



International  
Trade  
Centre

DRAFT

# Strategic Plan 2022–2025

Achieving inclusion,  
sustainability and prosperity



TRADE IMPACT FOR GOOD





© International Trade Centre 2021

The International Trade Centre (ITC) is the joint agency of the World Trade Organization and the United Nations.

**Street address:** ITC  
54-56, rue de Montbrillant  
1202 Geneva, Switzerland

**Postal address:** ITC  
Palais des Nations  
1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland

**Telephone:** +41 22 730 0111

**Fax:** +41 22 733 4439

**E-mail:** [itcreg@intracen.org](mailto:itcreg@intracen.org)

**Internet:** <http://www.intracen.org>

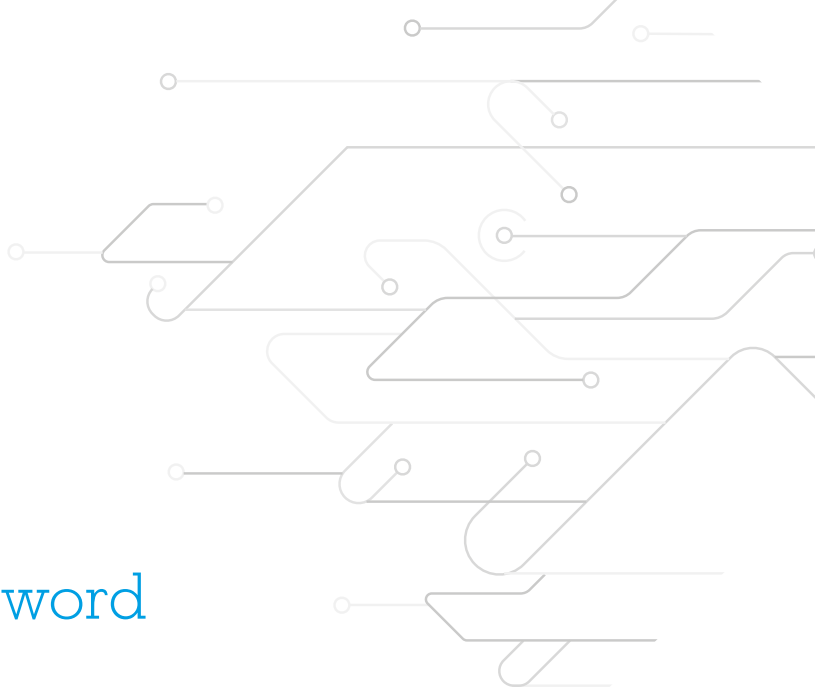
Printed by ITC Digital Printing Service on FSC paper, which is environmentally-friendly paper (without chlorine) using vegetable-based inks. The printed matter is recyclable.

A free pdf is available on ITC's website at: [www.intracen.org/publications](http://www.intracen.org/publications)



# Contents

Foreword .....	4
2022–2025 at a glance .....	6
<b>A world transformed</b> .....	8
The global landscape .....	8
The trade development environment .....	15
<b>The value we bring</b> .....	20
Our vision, mission and principles.....	20
Our framework for MSME competitiveness .....	21
<b>How we contribute</b> .....	28
Our clients .....	28
Our core services .....	29
Our impact areas .....	34
Responding to country needs .....	41
Engaging with the WTO and the UN.....	42
Partnering for purpose .....	44
Leading the global conversation.....	46
<b>Managing for impact and results</b> .....	48
Our purpose-driven identity.....	48
Our organizational strengths.....	51
Resource mobilization .....	55
 Annex: ITC’s results framework and corporate indicators.....	 58



## Foreword

We are living through historic and difficult times. In the past, despite economic highs and lows, we could celebrate the prosperity of millions lifted out of poverty through trade. Now we face monumental, almost existential challenges. Gains that we perhaps took for granted are in serious danger of being completely reversed.

The scale of the task is enormous. We must rebuild entire economies battered by nearly two years of a global pandemic. We must protect the most vulnerable from growing social and economic instability. We must harness the extraordinary power of technology for good. We must protect future generations from the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. We must restore the promise of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in their final decade.

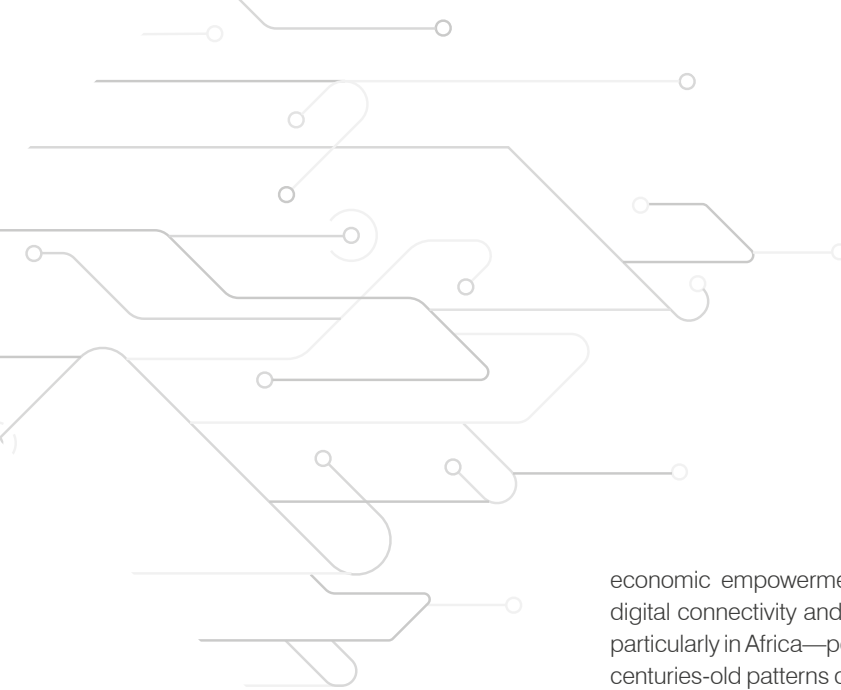
We are entering a pivotal moment in history. We have a chance to show that multilateralism matter—that trade can not only create a rising tide but also build a better boat.

*Achieving Inclusion, Sustainability and Prosperity* outlines the International Trade Centre's vision for delivering systemic change and building more resilient economies. It sets out our Strategic Plan and guiding vision for 2022–2025. It lays out a roadmap for creating trade that is sustainable, inclusive and transformative. Trade that puts the SDGs back on track.

This plan builds on the basic premise that ITC's business model has never been more critical or relevant. ITC will turn 60 years old during the period covered by this Strategic Plan. During those six decades, our interventions have created more competitive micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), stronger business ecosystems, better regulatory environments and more accessible global public goods.

Over the next four years, this strategic plan will push our business model even further. Thematically, it will deepen our already cutting-edge work on women's





economic empowerment, youth and refugees. It will turbo-charge our offer on digital connectivity and the green transition. It will give regional economic blocs—particularly in Africa—powerful tools to create truly integrated markets and transform centuries-old patterns of trade.

This strategic plan will transform not just *what* we do but also *how* we do it, externally and internally. We will deepen our in-country engagement, in response to the UN Secretary General's call for a more coherent and impactful UN Development System. We will deliver even more customised solutions to respond to the unique needs of least developed countries, land-locked developing countries, small-island developing states, fragile / conflict-affected countries and sub-Saharan Africa. We will build better partnerships with our Geneva partners at the WTO and UNCTAD, within the UN family and with the wider ecosystem of private sector and non-profit organizations. We will broaden our resource mobilization to access an even wider range of public and private sector partners.

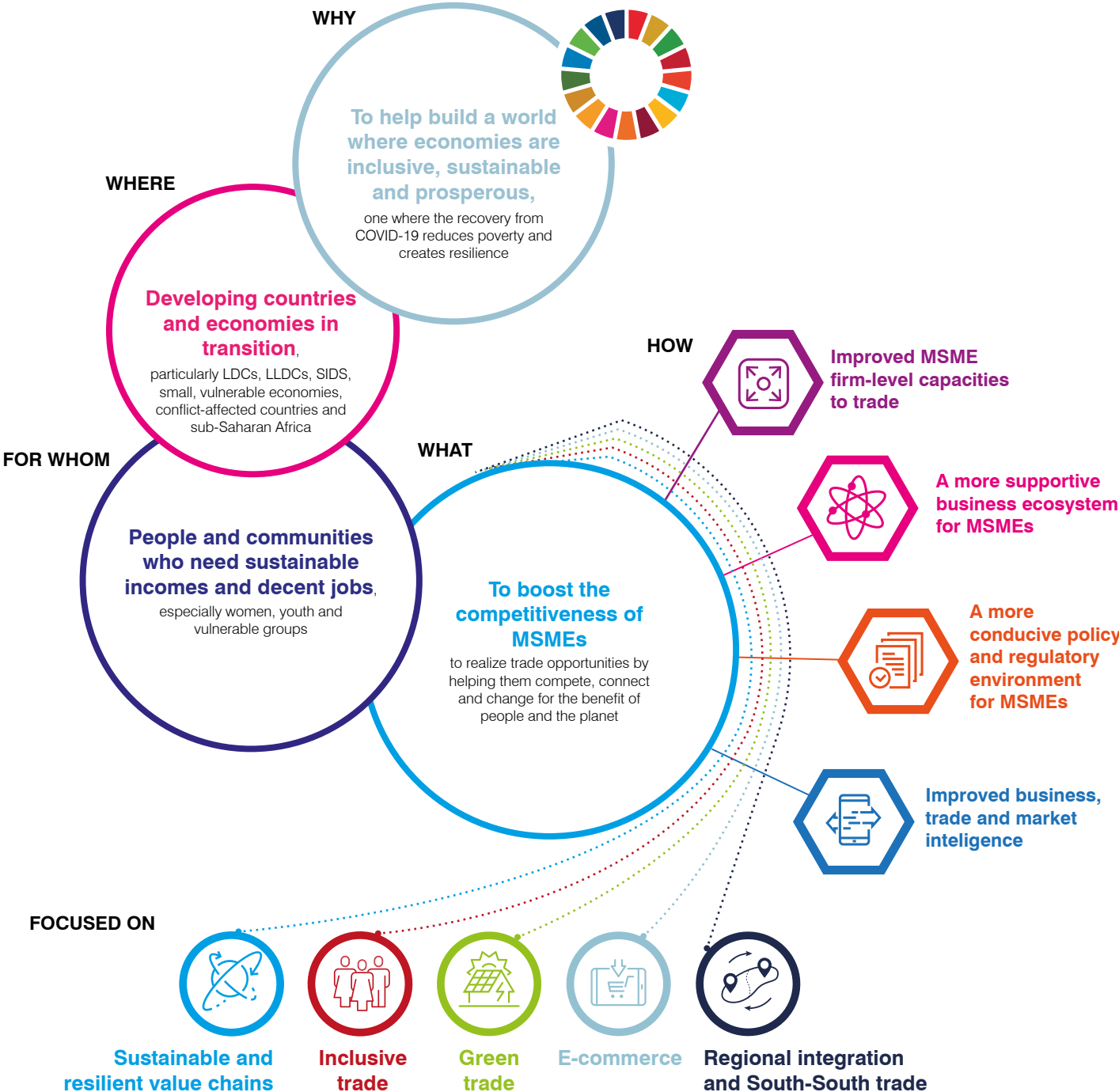
Internally, we will work harder to build an even more agile, expert and supportive ITC. We will keep strengthening our core business processes and communication skills as our project portfolio grows in size and scope. We will continue to lead on equality, diversity and inclusion. We will keep tracking and delivering our development results, ensuring value for money and retaining the trust of our partners.

This strategic plan will ensure that the ITC and its stakeholders thrive in these complex and troubled times. It is the next step in our sixty-year journey and a once-in-a-generation opportunity to renew the promise of multilateralism for a world in crisis. I invite you to take this next step with us, towards ever more inclusion, sustainability and prosperity. Help us build a better and more resilient world.

Pamela Coke-Hamilton  
Executive Director, International Trade Centre

# 2022–2025 at a glance

FIGURE 1. ITC's strategy at a glance



A world  
transformed



# A world transformed

## The global landscape

*ITC will strive to deliver on the vision set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.*

### Introduction

In 2024, the International Trade Centre (ITC) will celebrate 60 years of existence. During these six decades, the world has transformed. The global environment has become more multipolar, volatile and complex. The way we produce, trade and consume has been altered by digital innovation and technological change. A deeper understanding of the relationship between economic development, human wellbeing, inequities and environmental sustainability has emerged.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with its 17 interrelated Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), was launched in 2015 as a beacon around which all countries, the business community and civil society could coalesce with a shared aim of reducing poverty and vulnerability and creating a more sustainable and equitable world. ITC will continue to deliver on the vision set out in the 2030 Agenda, as an integral part of the contribution of our two parent organizations—the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the United Nations (UN).

Established in 1964, the **International Trade Centre** is the joint agency of the World Trade Organization and the United Nations. ITC is the only international development agency fully dedicated to supporting MSMEs to enable them to benefit from trade. Working with partners to strengthen MSME competitiveness, we help to build entrepreneurial and employment opportunities, particularly for women, youth and the poor. Our main clients are MSMEs, business support organizations and governments.





As the joint technical assistance and capacity-building arm of the WTO and the UN, ITC is fully dedicated to the development of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), which are powerful actors in the quest to achieve broad impact for people, planet and prosperity.

Sustainable poverty reduction and enhanced economic security are only possible with more productive MSMEs that provide decent work for the most vulnerable members of society, including, women and youth. Globally, MSMEs account for 60–70% of employment and most of the new job creation in developing countries. However, due to productivity lags, the wages paid by MSMEs tend to be lower than those paid by large firms. MSMEs integrated into international markets are more productive than those that do not participate in trade. Market and product diversification are also directly linked to resilience.

*It is vital to support MSMEs as engines of change.*

MSMEs help attain the SDGs through direct and indirect channels. These include the employment opportunities they generate, the new ideas, innovation and dynamism that come from entrepreneurship, particularly among young firms, the responsible business practices they choose to adopt, the sectors in which they operate and the impact they have on the broader economy. To be successful, MSMEs must be competitive and resilient.

It is vital to support them as engines for change and poverty reduction.



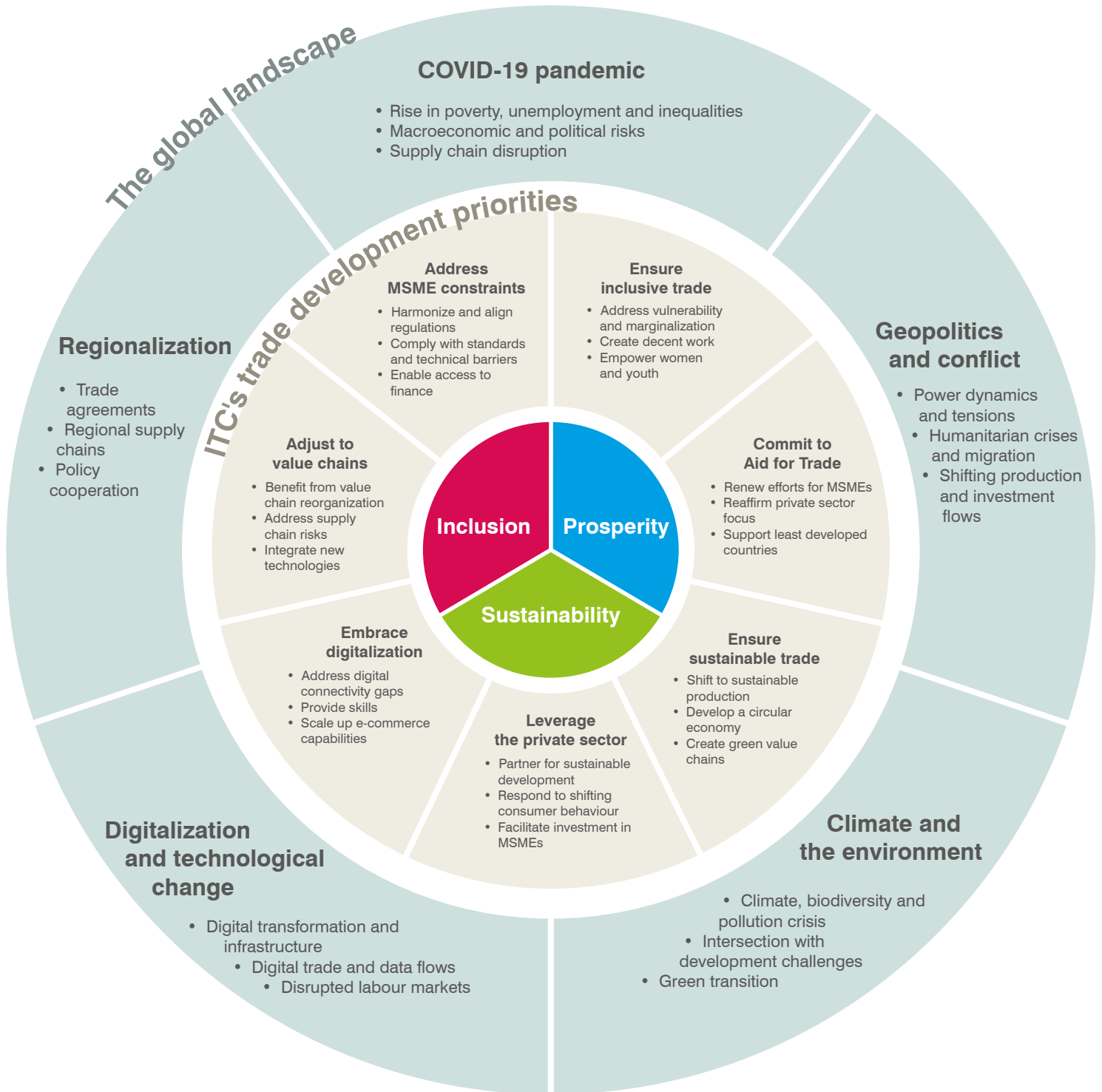
There is no internationally accepted definition of **MSMEs**. The term encompasses a broad range of definitions, which differ according to factors such as country, geographic region, level of development and business culture. Even within countries, definitions may vary or be non-existent. For comparability reasons, ITC classifies companies based on the number of full-time employees: micro (0 to 4 employees), small (5 to 19 employees), medium (20 to 99 employees) and large (100 or more employees). MSMEs are therefore companies with less than 100 employees. In the context of specific country interventions, ITC may also adopt the national MSME definition, if such a definition exists, in analyses and reporting.

*Source:* SME Competitiveness Outlook 2021 . [www.intracen.org/smecco2021/](http://www.intracen.org/smecco2021/)

In the period covered by the Strategic Plan 2022–2025, we plan to help build a world where economies are inclusive, sustainable and prosperous, one where the recovery from COVID-19 reduces poverty and creates resilience.

We see five main trends impacting the global environment in which ITC and its clients operate. These trends interact with other factors that will continue to influence the global economic and political environment like changing demographics, the youth bulge in many countries, increased inequalities, migration and urbanization. Figure 2 provides an overview of the global landscape and ITC's trade development priorities in the period covered by the Strategic Plan 2022–2025.

FIGURE 2. ITC's strategic context



## Recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in one of the most devastating health, economic and social crises in recent memory, severely undermining progress in attaining the SDGs and giving rise to new challenges for developing countries. COVID-19 has led to the first rise in extreme poverty in a generation, with an estimated additional 97 million people pushed back into extreme poverty in 2020. The pandemic has reinforced pre-existing social inequalities and has had a disproportionate impact on women. It has also confirmed that MSMEs are the lifeblood of economies. The global ITC COVID-19 Business Impact Survey showed that the pandemic affected virtually all companies, yet smaller companies were significantly more exposed than larger ones. They need adequate support to facilitate their adaptation and build resilience in the recovery.

*The COVID-19 pandemic has severely undermined progress in attaining the SDGs.*

---

As the world continues to recover from the pandemic, it has become clear that we will need to adjust and learn to help build better societies and economies. COVID has demonstrated that shared problems require shared solutions, and that ultimately there is no credible substitute for a multilateral system that works. However, despite successes, multilateralism appears to be constantly under threat.

Open economies will continue to be challenged unless we ensure that the recovery is sustainable in all aspects and lifts all boats. This will need to be done against a backdrop of pronounced supply chain disruption and macroeconomic risks related to inflation, debt and exchange rate fluctuations stemming from loose monetary policies and the fiscal stimulus packages implemented to support growth and household incomes during the pandemic.

## Geopolitics and conflict

Geopolitical forces are changing as power dynamics give rise to instability and tensions. There are diverging worldviews around political and economic models. This is leading to shifts in the organization and flow of global production and investment, partly due to supply chains being politicized. Industrial policies have become pervasive around the world and are key drivers of investment policy. Frictions are also arising over digital and technological development and regulation. These dynamics will have implications for industrialization and diversification strategies in developing countries. Export development and investment will need to be strategically linked.





*The transition to a sustainable and inclusive economy is a defining challenge of our time.*

In addition, conflict and humanitarian crises, with related migrant and refugee emergencies, permeate the landscape. 235 million people will need humanitarian assistance in 2021 and the last decade has seen an exponential growth of forced displacement, reaching nearly 80 million in 2020. The international community will need to engage where most effective, including in the nexus between trade, humanitarian assistance, development and peace.

## Climate and the environment

The transition to a green and inclusive economy is a defining challenge of our time. Climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution are growing threats. These environmental crises intersect with the many development challenges around the world. They compound risks and pressures .

Over 130 million people could fall into poverty by 2030 because of climate change alone, predominantly among vulnerable communities and regions. In addition, the effects of climate change could lead to mass displacement. Resilience to climate change must be strengthened. Protecting our planet must remain high on the global agenda.

## Digitalization and technological innovation

Digitalization took a quantum leap during COVID. The digital transformation will accelerate. It will reshape the development landscape as it continues to pervade and alter the manner in which individuals and firms interact with the world. Digitalization, technological innovation and the vast amounts of data generated can enable countries to leapfrog development. Yet the concentration of power among digital giants creates dependencies that affect competition, and issues like privacy, security and accountability raise new challenges.





The gaps and inequalities between those with and without access to technology are becoming wider. In the developed world the internet penetration rate is 87%, but just 47% in developing countries and 19% in the least developed countries (LDCs). Access to digital technologies and capabilities, and the hard and soft infrastructure that underpin them, will increasingly be critical to ensure opportunities are universally shared. Technological change, including artificial intelligence, automation and robotics, will have disruptive effects on labour markets that will need to be managed in countries at all levels of economic development.

## Regional integration and trade agreements

Regionalization is at the centre of many policy debates and will continue to shape international trade and economic relations. Most developing countries around the world are engaged in formal regional integration efforts. There are also numerous preferential schemes, particularly for LDCs. The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) aims to eliminate tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade across the continent and create a market of over 1.2 billion people. Regional trade agreements of various scope, size and depth have also been concluded or are being negotiated in Asia, the Caribbean, Central and South America and the Pacific.

When well designed and effectively implemented, these agreements can reduce costs and improve policy cooperation for the benefit of MSMEs. They can also enable the formation of and participation in regional value chains and support South-South trade and investment.

## The trade development environment

ITC's mandate is built on the principle that trade can be a potent vehicle for better lives. The relevance of trade for achieving the SDGs is explicitly recognized in the 2030 Agenda, which notes that "international trade is an engine for inclusive economic growth, job creation and poverty reduction, and contributes to the promotion of sustainable development." Member states agreed to "continue to promote a universal, rules-based, open, transparent, predictable, inclusive, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system under the World Trade Organization, as well as meaningful trade liberalization."

*Trade can be a potent vehicle  
for better lives.*

---

In view of the trends impacting the global environment, and in particular the huge backward step in reducing poverty and in achieving the global goals, ITC's work on MSME competitiveness, including for employment and income generation, is more important and relevant than ever. In addition, focus will be placed on the following factors so that MSMEs become even stronger vectors of sustainable development.

### Ensure more inclusive trade

The rise in poverty witnessed during the pandemic must be addressed as a priority. We must also better reflect on how different experiences of socioeconomic marginalization, whether due to gender, race, ethnicity, refugee status, sexual orientation, disability, age or other determinants, are linked to and affect each other. Over the past decade, ITC has placed a premium on ensuring trade supports the economic empowerment of vulnerable communities, women and youth. We will need to deliver more widely and effectively to contribute to the 2030 Agenda vision of leaving no one behind and to realize rights-based, sustainable development.

There are also groups of countries that confront particular trade development challenges. ITC will deliver at least 80% of its country-level assistance in LDCs, landlocked developing countries (LLDCs), small island developing states (SIDS), small, vulnerable economies (SVEs), conflict-affected countries and sub-Saharan Africa, of which at least 45% will be in LDCs.

## Place environmental sustainability at the heart of competitiveness

The triple planetary crises of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, with its resulting health, economic, social and political consequences, has triggered a sense of urgency to act. Efforts to produce and consume more sustainably should form essential elements of national development plans, business strategies and international cooperation.

## Leverage the private sector

Businesses are adapting to changes in their immediate environment, such as shifting consumer behaviour and preferences. Many are also seeking to respond to societal challenges and needs. The private sector is an important actor and partner to deliver the SDGs: as a financial contributor, investor, provider of market-based solutions and knowledge partner, and as a market for goods and services. ITC will continue to leverage partnerships with the private sector, including by exploring options for scalability and replication of successful pilots in other countries and regions.

## Address the barriers and constraints to MSME growth

The increased use of non-tariff measures and the plethora of competing private standards pose challenges for MSMEs. They often involve fixed costs, which have an impact on performance when spread over lower revenues. Digital standards, labour standards and environmental standards will become more prominent, as will the need to comply with public health measures. ITC can bring valuable technical, regulatory and advocacy support in these areas.

Building enterprise resilience will be integral to the post-COVID development strategy. MSMEs and their governments will increasingly need to look at the deeper, binding constraints to MSME growth and development. In particular, this involves access to finance. ITC will work closely with competent institutions in the area of MSME finance to ensure enhanced access to finance for MSMEs. In the realm of investment, ITC will place a greater focus on investment facilitation, supporting the development of investment attraction strategies and the institutional strengthening of investment promotion agencies in developing countries to nurture the potential and need for greater investment flows.

*The digital transformation must be inclusive.*

---

## Embrace digitalization and e-commerce

The COVID-19 pandemic and its after-effects will continue to transform our understanding of digital connectivity as a matter of economic survival. The digital transformation must be inclusive. Access will be critical and a holistic approach to digitalization is necessary. Leveraging the digital momentum will necessitate ITC to incorporate digital elements in all its projects and operations and strengthen the capacity of MSMEs to engage in e-commerce, cognizant of the dependencies created by market concentration. Digitalization will further increase the importance and relevance of the services sectors.

## Adjust to value chain reorganization

Value chains will continue to reorganize, perhaps through greater consolidation and regionalization, as lead firms adapt their sourcing strategies to manage supply chain risks, adjust to cost differentials, integrate new technologies that affect international competitiveness, respond to the changing geography of demand and comply with political pressure. Value chains are also becoming more knowledge-intensive, with labour cost arbitrage an increasingly less important factor in the choice of production location.

The pandemic has exposed the level of imbalance in some regions with regards to the manufacture of medicines, vaccines and medical equipment. It has also led to a supply chain crisis with huge backlogs, shortages and transport and logistical bottlenecks. This could lead to a rethinking of whether some fundamental goods and services need to be produced closer to home through near-shoring and reshoring. We can expect further disruptions to value chains of everyday goods and services critical to the global economy. The reorganization of value chains will also present opportunities that MSMEs in developing countries can benefit from, with ITC support.

## Commit to Aid for Trade

Aid for Trade must continue to be primary on the development agenda. Predictable funding that builds and supports business ecosystems, knowledge and capacities to develop through trade for the long run must be reaffirmed. Aid for Trade is an extremely powerful tool to build sustainable societies.

Aid for Trade funders must reaffirm their focus on the private sector in developing countries. The scope must be expanded to address green technologies, services and innovation. Committing to Aid for Trade will send a strong signal that the international community will renew efforts to build the competitiveness of MSMEs to grow through trade.



The value  
we bring







# The value we bring



## Our vision, mission and principles

### Vision

A world where trade builds inclusive and sustainable economies.

### Mission

ITC supports sustainable and inclusive livelihoods by boosting the competitiveness of MSMEs, placing trade-led growth at the centre of economic and social policy and building business ecosystems in developing countries.

### Guiding principles

ITC's work is driven by three objectives: inclusion, sustainability and prosperity. Together with the core values of the UN that are integrity, respect for diversity and professionalism, and the values of collaboration and coordination, they guide our decision-making.





## Our framework for MSME competitiveness

*MSME competitiveness is more important and relevant than ever.*

MSME competitiveness is at the centre of ITC's work and how we generate inclusion, sustainability and prosperity. A competitive MSME is able to offer a good-quality product or service that customers want, and at a reasonable cost. It has strong linkages with buyers, suppliers and peers, and is forward-looking, adapting to market trends through skills development, research and innovation as well as access to finance.

ITC has developed an analytical framework to understand MSME competitiveness and how it can be improved over time. It identifies the factors that influence the capacity to be competitive under three interrelated pillars.

The capacity to:

- 1.) **Compete**—the ability of enterprises to deliver output of appropriate quantity, timeliness, quality and cost to meet current market expectations;
- 2.) **Connect**—the ability of enterprises to build strong linkages with actors in the business ecosystem for successful enterprise operations and growth; and
- 3.) **Change**—the ability of enterprises to be flexible, agile and innovative and adapt to dynamic market forces, new opportunities and regulatory change.

Factors supporting the ability of MSMEs to compete, connect and change must be in place at the enterprise, business ecosystem and national levels.

Many of the factors driving MSME competitiveness are under the control of managers and employees at the **enterprise level**. For example, improved production processes can make MSMEs more efficient. Altering firm-level sales and distribution practices can enable them to connect better to buyers.

Improvements in business strategy and operational planning can give impetus to innovation that enhances the capacity to change in response to market opportunities.

The **business ecosystem** level refers to the immediate environment of an MSME. Actors in the business ecosystem play a role in enabling, nurturing and strengthening MSME capacities to connect, compete and change. **Business support organizations** (BSOs) advise, coach and support MSMEs to improve their performance. They also link MSMEs to new suppliers, buyers, service providers and peers, and represent MSME interests in policymaking forums. **Market partners**, such as lead firms in value chains, investors, service providers and other private sector actors, facilitate MSME development and growth by helping them improve their efficiency, broaden their network of connections and upgrade their linkages within value chains. Furthermore, market partners transfer knowledge, skills and technology to MSMEs, deepening their capacities.

At the **national level**, macroeconomic and governmental factors establish the fundamentals for the functioning of markets. National governments, in particular policymakers and regulators, set the rules of the game within which MSMEs can thrive, stay stable or fail. They define the conditions of trade, develop investment opportunities, spread business-relevant skills and create incentives and support systems for MSME development and innovation, thereby fostering MSME competitiveness. Bilateral, regional and multilateral agreements and market access conditions add to the rules of the game that MSMEs need to master.

ITC research has shown that MSME competitiveness and **MSME resilience** are closely correlated. Resilient enterprises have the ability to absorb shocks and react to new conditions through the development of situation-specific responses. As depicted in Figure 3, the competitiveness attributes that ITC supports also lay the foundations for resilience that makes MSMEs and entrepreneurs ready for the impacts of disruption today and tomorrow.

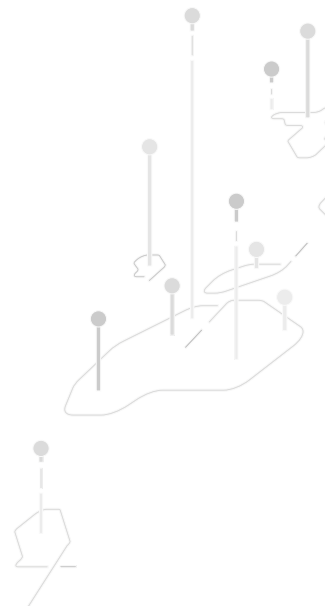
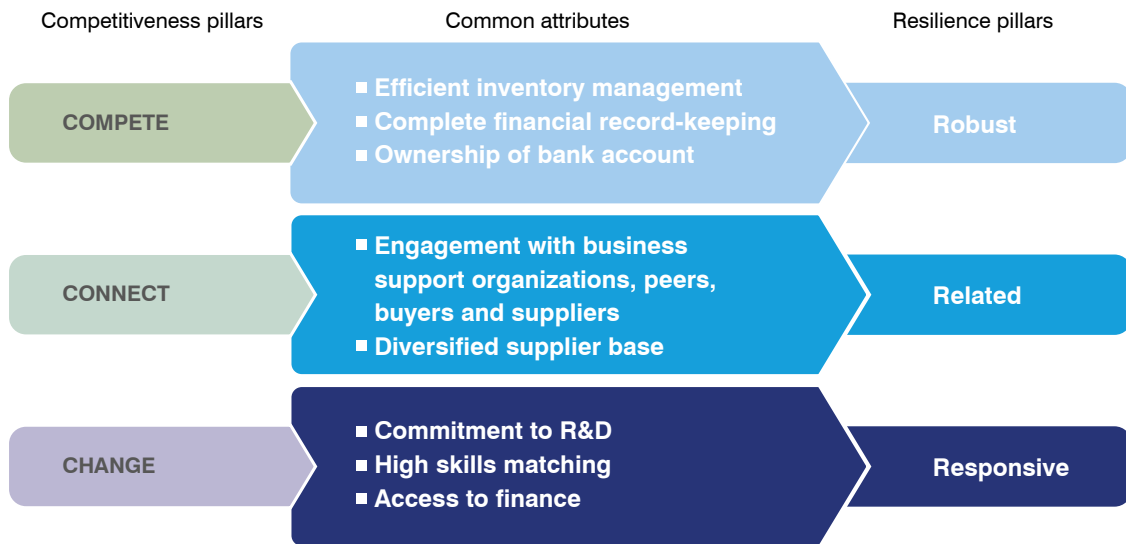
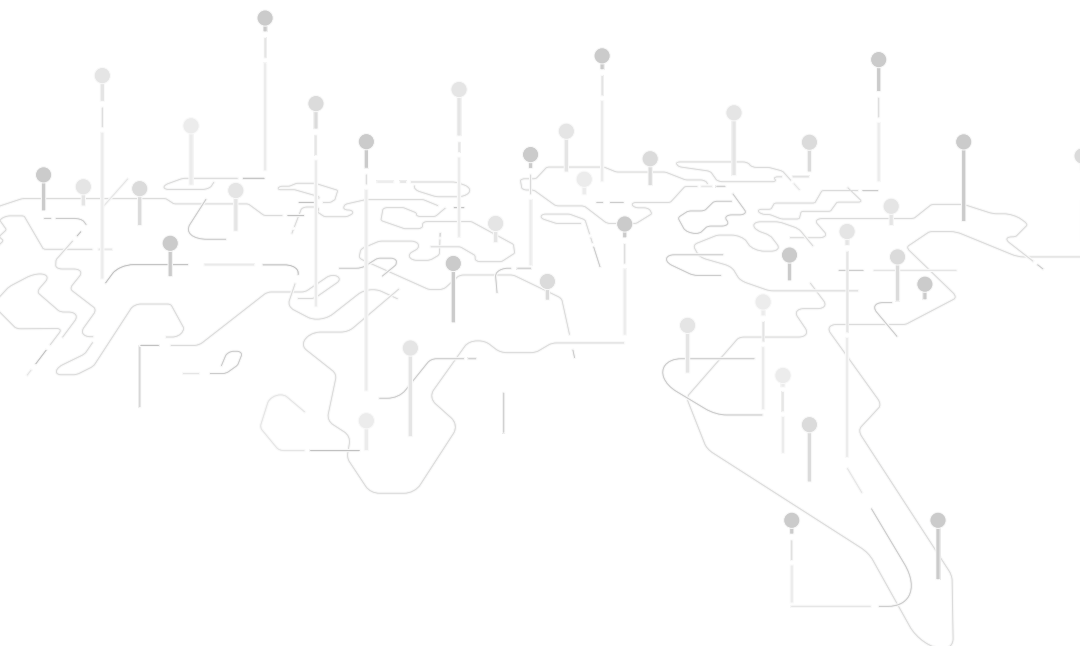


FIGURE 3. Competitiveness builds resilience



Source: SME Competitiveness Outlook 2021. [www.intracen.org/smeco2021/](http://www.intracen.org/smeco2021/)





## Our value proposition

As the joint agency of the WTO and the UN, ITC's mandate combines a focus on expanding trade opportunities for MSMEs with the aim of achieving sustainable development. Our value proposition pools a unique set of technical and operational capacities to respond to client needs.

### Trust

ITC generates trust as a neutral and inclusive organization.

- **Universal membership and neutrality.** All UN and WTO members are stakeholders of ITC. We objectively and impartially carry out trade-related technical assistance as a member of the UN development system.
- **Reliable procedures and protocols.** ITC's processes and UN rules reduce risk and ensure consistency and accountability towards organizational principles and UN values.
- **Integrity.** ITC recognizes that inclusion starts from within through our diversity and inclusion initiatives and our commitment to empowering employees and promoting an enabling work environment.

### Expertise

With our technical experts and networks, ITC creates knowledge and skills in unique ways to empower stakeholders with relevant capabilities, data, intelligence, advice and ideas.

- **Depth of experience.** ITC has a 58-year track record of connecting MSMEs to markets and building supportive business ecosystems. We evolve with time and maintain our competitive edge. Our distinctive feature is to offer integrated solutions for increased MSME competitiveness and trade—fostering policy, regulatory, managerial and entrepreneurial capacities at government, institution and enterprise levels, thereby creating opportunities, including for the least advantaged.
- **Effective projects.** ITC has strong project design and results-oriented delivery systems based on client-focused needs assessments and good country intelligence drawn from extensive local networks and country presence. We have a proven ability to show results.
- **Owning and understanding trade-related information.** ITC is the trusted reference for MSME data and trade and market intelligence that is relevant to all economies and the business community.

### Connectedness

ITC has the tools and channels to facilitate dialogue and support between and among MSMEs, ecosystem actors, policymakers, funders and partners.

- **Working with the public and private sector for MSMEs.** ITC engages the private sector in contributing to development. We bring together public and private sector actors to help craft a conducive business environment.
- **Advocacy and thought leadership.** ITC raises the development topics that matter with its partners and clients. We show how they connect with trade and MSME competitiveness and which decisions contribute most to economic, social and environmental impact.

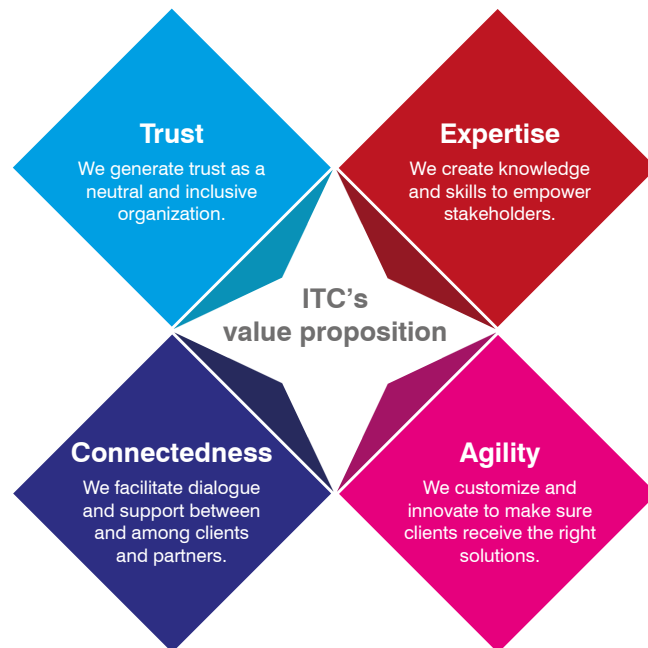
- **A purpose-built global network.** Country-based project offices, personnel, hubs, partner organizations and a family of technical consultants provide local knowledge, networks, credibility and reach.
- **Publications, events and platforms.** ITC’s publications, such as the SME Competitiveness Outlook, flagship events—World Export Development Forum, SheTrades Global, Trade for Sustainable Development Forum and Trade Promotion Organization Network World Conference—digital platforms, social media and other communication channels provide tailored information, learning and exchange.

## Agility

ITC adapts, customizes and innovates to make sure clients receive timely and bespoke solutions in the right way.

- **Nimble, adaptive and innovative.** ITC is capable of rapidly changing and adapting to the needs of its clients and partners. We believe in constant innovation and creativity. We embed new technologies in our project solutions and business processes wherever this can add value to our clients and drive innovation across ITC through our Innovation Lab.
- **Hybrid delivery models for best results.** ITC has the skills, networks and technology to deliver a mix of face-to-face and remote solutions depending on what works best.

FIGURE 4. Our unique value proposition



How we  
contribute











## How we contribute

### Our clients

*Different MSME groups need tailored solutions to enhance trade competitiveness.*

---

Our primary clients are **MSMEs**. We help MSMEs become competitive and capture opportunities and more value from trade. Business needs vary, depending on the socioeconomic situation of the enterprise owners and employees and where enterprises are on their journey towards competitiveness. The regulatory environment, immediate business ecosystem, geography, sector and market destination are all relevant.

We tailor solutions for MSME groups that differ in their specific needs, like informal and small-scale producers, aspiring exporters in the formal economy, MSMEs with potential for a higher proportion of exports in turnover, active exporters with demonstrated capacity to trade, enterprises that trade indirectly by integrating into value chains, and woman and youth entrepreneurs who face specific challenges.

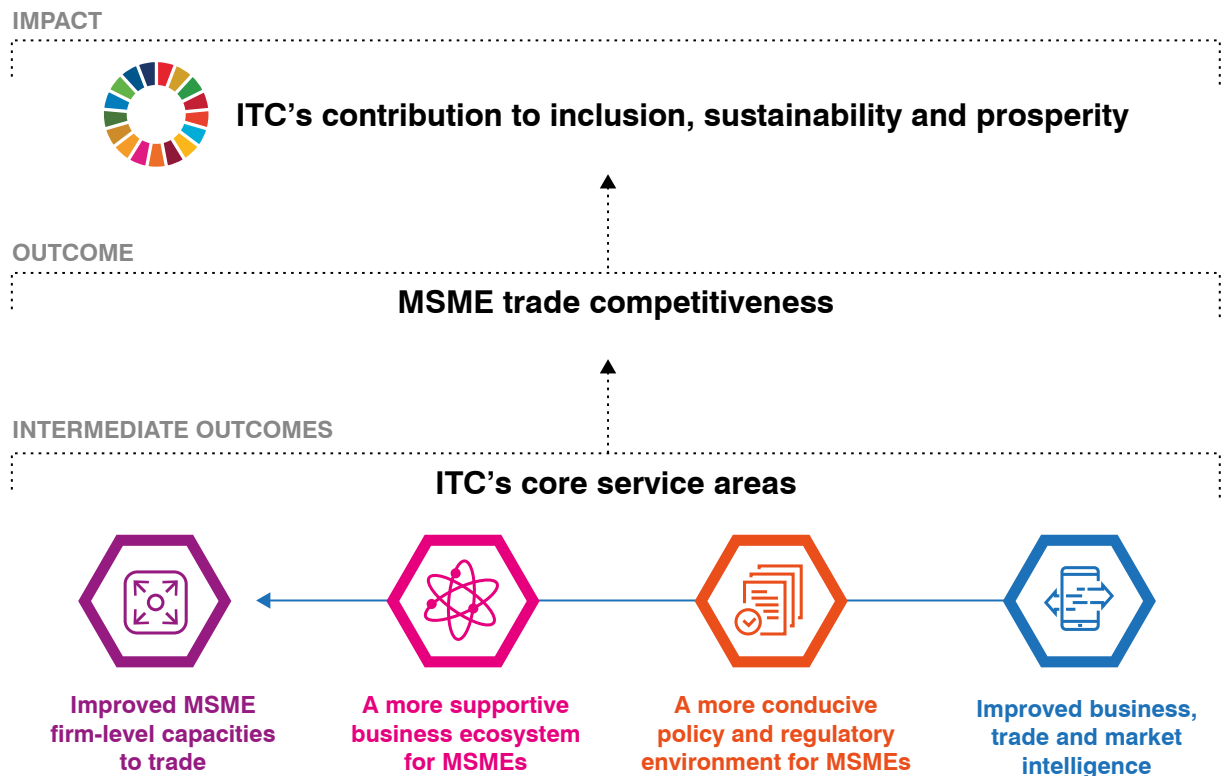
We also offer services to clients through whom ITC cascades and multiplies support to MSMEs. Key among our clients are **BSOs**. ITC works with regional, national and sub-national entities charged with providing trade and investment support services to their members, and the wider web of business service providers. Policymakers are also important clients. ITC supports national and regional government actors to develop integrated and comprehensive trade development strategies and make the policy and regulatory environment more favourable for MSMEs.

# Our core services

Over the period of the Strategic Plan 2022–2025, ITC will maintain a modular and customized approach to its service offer. Our overall objective is a prosperous economy, one where everyone has the opportunity to benefit. With inclusion and sustainability, it is an economy where poverty and vulnerabilities are addressed and that aims to provide decent work for all. We are ambitious in the change we aim to create through our work.

In line with the drivers of MSME competitiveness, ITC groups its core services around the three intervention levels that influence MSME competitiveness. Our fourth core service area, which is an implicit part of the MSME competitiveness model, offers public goods on business, trade and market intelligence that enable our clients to take informed and evidence-based decisions. The four areas of technical expertise have been developed and nurtured over the lifetime of the organization and are the fundamental building blocks for supporting our clients.

FIGURE 5. Simplified version of ITC's results framework





## Improved MSME firm-level capacities to trade

ITC addresses the managerial, strategic and operational needs of MSMEs and helps create market linkages.

Our approach to assessing and building firm-level capacities will become harmonized across ITC's focus areas, yet modular to address particular situations and needs. The tools and methodologies can be adapted to various degrees of trade readiness and maturity. Some support will be provided on a self-service basis, for example training modules offered through the SME Trade Academy, benchmarking tools and business community platforms, while other services will be provided directly or through partner organizations.

In this period, we will place emphasis on increasing firm resilience through improving management practices and identifying and securing network, market and value addition opportunities. In collaboration with partners, ITC will strengthen MSME capacity on how to access finance, which is crucial for resilience and business development. We will sharpen our focus on supporting entrepreneurship, innovation and digital literacy and enabling MSMEs to prioritize change areas.



## A more supportive business ecosystem for MSMEs

Businesses have a greater chance to succeed when they benefit from the inspiration, information, solutions and connections supplied by an ecosystem of support. The services provided in this ecosystem can cover market information and linkages, sector and country branding, new paths to markets,

bridge-building among enterprises, advocacy and representation of interests in public-private dialogues.

BSOs—ranging from trade and investment promotion organizations to sector associations, social enterprises, women business associations, business incubators, tech hubs, vocational training institutions, cooperatives and others—benefit widely from ITC benchmarking and diagnostic tools, and services that strengthen their governance and managerial, operational and strategic capacities. Going forward, ITC will work increasingly with networks of BSOs, including cross-border. This will involve developing joint strategies, addressing overlaps and gaps in the services provided and creating synergies that increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the ecosystem as a whole as well as the individual actors.

Over the plan period, ITC will support BSOs with particular tools that will help them expand their services in response to MSME needs such as: guidance in assisting MSMEs in implementing environmental, social and governance (ESG) factors, increasing the digital literacy and e-commerce capabilities of MSMEs, facilitating cooperation between enterprises and providing effective advocacy.

We will reinforce our efforts to leverage the benefits private sector partners bring to MSMEs. This will cover advising market partners on the value of doing business with smaller firms and networking multiple partners to provide complementary support. We will streamline our approach to engaging with market partners to become supportive of MSMEs—for example by developing long-term relationships and providing training and investment, working with market partners to adjust purchasing criteria and compliance standards and integrating policies that benefit women-led and youth-led suppliers.

ITC will continue to invest in multi-year engagements with committed, capable and accountable market partners and BSOs for local implementation with the potential for sizeable, lasting impact.

*ITC's core services have been developed over the lifetime of the organization.*



## A more conducive policy and regulatory environment for MSMEs

A conducive business environment is a precondition for a vibrant economy. It helps expand trade opportunities and reduces barriers to entrepreneurship, innovation and investment, all of which have a direct bearing on a country's competitiveness, economic diversification, resilience and sustainability. What a country can trade, the investment it can attract, the sectors it develops and the markets it is competitive in are hugely determined by the strategies it pursues, and the policies that it has in place. ITC's technical assistance in strategy design and policy can define the country's potential as a business partner, as an investment destination and as a competitive market player.



ITC works with government institutions and other stakeholders to craft inclusive and country-owned trade and investment strategies and monitor their implementation, and to make the policy and regulatory framework more conducive for business development. We support programme countries to negotiate multilateral, regional and bilateral agreements that shape trade and investment opportunities and to implement commitments, factoring in the business, especially MSME, perspective.

Understanding and meeting regional and international market demands, conforming to sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) requirements and other regulations and standards such as technical barriers to trade (TBT) and complying with policy and regulatory regimes are key for MSMEs to overcome cross-border trade challenges. ITC will continue to support the improvement of trade and investment facilitation regimes to reduce the compliance cost for business. We will also improve the quality infrastructure for trade by strengthening the SPS and TBT regulatory environment and enabling conformity assessment bodies to demonstrate compliance with technical requirements.

We will further mainstream inclusion and environmental sustainability in our public-private dialogues and strategy solutions, and assist countries to identify opportunities for increased competitiveness, value addition and diversification.



## Improved business, trade and market intelligence

To improve the competitiveness of MSMEs, enterprises, policymakers and actors in the support ecosystem must have access to information on trade dynamics, market access conditions and growth potential, possible business partners and business operations. ITC provides public goods that promote transparency and facilitate access to such information. In an environment where the sources, availability and value of data have increased exponentially, information providers must help stakeholders rise above the challenges and translate information into actionable intelligence.

ITC builds on its long-standing expertise in data collection and management to provide tools that support informed and evidence-based business decisions, policymaking and advocacy. We will continue to provide targeted data-driven and analytical products and services, such as ITC's flagship **SME Competitiveness Outlook** and the Promoting SME Competitiveness Series.



New information and cutting-edge research and analysis will be added regularly on topics at the forefront of global trade and development, including foreign direct investment, sustainability standards, digitalization and services trade regulations.

The **SME Trade Academy** will continue to update its e-learning offer in line with clients' evolving needs. It will also support our advocacy efforts for MSMEs and their contribution to development. We will increase the user-friendliness of our public goods and expand cooperation with other organizations to enhance data collection, dissemination and related activities.

ITC plans to test and develop artificial intelligence models to incorporate new sources of data, support the digitalization of paper-based market information and invest in providing real-time information in selected areas. This will contribute to the further development of one-stop trade information "shops" such as the **Global Trade Helpdesk**. ITC will also contribute to building new tools to allow MSMEs to assess their own competitiveness and obtain tailored business intelligence. We intend to increase the reach of our public goods by making more of them available in French, Spanish and other languages with partner organizations and by developing versions that can be embedded in national or regional information portals.



## Our impact areas

In response to the challenges we see in our environment, and to maximize the contribution of MSME competitiveness to inclusion, sustainability and prosperity, ITC will focus on five “impact” areas. The titles of these impact areas express the specific development objectives that each prioritizes. We will fully exploit our technical expertise in our four core services, and blend this expertise with specific tools focusing on the impact area. These can also be mainstreamed and combined. For example, increased competitiveness for women entrepreneurs in a specific sector can be pursued through expanding e-commerce.

By applying different specific development objectives to our core services, mainstreaming them and tailoring the composition of our services offer to the specific situation, we contribute to systemic change and take advantage of the opportunities we see for MSME development and growth. This new approach to structuring our interventions will increase the cohesiveness of ITC support, enhance our responsiveness, maximize the synergies of different lines of work within our mandate and improve our agility as an organization.

All ITC interventions are adapted and aggregated according to the needs of our clients. We will ensure that affected communities are included in the design of these solutions. We will also strengthen efforts to better reach priority target groups. All core services and focus areas are underpinned by a logframe and a theory of change that contribute to ITC’s corporate outcomes and to the SDGs.



## Sustainable and resilient value chains

Connecting MSMEs to value chains and helping them succeed is at the heart of ITC's mission. Rising demand for sustainable production and trade and disruptions caused by the pandemic have magnified existing imbalances and increased the vulnerability of MSMEs. In this context, we will maintain and sharpen our methodologies for building sustainability and resilience and enhance our approach for facilitating business models that rebalance the risk and value generated in value chains among all stakeholders.

ITC targets sectors where there is scope for improving incomes, employment and positive spillover to other sectors in the economy and which have the greatest potential to achieve positive change—especially in LDCs as well as for women, youth and vulnerable groups.

ITC creates networking platforms to convene all sector stakeholders and build partnerships along the value chain, including suppliers, lead firms, investors and technology providers in target markets. With these stakeholders, we co-create the most appropriate response for sector development based on a clear understanding of client aspirations, strengths and weaknesses, market dynamics and the potential to create quality jobs.

At sector and ecosystem level, we mobilize stakeholders from the government, BSO and private sector to develop strategies and build alliances. These partnerships bring sector stakeholders together to create more value for producers at origin. We apply a holistic approach to addressing policy, regulatory and procedural challenges “at, behind and beyond” the national border.

At the enterprise level, we reinforce quality and efficiency of supply and production, strengthen operational and managerial sustainability practices and drive service-orientation and innovation. Leveraging the Standards Map website and database and the Sustainability Map, ITC's **Trade for Sustainable Development** (T4SD) initiative supports MSMEs in understanding and adhering to social and environmental sustainability standards and benefitting from related market opportunities and potential cost savings. In addition, we improve import and export management practices and support MSMEs in their sourcing, marketing, branding and market linkages activities.

Going forward, ITC will enhance multistakeholder processes in selected sectors such as coffee to influence how value is created and distributed. We will scale up our work in services sectors, including logistics, and on helping MSMEs capture higher value services elements within good sectors such as after-sales or pre-production services. We will also improve analytics to better target systemic factors that improve the resilience of enterprises and allow vulnerable actors to benefit from trade. Our Value Chain Diagnostic methodology will be strengthened to identify opportunities and barriers in cross-country value chain development based on quantitative and qualitative



information. T4SD will continue to enhance transparency on standards and will increasingly work with market partners to achieve harmonization of these standards, making them more attainable for MSMEs. T4SD will also provide thought leadership in the emerging discussion on sustainability-related policy initiatives and associated value chain due diligence regulations.



## Inclusive trade: women, youth and vulnerable groups

Inclusion is essential if countries are to bridge economic, social and environmental gaps. The inclusion imperative has taken on greater salience due to the prevalence and the rise in inequalities across multiple dimensions witnessed during the pandemic. Women and youth entrepreneurs can unlock boundless possibilities for economic prosperity. ITC's work places emphasis on economic empowerment and creating entrepreneurial and remunerative opportunities for women, youth and vulnerable groups. We will differentiate these groups in monitoring and evaluating the impact of our actions and in risk mitigation.

ITC places emphasis on initiatives and projects that create opportunities for **women, youth** and **vulnerable groups**, understood as those living in poverty, small-scale farmers, rural isolated communities, indigenous peoples, individuals with disabilities, refugees, migrants and internally displaced people and LGBTQ+.

*ITC will focus on five impact areas where we can fully exploit our technical expertise in response to trade development priorities.*

ITC's **SheTrades** is a comprehensive initiative that brings together the full range of our service offers from a gender perspective. It addresses gender-specific barriers to market access, supports the upgrading of women-led businesses and women producers in value chains and improves ecosystems for women's entrepreneurship, working with local institutions and BSOs as SheTrades hubs. SheTrades Outlook provides an expanding repository of information to explore and guide how countries are addressing gender in trade policies and practices.

ITC's **Youth and Trade** initiative emphasizes entrepreneurship and employability. It positions young people in developing countries as a competitive force for the future. To achieve this, we provide tools for entrepreneurship development and establish connections with market partners. Work with incubators and vocational training organizations extends our reach and impact. The initiative is also building a large community of young entrepreneurs who benefit from a platform that offers mentoring, capacity building, networking and an amplified voice to achieve their ambitions for a decent job and economic success.



ITC initiatives with vulnerable groups include, for example, **Ethical Fashion** and **Refugee Employment and Skills Initiative (RESI)**. We will look at vulnerable groups more systematically when undertaking needs assessments and developing projects. The Ethical Fashion initiative will create jobs and livelihoods for artisans, designers and actors from the cultural and creative industries with a particular focus on meeting ESG standards in the fashion and lifestyle sector. RESI will expand its reach to at least 40 countries with a particular focus on creating digital jobs for displaced people and getting the private sector to participate more actively in refugee-inclusive businesses.



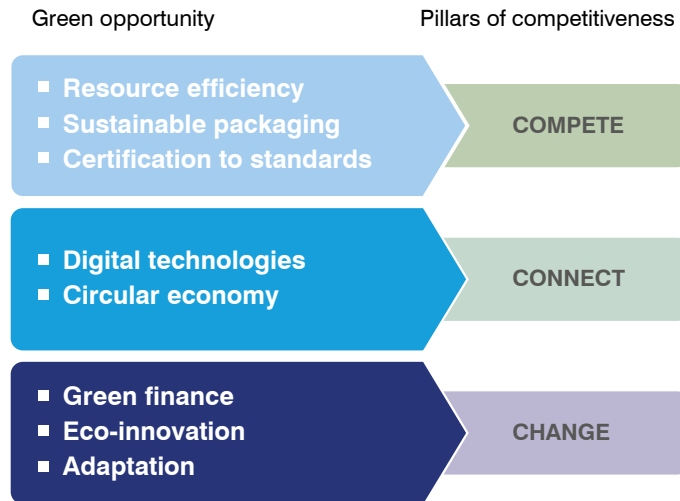
## Green trade

Climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution are posing an unprecedented threat to livelihoods, health and societies. Against this backdrop, environmental sustainability and climate resilience have become key determinants of enterprise competitiveness. Changing demands in international markets and new requirements and regulations are making a green shift of MSMEs no longer an option but a must.

While trade has traditionally been seen as a contributor to environmental degradation, it also forms an integral part of the solution. If the right rules and policies are in place, trade can enhance access to goods, skills and technologies for companies to reduce carbon footprints, use resources efficiently and build resilience to climate shocks. Trade can also boost innovation and entrepreneurial vigour, so that companies can contribute to building solutions for the triple planetary crisis and seize opportunities in sustainable markets, including certified products and climate services.



FIGURE 6. Compete, connect and change by going green



Source: SME Competitiveness Outlook 2021. [www.intracen.org/smeco2021/](http://www.intracen.org/smeco2021/)

Note: The figure shows that taking action on green opportunities can lead to improvements in all three pillars of ITC's competitiveness framework.

Through **GreenToCompete**, ITC reinforces its commitment to trade that is climate resilient, fosters a new bio-economy and promotes production cycles that are truly circular. It aims to strengthen local capacity to manage climate-related risks, promote the reduction, reuse and recycling of resources and harness opportunities from the bio-economy to restore and conserve biodiversity. As such, it supports MSMEs to gain a competitive advantage by “going green,” whilst at the same time balancing climate, developmental and economic goals.

ITC is committed to strengthening the capacity of people working in MSMEs, young ecopreneurs and support institutions. ITC will also work with enablers, such as service and technology providers, or with finance and market partners, including lead firms who provide supporting services to facilitate access to growing sustainable markets. ITC will also further engage with policymakers to create enabling business ecosystems and to shape trade policies that contribute to achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement. For this, our local network of GreenToCompete hubs as multipliers in supporting MSMEs will be expanded.

Finally, ITC will deepen the implementation of its guidelines on environmental mainstreaming, understood as the integration of environmental considerations into all ITC policies, planning and project activities to ensure the coherence and sustainability of our mission and practices.



## E-commerce

The world that has decisively shifted to conducting its business online. In 2019, global e-commerce sales reached \$26.7 trillion globally. This includes business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-consumer (B2C) sales, and is equivalent to 30% of global gross domestic product (GDP) that year. B2C e-commerce sales were estimated at \$4.9 trillion in 2019, up 11% over 2018. The pandemic has accelerated the need for MSMEs to master digital technologies for trade. Digitalization has offered a means of survival to some and created vast opportunities for the most resourceful. But many have been left behind. MSMEs struggle to develop their online presence and are inadequately supported to address the barriers. Many in the least connected countries, and especially in excluded communities such as those in rural areas, simply do not have access to the opportunities of the digital economy.

The digital revolution also means that flows of services and data are playing an ever bigger role in connecting the world economy. MSMEs in developing countries have opportunities to tap into new services markets.

ITC centres its efforts on the digitalization of trade. We will reinforce our focus on facilitating inclusive participation in e-commerce by simultaneously enabling firm growth and addressing challenges faced at the enterprise, business ecosystem and policy levels. Through the **ecomConnect** initiative, ITC will enhance its offer on MSME capacity development and the provision of tools and solutions for the development of e-commerce. We will contribute to improving business ecosystems by collaborating with market partners and equipping BSOs to support MSMEs in the digital economy, and support a conducive policy and regulatory environment for e-commerce.





## Regional integration and South-South trade and investment

ITC's interventions at the regional and inter-regional level will continue to focus on boosting regional trade and advancing **South-South trade and investment**. Our initiatives and projects support the implementation of regional economic integration initiatives in which developing countries participate by enhancing supportive regulatory and institutional environments, particularly focused on fostering regional integration, and by integrating MSMEs into regional value chains and connecting them with emerging trade opportunities.

ITC's **One Trade Africa** initiative will give thrust to support implementation of the AfCFTA, empowering African enterprises, especially women and youth-led, to access market opportunities from continental integration.

## Responding to country needs

ITC's support is demand-driven and rooted in the needs of partner countries. It combines global, regional and local perspectives. Responsiveness to these needs and local ownership are essential for effective and accountable development assistance. Our methodologies for assessing client needs will be streamlined through a more structured yet flexible model of needs assessment that will underscore engagement with local communities and emphasize agility.

---

*ITC support is rooted in the needs of countries and their populations.*

## Customized solutions in cooperation with partners

ITC provides customized solutions with adaptive tools and methodologies for interventions in support of MSME competitiveness, aligned with national objectives. The implementation of this approach is often delivered with local partners and organizations within and outside the UN system to leverage complementary resources and expertise.

## Involved on the ground

ITC has no permanent “brick and mortar” representation offices in client countries but has many project offices. Project personnel and local partnerships ensure that ITC efficiently delivers operations on the ground, quickly recognizes local needs and can adjust in a flexible manner. Collaboration with national stakeholders and partner organizations is essential for our interventions—for example through the “hub” concept where local BSOs take on a multiplier role. This concept, already piloted under the SheTrades, Youth and GreenToCompete initiatives, will be expanded. As experienced during COVID, the approach will strengthen ITC's local presence without creating heavy overhead costs of permanent country representations. It also enables ITC to be anticipatory and pivot where required in response to local needs.

Moving forward, ITC will enhance its field operations in programme countries with the support of UN country teams. With these operations becoming increasingly complex—working in contexts of vulnerability and fragility for example—ITC will produce a field operations manual and train country-based personnel. We will continue to transmit our expertise at regional and local levels to ensure sustainability over the longer term.

## Committed to the Paris Declaration and Busan Partnership

ITC is committed to the principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation. Greater

accountability towards programme countries is crucial for ensuring local ownership of project interventions. ITC will enhance transparency of its work through our Open Data Portal.

## Engaging with the WTO and the UN

As the joint technical cooperation and development assistance organization of the WTO and the UN, ITC engages with its parent organizations to contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

### The WTO

*ITC products and services contribute to the WTO-led Aid for Trade Initiative.*

---

All of ITC's products and services contribute to the WTO-led Aid for Trade Initiative, including the work conducted under the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF). Some interventions are directly linked to the WTO's operational activities, while others aim to build the supply-side capacity of developing countries from additional angles.

ITC's direct contributions to WTO initiatives fall under ITC's core services that pursue a more conducive national, regional and multilateral business environment for MSMEs. One strand of work supports the implementation of WTO agreements in developing and least developed countries. For example, ITC has been engaged in implementing the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement in over 65 countries. In close coordination with the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF), ITC also provides support to implement the WTO SPS and TBT agreements.

In collaboration with the WTO Accessions Division, ITC assists developing countries and LDCs in their bid for WTO membership and post-accession implementation of commitments. For the period 2022–2025, specific initiatives to support Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Iraq, Turkmenistan and Sudan are already planned.

ITC continues to support the WTO's informal Working Group on MSMEs and the informal Working Group on Trade and Gender, and contributes to WTO work on trade and environment. Means include building the capacity of developing country negotiating teams to conduct sustainability impact assessments for ongoing or new trade agreements and to take informed positions. This also applies to the topic of investment facilitation. ITC is active in the WTO discussions on e-commerce through a variety of mechanisms such as examining the practical challenges MSMEs face and assisting developing countries to align their domestic legislations with a view to enabling e-commerce.

Our work on direct contributions to WTO initiatives will respond to emerging priorities of WTO members and outcomes of the WTO ministerial conferences. We will also continue to engage in extensive joint research.



## The UN

ITC is an active participant and integral member of the UN development system. At the headquarters level, ITC works with other members of the UN Sustainable Development Group to take forward the systems and processes that strengthen UN reform.

At regional and country level, we work closely with other UN entities to ensure our interventions align with and are driven by country needs, and offer the best mix of complementary expertise. ITC will intensify its engagement with UN Resident Coordinators offices to support a coherent response as One UN.

We will increase our participation in the development of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCF) and Common Country Assessment (CCA) as well as in joint programming, monitoring and evaluation. We will continue to work as part of the UN Inter-Agency Cluster on Trade and Productive Capacity, which coordinates trade and development operations, and will explore additional opportunities for collaboration with UN agencies involved in trade and private sector development.

As described below, ITC also collaborates through technical partnerships with UN agencies working across different areas with whom we share complementary mandates.



## Partnering for purpose

Partnerships are critical to delivering the SDGs and are essential to fostering improved trade cooperation for MSMEs in developing countries. Further enhancing partnerships is even more important for this iteration of our strategy. This is due to the realization during the pandemic that solid project-level partnerships, in particular, were vital to ensuring that ITC continued to deliver operations on the ground.

Each partnership exists for a purpose, based on complementary expertise and a mutually agreed value proposition. These partners include UN agencies, the WTO, other multilateral and bilateral development agencies and an increasingly diverse range of public and private sector partners like multinationals, private sector associations, development banks and investment funds, professional bodies, non-governmental organizations, universities and foundations. Beyond partnerships for resource mobilization purposes with funders who are our partners in development, ITC will intensify these collaborations to better leverage access to technical and local knowledge, expertise and networks. Partnerships can help scale our work and increase reach.

---

*Partnerships are essential to foster improved trade cooperation for MSMEs.*

### Technical partnerships

ITC partners with a core group of international agencies with whom we share complementary mandates. This includes our two parent organizations, the WTO and UNCTAD, as well as other UN agencies working across different domains—e.g. agriculture (FAO), decent work and entrepreneurship (ILO), the environment (UNEP and UNFCCC), migration (IOM), international standards (ISO), digitalization (ITU), access to finance (UNCDF), sustainable development (UNDP), the private sector (UN Global Compact), industrialization (UNIDO) and tourism services (UNWTO). Building existing partnerships to deliver on priority areas will also be a focus. Efforts will be made to further concretize these existing partnerships through results-focused MOUs and/or joint delivery initiatives—e.g. with the Commonwealth Secretariat on SIDS. We will also develop new collaborative work streams with complementary agencies such as the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) to capitalize on good synergies.

ITC will also strengthen its relationship with the UN Office for Partnerships.

Partnerships with academia and think tanks stimulate ideas to solve trade and development challenges. This is particularly useful for research and data gathering. There will be a focus on developing more academic partnerships to help build training and research services adapted to local needs. We will continue to increase partnerships with institutions and organizations in the Global South.

Private sector partners provide insights, innovation, new practices and networks. They also act as gateways to value chains and markets. Improved business

processes, greater network power and higher engagement of MSMEs in supply chains are all benefits from working more closely with multinational enterprises. Existing collaborations have yielded good results. ITC will build and scale up these partnerships across different sectors and countries.

## Regional, national and local partnerships

ITC works with regional groups, governments and BSOs to cascade capacity building programmes at a local, sub-national or regional level. At the country and sub-national levels, we work with governments and local partners and collaborate with BSOs and other sectoral organizations such as women in business organizations and youth accelerators. By working with national and regional partners, we ensure the sustainability of results beyond project duration.

Project functions which can be decentralized to the field should be delivered locally. This implies an emphasis on assessing partner suitability and monitoring for results. ITC will increasingly work with reliable and proven local implementing partners and deepen our partnership with BSOs. ITC's guidelines and due diligence on implementing partners will be further refined. Where there is an overlap with the work of other organizations, our unique focus on MSME competitiveness for developmental impact will guide opportunities for collaboration rather than duplication.

## Understanding and building partnerships

ITC's strategic priorities will guide our partnership drive. Trust, credibility and positioning our unique value proposition will be central to building true partnerships. Our partnerships are also value-based to match with ITC's high standards regarding accountability, inclusion and social and environmental responsibility.

ITC approaches partnerships from many different perspectives. However, we will continue to align approaches, monitoring and evaluation and build a culture of transparency and knowledge sharing around partnerships. We will streamline the process for building and scaling new partnerships and better explore synergies between project-level and corporate partnerships through an internal knowledge sharing and transparency platform. Greater efforts will also be made to communicate the results and impact of ITC partnerships through campaigns and building an outreach approach around "partnerships4purpose."

ITC will undertake a stocktaking of its existing partnerships, including better understanding the different levels of depth, commitment and responsibility. Exploring the specific challenges that ITC project managers have with securing partnerships must also be a priority to gauge whether internal administrative arrangements around partnerships are fit for purpose in an environment where developing future partnerships is a necessary part of delivering agile and modern trade development assistance.

## Leading the global conversation

ITC has made great strides in leading the global conversation on MSME competitiveness, trade and development. Our reach is global and our audience is constantly growing. In 2022–2025, ITC communications and outreach will be driven by five priorities.

- **Brand:** Provide the means for ITC to amplify its visibility with funders and partners.
- **Broadcast:** Give stakeholders a voice and showcase impact.
- **Connect:** Strengthen digital communication tools and channels.
- **Engage:** Broaden our audience and expand our coverage.
- **Innovate:** Identify new ways to produce content and reach audiences.

Our focus will be on strategic issues—including women’s economic empowerment, youth and migration, the environment and digital connectivity. We will explore how our communications strategy could be updated to better engage with our audiences. We will also enhance communication on the value of our products and services.

Our goal will be to strengthen ITC’s position as the leading source of MSME and trade information for our main stakeholders. We will continue to provide relevant and targeted information for our many constituencies.

The COVID pandemic saw a steep rise in the use of our digital communication channels, and we will develop a user-centred digital environment as the main conduit for the information we produce. This more structured digital communication approach will see the creation through our new website of integrated digital communications.

We will continue to support the advocacy pursued under ITC’s globally available services that improve transparency.

Our events will be hybrid and thereby provide opportunities to expand our audience base and increase participation and interaction. Through our new website, we will develop a user-centred and integrated digital communications environment. Partnerships will continue to play an instrumental role in bolstering our communications and outreach.

Managing  
for impact  
and results





# Managing for impact and results



## Our purpose-driven identity

The COVID-19 pandemic has strengthened many individuals' motivation to contribute to inspirational goals. Organizations with a strong identity, which meet employee aspirations for purpose, have a motivated workforce that can be trusted with decision-making. Organizations that are clear on what they stand for are better partners and more effective.

ITC will continue to strengthen its identity driven by our vision, mission and principles. They will guide management decisions and each employee will be encouraged to consider how their work contributes to our vision and mission, and reflects the values of ITC.

ITC will ensure that cross-cutting development objectives, such as the economic empowerment of women and environmental sustainability, are pursued in all programmatic work. This is supported by a dedicated project design taskforce that will ensure that lessons learnt are adopted by new projects. ITC's mainstreaming guidelines for sustainable and inclusive trade, developed in 2019, will be regularly reviewed, and performance tracking will be further strengthened through the data management initiative.

The next iteration of the guidelines will integrate a rights-based approach for all, specifying practical ways to ensuring a meaningful participation of affected communities in the design, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of projects. In addition, ITC will enhance the focus on decent work and respect for human rights of women and populations in vulnerable situations in its interaction with MSMEs and enterprises in value chains.

ITC will invest further in capacity building for our employees to better understand how to implement, monitor and analyse cross-cutting objectives and create feedback loops for learning. Cross-cutting objectives are also important for **internal organizational decisions**.

*Organizations with inspirational goals and a clear identity are more effective.*



FIGURE 7. ITC guidelines to mainstream sustainable and inclusive development in project development

	STEP 1: Prioritize	STEP 2: Define	STEP 3: Design	STEP 4: Rate	STEP 5: Review
Task	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review the project scope, objectives, limitations and challenges to be addressed.</li> <li>Determine how deeply each focus area can be mainstreamed using the development marker framework.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Based on mainstreaming prioritization, define interventions to address significant issues in each mainstreaming focus area.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evaluate which outcomes, outputs and indicators are relevant for the project and embed them in the project approach and logframe.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Confirm the development marker rating based on the final design of the project.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review draft logframe with project design taskforce, project quality assurance office and/or mainstreaming focal point to align and confirm final logframe.</li> </ul>
Result	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Indicative level of mainstreaming determined for each focus area.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Significant issues related to the prioritized mainstreaming area(s) defined.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project approach and draft logframe designed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development marker rating confirmed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mainstreamed project logframe aligned in preparation for further approvals.</li> </ul>

Source: Mainstreaming sustainable and inclusive trade: Guidelines for International Trade Centre projects. [www.intracen.org/publication/Mainstreaming/](http://www.intracen.org/publication/Mainstreaming/)

## Gender equality, diversity and inclusion

ITC is committed to pursuing gender parity, women's empowerment, geographic diversity, disability inclusion and zero discrimination across all organizational areas and functions. Progress will be tracked through the UN-SWAP 2.0/3.0 and the new United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS) benchmarking and monitoring frameworks. ITC is determined to retain its top-performer status within the UN-SWAP network and to perform well on UNDIS.

In support of an enabling work environment that embraces diversity, eradicates bias, and has zero tolerance for any form of discrimination and harassment, ITC will promote institutional learning and accountability at each organizational level. Human resources management initiatives on leadership development, talent management, recruitment and employee training will include specific components to support diversity and inclusion. As such, initiatives will be aligned with the UN core values. ITC's Diversity and Inclusion Group will remain empowered to lead with advocacy, promote an intersectional approach to organizational culture and de-silo diversity and inclusion-related efforts. ITC's Staff Council will continue to pursue the well-being of all ITC personnel.

## Environmental sustainability

ITC is committed to contribute to environmental sustainability by integrating environmental considerations into all ITC operations. We will seize opportunities for digitalization and the reduction of our carbon footprint, including in the realm of travel. ITC will also implement all dimensions of the Strategy for Sustainability Management in the United Nations System (2020-2030), which cover five environmental impact areas and six management functions. Indicators, commitments and objectives are assigned to all.

# Our organizational strengths

ITC's value proposition combines four organizational strengths. These are not static assets. They have to be carefully nurtured and continuously developed with strategic intent.

## Trust

Accountability and transparency are indispensable for maintaining trust. Accountability means that ITC and its employees are answerable for all decisions made and actions taken and are responsible for honouring commitments. Transparency means making information about ITC's work, rules, results and other areas accessible to stakeholders, both proactively and on demand.

ITC will continue to build trust through maintaining and strengthening the following tools for **accountability** and **transparency**.

## RESULTS-BASED MANAGEMENT (RBM)

ITC will maintain a strong focus on results, starting at project design. Decisions on our project portfolio and resource allocation will be consistent with the priorities outlined in the Strategic Plan 2022–25, and all ITC processes, projects and services will contribute to its implementation. Monitoring and regular reviews to validate the Strategic Plan objectives and implementation choices are necessary in a constantly changing operating environment. This will be facilitated by an implementation framework, planned to accompany the final version of the approved Strategic Plan. Its role is also to be a bridge between the high-level medium- to long-term strategic objectives, and the annual operational plans that serve to operationalize all priorities of the strategic plan. In some areas, it will be necessary to develop or update sub-strategies, for example for the areas of partnerships and resource mobilization. UMOJA and ITC's project portal will be complemented by new RBM tools—a new management dashboard and data collection tools developed under the ongoing data management initiative to provide easily accessible, more granular and timely information. Where poor performance is identified, it will be assessed and addressed.

## INDEPENDENT EVALUATION

Evaluations support accountability and learning. During the 2022–2025 period, ITC's Independent Evaluation Unit (IEU) will assess progress and demonstrate accountability of our contribution to achieving inclusion, sustainability and prosperity. The unit aims to distil information and recommendations for

*ITC's organizational strengths are developed with strategic intent.*



senior management, governing bodies, staff and partners to improve the relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of our interventions.

The IEU will keep updating its methods and focus on maximizing the utility and use of evaluations for learning. At the country level, the unit will continue its efforts to contribute to national evaluation capacities. ITC will integrate evaluative learning more systematically into programmatic and resource allocation decisions. Senior management will work with the IEU to ensure that the schedule and scope of evaluations are responsive to key areas of need, while giving the IEU full discretion in final decisions on the evaluation programme.

### **RISK MANAGEMENT**

Taking risks, as per ITC's risk appetite statement, combined with good risk management, is essential for the credible stewardship of the resources entrusted to ITC. With the benchmarks of the UN Reference Maturity Model for Risk Management, ITC aims to move from the "established" to "advanced" level. This will imply, in particular, further staff training, a strengthening of the corporate risk management function and an advanced enterprise risk management platform.

### **REPORTING**

ITC will maintain its transparent reporting, with the annual report of the Executive Director as the main means for reporting on Strategic Plan progress to the Joint Advisory Group (JAG) and member states. The biannual reports to the Consultative Committee of ITC Trust Fund (CCITF) will continue to provide comprehensive information on implementation of the annual operational plans, and programme and budget reports will inform our parent organizations about ITC's performance in relation to plans. ITC is readily available to outside scrutiny through its reporting to the International Aid Transparency Initiative and the new ITC open data website. Given the quality of ITC's expenditure data, OECD-DAC has invited ITC to report on its main databases on development finance: the Creditor Reporting System (CRS) and Total Official Support for Sustainable Development (TOSSD), which will further increase transparency.

### **INTERNAL CONTROLS AND EXTERNAL OVERSIGHT**

Internal controls ensure that results are achieved in line with organizational policies, regulations and integrity standards. ITC will continue employee onboarding and training measures, including for its field personnel, to ensure knowledge of rules and compliance. We will keep aligned with the updating and streamlining of regulations and rules by the Secretary General. Mechanisms such as the Board of Auditors and Joint Inspection Unit (JIU)

provide oversight on behalf of the member states, and the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducts internal audits, investigations and organizational evaluations. Their reports and ITC's management responses are made publicly available.

## Expertise

In 2024, ITC will celebrate 60 years of experience in trade-related technical assistance, continuously guided by a focused mandate. This has allowed the organization to attract experts and build unique knowledge. ITC expertise must continuously adapt to effectively address a changing environment. Efforts to bolster expertise and thought leadership will focus on three pillars.

### TALENT MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

For its core work in supporting clients, ITC relies on six types of expertise that need to be maintained: technical and country expertise, project design, project management, administrative support and management expertise. Our talent management strategy, with ongoing investment in training, will attract, retain and build human capacities, skills and behaviours that reflect ITC's strategic objectives. It will include a focus on performance management that incentivizes knowledge creation, collaboration and learning. Among other outcomes, the strategy will strengthen internal coherence. ITC will increase investment in digital skills to accelerate the adoption of digital technologies, where useful.

### INNOVATION

ITC aims to foster creativity and innovation to solve client and organizational needs. The Innovation Lab, a grassroots collaborative hub for experimentation and learning, will continue to serve as a pillar for supporting our innovation culture. It provides training, networks and other resources to help intrapreneurs succeed, regardless of where they work. ITC will also maintain its second pillar for supporting innovation—Window 1 allocations to fund the development and pilot of new tools and approaches, in view of strategic priorities.

### DATA MANAGEMENT INITIATIVE

The data management initiative aims at efficiently collecting, sharing and analysing corporate data sets in order to turn data into a strategic asset that expands ITC's knowledge of its clients and intervention results. Data collection and processing will be further harmonized, standardized and automated. Aligned with the UN Data Strategy, ITC will foster data savviness across all corporate functions and systematically manage data security, privacy and risks. ITC will engage in the conversation on data management at UN level and seek partnerships to leverage expert knowledge and skills in support of its data management effort.

## Connectedness

Connectedness allows ITC to magnify the scale, scope and impact of its interventions and help its clients to navigate complexity. It is essential to applying a systemic approach involving MSMEs, BSOs, buyers and suppliers and policymakers in shaping integrated solutions.

Connectedness results from our unique position between the UN and WTO, our approach to partnerships, our communications and our presence in Geneva, New York and programming countries. Geneva HQ ensures we are connected to the decisions, influencers and networks of the UN, WTO and broader trade and development communities. Our events, outreach, market intelligence and thought leadership benefit from global and local perspectives and channels. Our representation in New York ensures connectedness to the wider UN family. ITC has a growing percentage of personnel based outside Geneva. We are also investing in a network of hubs and local partner organizations that provide services on our behalf.

Going forward, ITC will continue to build this deliberate business model of combining global and local outreach. The strengthening of specialist hubs, local partner organizations, expert consultants and country-based staff will provide more local knowledge, networks, credibility, reach and impact. There will be further investment in platforms and campaigns that inform and support topical communities, peer learning, multi-channel dialogue and outreach to diverse constituencies.

## Agility

As an agile organization, ITC can respond fast and effectively to changes in the marketplace. We encourage experimentation and innovation and regular review of business practices.

ITC will reinforce factors of agility that have served it well, not least since the COVID-19 outbreak, including project-level responsiveness to client needs, fast adoption of technologies and rapid engagement with new types of partners. We will also prioritize the following areas:

- **Streamlining and acceleration of internal processes**, without compromising on their quality or compliance with UN rules and procedures. ITC will implement an agenda to review and adjust resource-consuming practices and processes for efficiency gains and flexibility.
- **Hybrid delivery models that combine remote and in-country delivery**. ITC will aim for continuous improvements in customization and scale in each area of work and for diverse clients.

- **Decentralized decisions.** ITC will empower employees to delegate decisions with accountability for outcomes. This will be supported by directions on purpose, values and priorities as well as transparency. At the same time, ITC management will reduce and mitigate drivers of siloed behaviour.
- **Technology.** ITC will apply technologies that facilitate efficient corporate organization and communication.

## Resource mobilization

*Resource mobilization efforts will support the priorities laid out in this Strategic Plan.*

Continued efforts in securing contributions are indispensable to deliver tangible results. Our resource mobilization efforts will focus on maximizing flexible and predictable income.

ITC needs its three funding sources to sustain its intervention model: the regular budget, unearmarked or soft-earmarked contributions (Window 1) and earmarked voluntary contributions (Window 2). Each funding source unlocks distinct value. While activities funded by Window 2 contribute to many of the visible results, they would not be possible without core management functions, programme development, global public goods and innovation, all funded via the regular budget and Window 1.

The external funding environment is evolving, partly owing to the economic and fiscal impacts of the pandemic on member states. Key changes include greater competition, a reprioritization in official development assistance, the decentralization of resource allocation decisions to programming countries, UN reforms and efforts to strengthen UN-pooled funds and the increasing weight of new development actors.

ITC will anticipate these changes through an **updated resource mobilization strategy** suited to our times that will deepen relations with traditional funders and diversify our funder base.

We will continue to engage with those funders that have actively supported our operations through customized engagement strategies, and we will explore options for cooperation with new funders interested in supporting our work. This will include working towards eligibility for multilateral pooled funds where we are not yet recognized, such as the Global Environment Facility. We will also continue to monitor closely the horizon of new funding modalities and changing approaches to how development finance is provided. ITC will actively seek to sustain and grow financial contributions from additional public and private sector partners—including governments, bilateral and multilateral partners, UN joint programmes and pooled funds, foundations and businesses, and through innovative in-kind contribution arrangements.



Efforts to leverage in-country funds and develop resource mobilization partnerships with entities that have complementary strengths for joint projects will be important elements of this approach.

All resource mobilization efforts will be consistent with ITC's core mandate and the priorities laid out in the Strategic Plan 2022–2025 that aim to create a more inclusive, sustainable and prosperous future.

ITC believes in and will advocate for the immense value of Aid for Trade. It is indispensable for achieving the 2030 Agenda, especially now, when the impact of COVID-19 has reversed many development trends.

## **Strategy development process**

ITC launched an inclusive strategy development process from June to November 2021, engaging with member states, employees, partners, clients and the broader trade and development community. We are indebted to all for their contribution in helping to build consensus on the strategic directions set forth in this document.

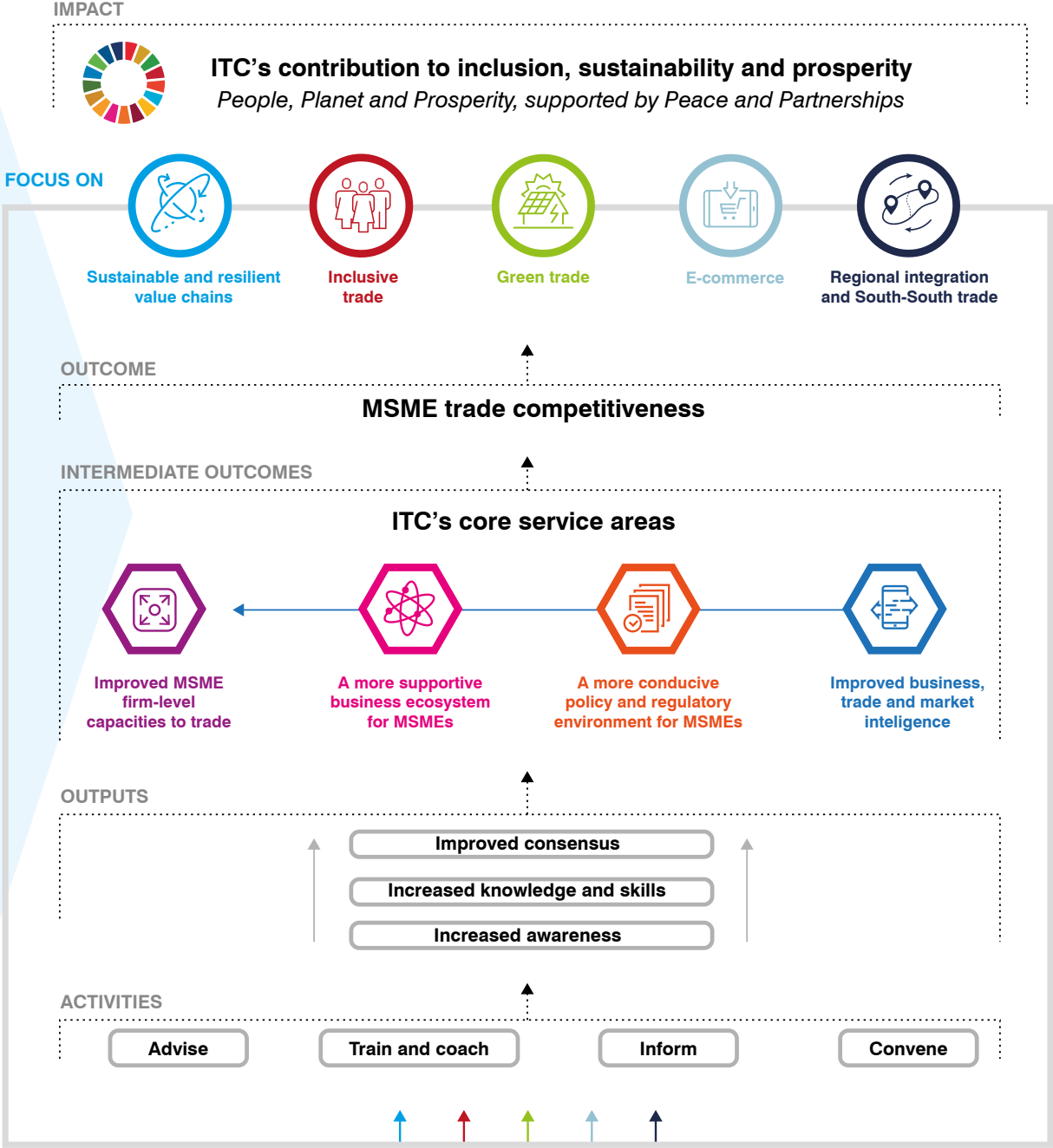
The process included multiple discussions among the Senior Management Committee and facilitated discussions across ITC. It involved detailed corporate document review, in-depth working groups and an online survey which collected numerous valuable responses.

This draft strategy document also reflects the inputs and recommendations provided by stakeholders following wide distribution of a detailed consultative document.

Annex



# Annex: ITC's results framework and corporate indicators





## IMPACT

### Contribution to People, Planet and Prosperity, supported by Peace and Partnerships

Qualitative and quantitative reporting on improvements in ITC projects and operations for:

- Prosperity: # of jobs created, supported or maintained; changes to value chains that support development
- People: Focus on women, youth, and other vulnerable groups (the poor, refugees, IDPs, people with disabilities)
- Planet: Sustainable resource management, sustainable production and consumption, climate change action
- Peace: ITC \$ delivery in conflict-affected countries
- Partnerships: # of non-financial agreements with partners that commit to extending services to MSMEs

## OUTCOME

### MSME trade competitiveness

- # of MSMEs and entrepreneurs that transacted international business
- \$ value of international business / investment transacted
- # of MSMEs that have accessed new markets (including through e-commerce)

## INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES

### Improved MSME firm level capacity to trade

- # of MSMEs and entrepreneurs that made specific changes to their business in order to improve their competitiveness

### A more supportive business ecosystem for MSMEs

Business support organizations

- # of cases in which BSOs improved their services for the benefit of their members
- # and % growth of MSMEs and entrepreneurs that used BSO services
- # of business (support) ecosystems created, supported or maintained

Market Partners

- # of changes made by market partners in favour of MSME competitiveness

### A more conducive policy and regulatory environment for MSMEs

- # of policies, strategies, rules or regulations, improved with business sector input, in process of agreement
- # of policies, strategies, rules or regulations, improved with business sector input, and promulgated or implemented

### Improved business, trade and market intelligence

- # of users that report having benefitted from ITC's core offering – global public goods (GPGs), research and analytical products
- # of new markets/countries/sectors that became more transparent through coverage by GPG data or ITC's trade intelligence products

*Note:* MSMEs, entrepreneurs and trainees will be segregated by gender and age. Information on other aspects of vulnerability / inclusiveness (poor, refugees, internally displaced, disabled) will be based on project context and /or self declaration.

*Note:* Enterprise changes, BSO services improvements and policies, strategies or regulations will be tracked in view of their links to social and environmental improvements, new application of digital tools.





**Street address**  
 International Trade Centre  
 54-56, rue de Montbrillant  
 1202 Geneva, Switzerland

**P:** +41 22 730 0111  
**F:** +41 22 733 4439  
**E:** [itreg@intracen.org](mailto:itreg@intracen.org)  
[www.intracen.org](http://www.intracen.org)

**Postal address**  
 International Trade Centre  
 Palais des Nations  
 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland

The International Trade Centre (ITC) is the joint agency of the World Trade Organization and the United Nations.