

## **ITC's Statement at the COMESA's 36<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee**

1. The International Trade Centre (ITC) is a joint technical cooperation agency of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the United Nations (UN). ITC, in its aim to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the UN, actively engages to generate sustainable incomes and livelihoods, especially for poor households by connecting enterprises to regional and global markets. ITC also enables small business trade success in LDCs, developing and transition economies by providing, with partners, inclusive and sustainable trade development solutions to the private sector, trade and investment support institutions and policy makers.
2. ITC bases its integrated solutions around the following focus areas where the organization has a comparative advantage:- (1) trade and market intelligence for SME competitiveness; (2) supporting regional economic integration and South South trade; (3) connecting SMEs to value chains and trade & export markets; (4) strengthening trade and investment support institutions; (5) promoting and mainstreaming inclusiveness and green trade; and (6) building a conducive business and policy environment through public and private dialogue.
3. On 17 February 2015, ITC signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the COMESA which includes cooperation in the design and implementation of trade-related technical assistance interventions aimed at promoting:-
  - i. **Regional market integration:** development of agriculture value chains and investment promotion, internal markets consolidation and simplified trade regime, trade facilitation and private sector development;
  - ii. **Industrialization:** through the development of regional and national industrial clusters for product transformation;
  - iii. **Policy and regulations:** regulatory harmonization, standards and institutional policy for trade development;
  - iv. **Technical cooperation and resource mobilization** with COMESA in supporting country projects for agriculture and rural development;
  - v. **Strengthening of regional trade support networks**, including businesswomen networks, for improved policy dialogue and coordination;
  - vi. **Enhancing enterprise level competitiveness in priority clusters** such as agriculture, cotton-to-clothing, leather and leather products value chains;
  - vii. **Intra-regional services sector:** mapping and development;
  - viii. **Sector strategy design and implementation** across countries;
  - ix. **Improving the trade facilitation environment** for SMEs in the region.
4. As it has been the case since many years, ITC is implementing a number of trade-related technical assistance projects in COMESA member states in areas that include the enhancing of SME competitiveness, value chain development, trade facilitation, institutional capacity building. In Q3 2016, ITC started projects under the Regional Integration Support Mechanism (RISM) in Zimbabwe, Zambia and Madagascar.
5. ITC wishes to see its future cooperation with COMESA strengthen further and looks forward to be considered as an Implementation Partner in upcoming projects under the EA – SA – IO 11<sup>th</sup> EDF Regional Indicative Programme - COMESA sub-envelope.