – 16:00**     **Panel 3 – ACCESS: Unlocking the Potential of Global Public Goods**

Acquiring the information needed to trade internationally is a time-consuming and costly process for businesses, particularly small businesses, and without it, they can struggle to engage in global markets. ITC and SECO are strategically aligned to provide free-to-use global public goods that are neutral, secure, and come with complementary capacity building for small businesses in developing markets, thus creating more equitable and sustainable supply chains. As the needs of small businesses evolve, it is imperative to adapt approaches to support “good trade” while leaving no one behind. This session will explore the new frontiers for trade-related technical assistance through the dissemination of information that is free, neutral, and reliable.

***Speakers to be confirmed soon.***

**16:00 – 16:15**     **Spotlight on ITC’s latest global public goods solutions**

This session will include a presentation on Global Trade Helpdesk, a multi-agency initiative jointly led by ITC, UNCTAD, and the WTO that aims to simplify market research for companies, and especially Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), by integrating trade and business information into a single online portal.

**16:15-16:30**     **Inspiring Closing Keynote**

**16:30**             **Networking Cocktail Reception**

**onwards**