

# SPECIAL MESSAGE

## Pamela Coke-Hamilton Executive Director International Trade Centre (ITC)



The International Trade Centre (ITC) is the development agency of the World Trade Organisation and the United Nations uniquely dedicated to micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) and their integration into regional and international trade. MSMEs represent over 70% of employment worldwide and are the backbone of our societies. They play a key role in the growth of economies in developing countries and in boosting social welfare, especially for women and youth.

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Trade is a fundamental lever of inclusive growth. This is why ITC works with stakeholders across all levels to make this a reality, from businesses to business support organizations to policymakers. Our multi-pronged approach targets capacity building, competitiveness, integration in global value chains, and value-addition. We also work at the multilateral level by advocating for the interests of MSMEs in trade negotiations and the implementation of trade agreements.

We have seen over the last year how the COVID-19 pandemic has devastated the world and threatens to send millions into extreme poverty. This has been especially challenging for developing countries who have seen significant reductions in export earnings and government revenues, and an increase in unemployment rates. As a result, many developed countries have devised strategic plans to adapt to the changing landscape of the national

and global economies. Institutions such as ICMA Pakistan play a key role to help to deliver tangible benefits to local stakeholders by providing the necessary knowledge, technical support, and training to create an efficient, competitive, and supportive business environment. This is a valuable service that can boost productive capacity and entrepreneurship in Pakistan in the long term.

ITC has sought to pivot its operations to meet these new global challenges and ensure business continuity for MSMEs in developing countries. International trade plays a critical role in achieving the SDGs, and in this Decade of Action, our approaches must align. The lessons learned from the pandemic have shown us that the future of trade must be inclusive, green, and sustainable. This sentiment is also reflected in the Pakistan COVID-19 socio-economic response which identified trade as a part of its path to recovery.

We are especially proud of our recently launched 'Growth for Rural Advancement and Sustainable Progress' project in Pakistan. This project seeks to reduce poverty, provide opportunities for decent work and promote sustainable and inclusive growth through the development of rural MSMEs in the provinces of Sindh and Balochistan. This project works in tandem with Pakistan's overarching goals for economic reform focused on increased trade and investment. ITC supports Pakistan's path to recovery and its strategy to promote structural transformation.