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Draft Donors' Statement

57th Session of the ITC Joint Advisory Group

20th July 2023

Chair, Director-General Ngozi, Secretary-General Grynspan, Executive Director Coke-Hamilton, excellencies, distinguished participants,

It is my pleasure to deliver this statement on behalf of the group of ITC donors.

Let me start the donor statement by thanking Ambassador Dwarka-Canabady of Mauritius for her service as Chair at the 56th Session. Donors congratulate Ambassador Theodore of Canada on assuming the Chair of the 57th session and wish you all the best in your endeavors.

We look forward to engage and exchange with ITC and ITC partner countries at this year's Joint Advisory Group meeting.

Activities in 2022

1. We would like to express our thanks to Executive Director Coke-Hamilton for the presentation of ITC's results over the past year. We would also like to extend our thanks to the ITC Secretariat for preparing a comprehensive Annual Report 2022 "Diversifying trade in times of crisis".
2. It has been another productive year with ITC continuing to deliver on its goals of supporting Business Support Organisations, trade policy makers and empowering businesses, women and youth to take advantage of global trade.
3. It is inspiring to read about 3000 women-led enterprises transacting business, or the hundreds of jobs created for youth in the Gambia, about climate smart cropping systems in Ghana or how cooperative structures are being strengthened in South Sudan – just to name a few of the many results.
4. Governments have been supported in their efforts to accede to the WTO, national export and e-commerce strategies launched, and ITC's Market Analysis Tools continue to provide crucial trade information to tens of thousands of enterprises informing business decisions for export and import. The numbers behind the suite of tools speaks volumes – boasting an impressive 1.4 million regular users from 190 countries.

5. These results are commendable, considering the growing global insecurities. As ED Coke-Hamilton rightfully noted - 2022 brought even more volatility, uncertainty and complexity than the previous years. Unfortunately, the overlapping crises of Covid, climate, conflict and cost of living, will make ITC's work more difficult - but arguably also more needed.
6. This context also underlines the importance of ITC's 2022-2025 Strategic Plan. It provides the needed direction and its emphasis on inclusivity, sustainability, digitalization, resilient value chains and regional integration has the right focus for ensuring SMEs will be competitive for the future.
7. The Annual Report shows that ITC is making good progress in implementing the Strategic Plan. The selection of Case Studies illustrate how ITC has worked towards these different impact areas but also how these different impact areas relate and re-enforce one another. For example how agritech solutions help Ghana's cocoa farmers or how resource efficiency trainings in textile companies lead to cost savings and the potential to reach new green markets. This ability to continue to advise traditional sectors – while bringing in digital, green and inclusive solutions - will be a vital aspect in ITC's services for the future.
8. We note that the targets for country-specific interventions in priority countries and interventions in least developed countries were not met in 2022 and encourage ITC to keep the targets in view over the lifetime of the Strategic Plan.
9. We note that ITC has been working in more conflict and post-conflict settings as well as with refugees. The positive evaluation of the Colombia PUEDE Project is very encouraging, showing that ITC is able to deliver sustainable impact also in complex post-conflict settings. We encourage ITC to continue its work in these settings, while keeping an eye on risk mitigation.

Donor contributions

10. The world continues to face geopolitical challenges that come along with increasingly competing needs for funding. In this context, support for trade related technical assistance is not always considered to be one of the top priorities for political decision makers. However, ITC donors continue to see both great value and need in supporting the work of ITC:
11. ITC's work considerably contributes to reaching the SDGs, supporting improvements for people, prosperity and the planet, contributing to peace and partnerships.
12. With the possibility to provide unearmarked funding to Window1 of the ITC Trust Funds, donors strengthen ITC's flexibility and agility, enabling them to react to partner needs and to bring forward topics of priority. Window 1 financing enables certain stability and

predictability for internal planning processes and it can serve as innovative seed funding for attracting further funds through Window 2 projects. At the same time, earmarked funding for Window 2 has its own beauty, allowing targeted projects that support donor priorities, increasing the overall funding available to the ITC.

13. Donors commend ITC's successful efforts to diversify its funding: in 2022, four new donors have been identified. We encourage ITC to continue reaching out to potential new partners and supporters.

Further issues

14. ITC has been an important voice for the needs of SMEs, not only in the recipient countries, but also in the multilateral dialogue. For example, ITC has supported the active participation of SMEs at COP 27. We encourage continued engagement in bringing the voice of SMEs to the table, also in Geneva, where trade talk is taking place.
15. Last year, ITC faced some difficult internal issues. The UNOG staff survey and related allegations posed a major challenge for the organisation's reputation, and for everyone being involved. Donors appreciated that ITC took on this challenge and seized the opportunity to "move forward". We commend ITC - ED, the management and the staff - for jointly working together on a sustainable improvement of working conditions for everyone at ITC. Donors have been reassured by the internal measures taken to respond, and appreciate the continuous and transparent dialogue since the allegations emerged. This will remain an area of interest for donors in the year ahead. We look forward to further updates on the implementation and impact of the measures being taken.
16. Let me conclude the joint statement by thanking ITC for its great work, for cooperation based on partnership, and for your continuous contribution to a world where economies are inclusive, sustainable and prosperous. We look forward to future collaboration.