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ITC and World Customs Organization sign deal to strengthen collaboration on trade facilitation

Partnership will help developing countries live up to Bali commitments

(Geneva) World Customs Organization (WCO) Secretary-General Kunio Mikuriya and International Trade Centre (ITC) Executive Director Arancha González today (16 June) signed a Memorandum of Understanding in Geneva aimed at strengthening collaboration on trade facilitation. The WCO and ITC will provide joint technical assistance and capacity-building for developing countries and least developed countries to implement the World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA).

The collaboration will see the WCO and ITC providing assistance to beneficiaries in preparing project proposals to seek assistance from development partners and donors to implement TFA measures. Help will also be provided for the design and implementation of border administration reforms and assisting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to more efficiently manage cross-border operations. Both organizations will jointly publish an analysis on trade facilitation issues.

'This collaboration will build greater synergies between the WCO and ITC. More importantly, the combined expertise of the two institutions will deliver a higher level of technical assistance to help developing countries ensure that they comply with the TFA,' said Ms González.

'ITC works to increase the competitiveness of SMEs to help them build a platform for growth, development and employment creation. Support to improve the business environment and facilitate better management of border operations, will help reduce the transaction costs of doing business,' she said.

Mr Mikuriya, said: 'Support for SMEs is essential for competitiveness. ITC, which is promoting SME development, is good, and so is its support for the WTO's TFA. Our vision is connectivity and partnership to develop economic competitiveness.'

The Executive Director said that by helping countries to remove supply chain barriers caused by burdensome administrative requirements there will be a reduction in costs and delays in cross-border operations and an improvement in private sector competitiveness. ITC will build on its studies of non-tariff measures carried out in various countries to provide insights on the key barriers to trade and the most relevant measures in the TFA which can help to boost national exports.

Notes to Editor: The WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) that was concluded at the Ninth WTO Ministerial Conference in Bali in December 2013 will create binding obligations for members to improve customs procedures, transparency and efficiency, as well as co-operation with border regulatory agencies and the private sector. The TFA contains provision for technical assistance and capacity-building to support the implementation in developing and least developed countries (LDCs). The developing and LDC members can self-designate the provisions of the TFA into Category A (implementation upon entry into



force), B (deferred implementation) or C (linked with acquisition capacity through assistance and support) and the date of their choice for the implementation of respective provisions.

Some of the key actions required in the preparation phase of the TFA include the establishment of National Trade Facilitation committees; categorization of measures and their notification; domestic ratification process; and the drawing up of requests for technical assistance for capacity building. The publication of information, advance rulings, border agency processes; document simplification; and disciplines on transit requirements.

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](#).

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