

South Africa statement at ITC Joint Advisory Group (JAG)– 25 June 2024:

We are pleased to outline the significant activities conducted by the International Trade Centre (ITC) in South Africa, which have contributed to the government's efforts to advance economic growth, job creation, and the empowerment of women entrepreneurs.

My delegation would like to congratulate you on your appointment as well as the outgoing Chair, HE Ambassador Nadia Theodore of Canada for her outstanding contribution as Chair of this body. We would also like to thank HE Executive Director Pamela Coke-Hamilton and her excellent team for the sterling work they are doing.

The Government of South Africa recognizes and deeply appreciates ITC's commitment and contributions to our nation's economic development. We express our desire to deepen collaboration with ITC to further these commendable efforts.

SheTrades Initiative

The SheTrades initiative was highlighted in His Excellency President Cyril Ramaphosa's State of the Nation Address on June 20, 2019. Its implementation stands as a testament to South Africa's commitment to promoting economic growth and job creation by increasing the participation of women-owned businesses in trade.

SheTrades has established an excellent partnership with South Africa's Department of Small Business Development (DSBD) and the Small Enterprise Development Agency (Seda), under the umbrella of the SheTrades Hub. These institutions have been instrumental in driving the women in trade agenda in South Africa.

Since its inception, over 3,054 women enterprises have registered on the SheTradesZA platform. Under the leadership of Seda and DSBD, SheTradesZA Hub has been actively unlocking market opportunities for its members. Notable activities include a South Africa-Mauritius trade mission with the SheTrades Mauritius Hub, hosted by EDB Mauritius.

Additionally, SheTradesZA Hub members have been supported to participate in the MC13 WTO-ITC SheTrades Event in Abu Dhabi and the Absa InspireMe Conference in Kenya.

GIZ Project: Empowering African Women through E-commerce

The GIZ project, implemented in 2022, combined two main components:

1. Supporting SheTrades Hubs and other Business Support Organizations (BSOs) to provide better services for women-led businesses.
2. Enhancing the competitiveness and capacity of women-led businesses to participate in e-commerce and utilize digital technologies.

This project involved key partners such as the SheTrades Hubs hosted by the Nigerian Export Promotion Council (NEPC) and South Africa's Small Enterprise Development Agency or (SEDA).

Capacity Building for Women-Led Businesses

ITC has been instrumental in building capacity for women-led businesses in South Africa:

- 101 women-led businesses were supported.
- 246 women-led businesses participated in the pilot webinar with Digify Africa on 'Creatively Engage Your Audience with Instagram' delivered by Digify Africa and the GSMA Mobile for Development Building Synergies Workshop.

ITC SheTrades Accelerator Programme (STAP)

The ITC SheTrades Accelerator Programme (STAP), running from 2021 to early 2024 and funded by GIZ under the Global Project Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI) commissioned by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), aimed to promote income generation and job creation for women-led businesses. The programme focused on:

1. Strengthening the business support ecosystem to better support women's economic empowerment initiatives.
2. Increasing the competitiveness of women-led businesses.
3. Creating new market linkages and business opportunities for women-led businesses in the sector.

Under STAP, over 220 women-led businesses in the Apparel, Accessories, and Home Decor sector and 12 BSOs in South Africa were supported through various interventions. These included capacity building on export readiness, soft skills training, one-on-one mentoring, and trade participation support. As a result, women entrepreneurs from South Africa generated over 400,000 USD in business and created over 70 new jobs. ITC worked with 12 BSOs to implement long-term organizational gender transformative approaches through capacity building and sector-specific training of trainers to improve their client-facing interventions for women entrepreneurs.

Conclusion

The Government of South Africa deeply values the partnership with ITC and the impactful initiatives undertaken to enhance trade and economic opportunities for our citizens, particularly women entrepreneurs. We look forward to continuing and expanding our collaboration with ITC to achieve even greater strides in economic empowerment and sustainable development. In this regard, we are especially optimistic about the great potential represented in rolling out the Global Trade HelpDesk and the sharing of trade

information and intelligence through the African Trade Observatory of which ITC is an implementation partner.

Happy 60th anniversary to the ITC. Thank you Chair.