

Madam Chair,

Executive Director of ITC

Distinguished delegates,

On behalf of my Ambassador, I would like to convey our heartiest congratulations to ITC on reaching the remarkable milestone of 60 years, marking six decades of innovation, excellence and impactful contributions to the development of MSMEs through aid for trade.

I also take this opportunity to briefly highlight Bhutan's partnership with ITC in recent years. The EU-Bhutan Trade Support Project has supported Bhutan's export diversification by improving the national trade and investment regulatory framework and increasing exports of horticulture products and textile handicrafts. The efforts have resulted in increased incomes along the two value chains, leading to economic growth and poverty reduction.

The project, implemented by the ITC in collaboration with the Agency for Promotion of Indigenous Crafts has also supported Bhutan's textile handicraft sector in developing "high value, low volume" niche collections. This initiative has placed a special focus on establishing market linkages and branding to strengthen production and trade along the handicraft value chain. Bhutanese women artisans are now able to use these skills and knowledge to curate and weave new products with a contemporary weaving style and pattern.

Furthermore, the project has been instrumental in strengthening the SME sector, enhancing export competitiveness with a focus on empowering women entrepreneurs and economic and environmental sustainability.

The support provided thus far to small and developing economies like Bhutan is invaluable to ensure a sustainable economic growth.

In closing, I would like to express the gratitude of the Royal Government of Bhutan to the WTO, ITC, UNCTAD and member states for the continued support and technical assistance extended to Bhutan.

Thank you.

