

58th Joint Advisory Group (JAG) of the International Trade Centre (ITC)

STATEMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

Delivered by Amb. Arthur Kafeero, 25 June 2024

Thank you Chair (Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar, H.E Ms Hend Abdalrahman Al-Muftah)

I would like to begin by congratulating you, on assumption of the Chair of the 58th Joint Advisory Group.

We join others in acknowledging the extensive work of the 57th session and its chair, Amb Nadia Theodore of Canada, which we are now building on in this session.

We thank the Executive-Director of ITC Ms Pamela Coke-Hamilton for her leadership and the remarks made this morning enumerating the steps being taken, in collaboration with partners, to strengthen the competitiveness of MSMEs and help build vibrant, sustainable export sectors that provide entrepreneurial opportunities, particularly for women, young people and vulnerable communities.

We welcome the 2023 Report on Activities of the ITC and commend the Centre and partners for the readiness to deliver support to developing countries, especially the most vulnerable ones, and highlighting the crippling impact of cascading crises the resulting fragility.

The report's clarion call for everyone, from MSMEs to governments to international agencies, to come together to break out of the 'vicious cycle' of fragility, should be heeded, especially since we are at an inflection point in the implementation of the 2030 agenda for sustainable development, having crossed the halfway point with overall progress in the attainment of the sustainable development and falling short of the expectations.

As the only international agency fully dedicated to the development of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises through aid for trade, ITC is uniquely placed to make an invaluable contribution towards the development of informal sectors and economies that sustains a large part of the workforce in developing countries. We view it as a solid pillar in our collective efforts to find all-round, durable solutions to the challenges MSMEs face, that go beyond finance and address the major stumbling blocks such as technology and human resource gaps.

As we prepare to celebrate the ITC's sixtieth anniversary and approaching the end of the ITC Strategic Plan 2022-2025, it is important to

reflect on how we can collectively support the organisation and accelerate implementation and attainment of the sustainable development goals across the ITC's five impact areas, namely; sustainable and resilient value chains, inclusive trade, green trade, digital trade, and regional integration and South-South trade and investment.

In Uganda, ITC is doing commendable work supporting strengthening agribusiness resilience, especially of rural women and also modernizing the digital payments ecosystem, by making it more inclusive and accessible to micro and small enterprises. These businesses will have the tools to connect with the global digital economy and accept payments electronically, broadening their market reach and enhancing their contribution to national economic growth.

We thank ITC for its work and the partners who support this important work. We are ready to continue working with the Centre in creating more competitive MSMEs by expanding our collaboration to include projects that develop the technological dimensions of trade and investment. A focus on value addition and industrialisation could enable developing countries respond better to current and emerging needs, improve the performance of export sectors, generate sustainable investment, and stimulate job creation.

We also believe the growing significance of south-south economic cooperation and integration to global actions to advance the SDGs necessitates even greater focus by the ITC on this aspect of its work.

The potential of South–South economic cooperation, particularly on an interregional scale, has yet to be fully exploited. Interregional South–South trade cooperation linking different developing regions – Asia, Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean – can be significant in enhancing the South–South trade landscape and where the important work of the ITC could have impact.

We therefore recommend the continuation and expansion of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Export Training Programme for African SMEs.

Finally, we were elated seeing on the podium and listening to DG of WTO Ms Ngonzi Okonjo-Iweala, SG of UNCTAD Ms Rebecca Grynspan and ED of ITC Ms Pamela Coke-Hamilton, leaders of three critical trade organisations and hearing the complimentary approaches they are making to support MSMEs and small economies in particular, participate more fully in the global value chains. We commend this and look forward to more of this.

Happy 60th anniversary of ITC. I thank you!