

CARICOM Statement at ITC's JAG

Delivered by Barbados

Thank you Ambassador- congratulations for taking up this new role. Commendations to Ambassador Theodore for her excellent guidance

On behalf of the CARICOM group of countries, I first wish the ITC a happy 60th birthday. Thank you to Executive Director Coke-Hamilton for her continued leadership and to the staff of the ITC for their commitment, expertise and focus on always delivering trade impact for all.

The 2023 annual report shows how ITC continues to drill down on many of its longstanding areas of competence: women's economic empowerment through SheTrades; market and trade intelligence through its incomparable tools and analysis; on youth through its Ye platform; on sustainability through its T4SD work; and its work on digital. You continue to be best of class in many of these areas.

The moonshots give us an idea of where you intend to place your accent moving forward and we support this.

We welcome your aim to highlight the needs and offer solutions for small island developing states and although this will likely be covered in your 2024 annual report we thank you for your active participation in the SIDS4 in Antigua, the 3rd AfriCaribbean Trade and Investment Forum (ACTIF) in Bahamas and the Global Supply Chain Forum in Barbados. The Ambassadors and delegations here in Geneva look forward to presentations on the initiatives you launched including the SIDS tracker, the launch of the Caribbean food security project, and the upcoming research with the Afreximbank that will highlight the potential trade between Africa and the Caribbean.

We welcome the launch of SheTrades Caribbean with the Caribbean development bank. Our entrepreneurs are our gems. By bringing shetrades to our region you are providing the tools, the network and the capacity building that will ensure our women entrepreneurs and women owned enterprises will contribute to the continued growth of our economies.

I don't need to tell you that our region is on the frontline of the climate crisis. We are also facing a debt crisis while at the same time continuing to battle with an archaic international financial system that has graduated many of us out of accessing concessional funding. We ask ITC to continue to work with us including by scaling up the Alliances for Action interventions which have been so transformational in including trade, livelihoods, circular economy and food security elements in its roll out. We thank ITC for its work in helping us to take advantage of WTO rules and regulations: from your MSME work with the MSME working group, your SheTrades expertise in the Trade and Gender Working Group, your support on trade facilitation and investment facilitation for development and your support on e-commerce. We look forward to exploring how you can do even more in areas of critical importance to the Caribbean such as in services, tourism and accessing and using climate smart technology.

We also look forward to ITC incorporating the Antigua and Barbuda agenda for SIDS from the SIDS4 conference, into its strategic framework moving forward as well as considering how you can respond to some key policy directives emanating from our region such as the Bridgetown Initiative 3.0 and the SIDS Transport Ministerial Statement from the Global Supply Chain Forum.

We also recognize your continued attention to improving the working environment in ITC through the 'moving forward' initiative and we commend you for continuing to place priority on diversity, zero tolerance to harassment and your decision to pay your interns! Bravo.

We welcome the healthy pipeline of projects until 2028 and look forward to continuing to see the impacts of these projects on poverty reduction and income generation. We note your continued investment in partnerships for purpose including with the private sector and foundations such as Visa Foundation, Mastercard and amazon. With traditional development funding under threat we know that partnerships, including with other international agencies, is the only viable way forward.

In closing, CARICOM thanks ITC for its work, for its passionate and innovative staff and for continuing to pay attention to the needs, priorities and stories of small island developing states.

On behalf of Barbados I thank ITC for the excellent collaboration with my country and with the WTO MSME WG which I chair. From being an integral partner to the small business champions- which we will announce this week- to working with the MSME group and the trade and gender WG on access to finance for women, to showcasing your tools- we welcome your partnership. And we really look forward to the SME Ministerial you will host next year.

As a former ITC staff member myself I really congratulate you for this milestone of 60 years. Happy birthday ITC.

Matthew Wilson
Sent from my iPhone