

ITC Executive Director's closing remarks

Thank you very much, Chair.

And thank you delegations for remaining till this hour. I am very grateful and I know my staff as well is very grateful to you because it indicates your support and your commitment to what we do.

I also want to thank the chair. I think she has done a phenomenal job and I am particularly moved by her personal interest, anecdotes and engagement. I think it says a lot and I look forward to continuing to work with you through this coming year.

I also mentioned at the lunch that it would be great if delegations can actually come with us to some of our on-the-ground engagements, just to see in real terms what we do; because it makes a difference when you see it. It changes your perspective on a lot of things. So, if you're interested, perhaps you can let us know and we can see how we can work it out over the next year.

I want to thank you all for your time and for your engagement today. After two years of COVID – I came on in October 2020 – I think in the last two years, we have more than shown that ITC is not only fit for purpose, but aligned to not just present, but future goals.

And I think it says a lot about the organization and about ITC staff. I really wanted to use this as a tribute to the staff to thank you all for your continued commitment and work in light of COVID. Most worked from home for at least the first year, but never wavered, never complained – well, I shouldn't say that, some did – but in the grand scheme of things, the complaints were actually quite reasonable. It said a lot about the ethos of the organization, of the people who work here.

And I want to take this opportunity before I leave to indicate that this is Mr. Anders Aeroe's final JAG with us. He is retiring, going on to better things. But we want to thank him for his service. We want to thank him for his commitment. We want to thank you for being one of the true believers. Because in this business that we do, it takes true believers to make change. If you don't really believe what you're doing, the change doesn't really happen at the deeper level. You do it because you're paid to do it; but I'd say most of us – 90% – do it because we want to do it, not because we're paid. And I think Anders represents that for so many of us. So, I do want to pay tribute to him. Thank you so much. Thank you for being a great guide.

I also want to thank you for those who have indicated what ITC's work means for your country. Coming from a small island developing state myself, I know exactly what it means to lack resources, to lack size, to lack capacity, and to need the help of organizations like ITC to make it, to be able to export, to be able to meet standards, to be able to survive. And we fully understand what this means. And we want to continue to see how we work to fit with your strategic priorities. How do we actually deliver more for MSMEs; how do we support communities and the vulnerable, the women and youth to actually engage in what is a rapidly changing world? And how do we meet your needs in terms of international trade?

I have also told my staff many times that I really should have been a charity worker, but it wouldn't pay me. So, I needed to earn a living to, you know, send my son to school. But: *What is our Why?* That's always been my driving ethos. *What is our Why?* Because when you know "what your why" is, it informs what you do and how well you do it. And our Why is: how can we initiate and carry out fundamental change? Because at the end of the day, if we don't impact the lives of people, if what we're doing is just signing ceremonies and meetings, it makes no difference to me.

What is important is: have we affected lives in fundamental ways? And I think we have. And I think at the end of the day, when we go home at night, we can feel that we have made a difference in the lives of those that we've touched. And what we want to do is to be able to do more, to go deeper, to scale up. As the WTO DDG said, to engage more also with collaboration with other UN entities, with other bodies across the ground. I think that we do it well, but we admit that it is something that can sometimes be difficult. The UN is a huge organization and multiple mandates that are cross-cutting and sometimes tripping over each other.

We have to try to ensure that we work together to achieve the long, the greatest possible outcome. I think what's important also is that we heard about the rising challenges faced by member states and therefore the need for additional resources and also a deeper impact.

We are willing to be creative on that. We're willing to look outside the box. But we do ask for assistance in thinking outside that box, because as the challenge is raised, we can't keep going back to the same pot over and over. We have to find a way to expand that pot. And how do we do that? How do we do that in a way that maintains our integrity and, at the same time, enables us to meet the rising challenges ahead?

I also want to say that we do take the points where we fall short. It is an evaluation mechanism that we treasure dearly. Thank you, Miguel, who keeps us on our toes. We have a management response which has already been uploaded to our website if you want to see it, and how we integrate the recommendations into our work and into the organization.

I think at the end of the day, if there needs to be a wider discussion, we can include it in the CCITF discussions. That way, we can have a deeper engagement on the recommendations made and perhaps how we could be more effective in including those.

So let me thank you for your affirmation, for your perseverance, for your staying here with us. Thank you for your engagement. And as I begin my third year with you all, thank you for your support.

Thank you.