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## President Kagame opens the World Export Development Forum in Kigali

(Kigali, Rwanda) – President Paul Kagame today opened the [World Export Development Forum \(WEDF\)](#), which is taking place in Kigali, Rwanda. More than 800 delegates from 73 countries are attending the event.

President Kagame told the gathering that the right cultural mind-set is critical to transform an economy. ‘The first obstacle to overcome is the belief that we cannot do it. If we overcome this, the rest is history,’ he said, emphasizing the importance of believing in oneself. ‘To find the right trade niche requires not only hard work, but also resilience in the face of setbacks and disappointments. If the path were easy or obvious, it would have been discovered already,’ he said.

‘To overcome geographical and other disadvantages, we must benchmark ourselves against the best in the world, not just against similar economies,’ the President said.

A vibrant private sector is the only way to encourage jobs and growth, especially for youth and women, said ITC’s Executive Director Arancha González. ‘By 2030, 500 million jobs need to be created to keep up with growth in the world’s working-age population. More and better jobs will mean the difference between a demographic dividend and a social time bomb,’ she said.

‘It is the continent with both the most poverty but also the greatest promise...Africa’s potential is practically infinite. Sub-Saharan Africa is the world’s second fastest-growing continent in economic terms, with GDP rising by an average of 6% per year,’ she said.

Francis Gatare, Chief Executive Officer of Rwanda Development Board, highlighted the importance of entrepreneurship and job creation, to unlock the potential of the private sector to fuel economic growth. ‘Rwanda shares the same vision as ITC, that a vibrant private sector is the only way trade-led growth and development can be achieved,’ he said.

Mr. Gatare also greeted delegates of the [Women Vendors Exhibition and Forum](#), which this year is held as part of WEDF, pointing to the programmes Rwanda has in place to support women entrepreneurs. ‘Rwanda has a proven track record of economic, social and political inclusion of women and we are cognizant of women’s immense contribution to the transformation of this country, and championing greater regional market integration.’

Lamin Manneh, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative to Rwanda, said that the country’s rapid growth has led it to jump from 54th to 22nd place in the World Bank’s Doing Business Report, making it an inspirational setting for the first WEDF in Africa. ‘It is no mean feat to achieve this jump in a year,’ he said.

The theme of WEDF 2014, ‘SMEs: Creating jobs through trade,’ reflects the importance that ITC and its partners attach to the role of a vibrant private sector in driving trade-led growth and development. The urgent need to create employment opportunities, in particular for youth, will be at the core of the discussions between global thinkers and practitioners from the public and private sectors.

WEDF 2014 will explore how SMEs can become and remain competitive by addressing issues that impact their entrepreneurial capacity and operating environment. Developments in trade facilitation, regional integration, South-South cooperation and trade in services will be examined.



In the main sessions, high-level speakers and participants working in complex and dynamic environments will share best practices to address the challenges faced by developing countries and economies in transition, and propose solutions based on the principles of partnership, inclusiveness and sustainability

**Notes to the editor:**

ITC is the joint agency of the World Trade Organization and the United Nations. ITC assists small and medium-sized enterprises in developing and transition economies to become more competitive in global markets, thereby contributing to sustainable economic development within the frameworks of the [Aid-for-Trade agenda](#) and the [Millennium Development Goals](#).

The RDB was set up by bringing together all the government agencies responsible for the entire investor experience under one roof. This includes key agencies responsible for business registration, investment promotion, environmental clearances, privatization and specialist agencies, which support the priority sectors of information and communications technology and tourism, as well as SMEs and human-capacity development in the private sector.

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