International Trade Centre

European Union

Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
Ministry of Commerce and Industries

ITC and EU launch initiative to boost trade and economic growth in Afghanistan

Kabul, 29 November 2016

ITC, European Union and Government of Afghanistan seek to strengthen Afghan trade capacities

(Kabul-Geneva) – A new EU trade related assistance initiative for Afghanistan that aims to speed up the country's integration in regional and international commerce was announced in Kabul today. The initiative – **Afghanistan: trade for economic growth and regional cooperation (ATEG)** – will lay the foundation for strengthening the country's trade capacities and building a business-friendly environment, with a long-term goal of Afghanistan – and its regional partners – becoming a vibrant regional economic hub.

Funded by the European Union, the €4.5 million ATEG project will use trade as a lever for economic growth, job creation poverty reduction and enhanced regional cooperation. The three-year project, which follows the high-level Brussels Conference on Afghanistan held in October 2016, will be implemented by the International Trade Centre (ITC) in close collaboration with the Ministry of Commerce and Industries. In its initial phase the project will build the capacity of policy makers to negotiate, formulate and implement trade policies and strategies, including by ensuring private-sector participation in these processes.

The launch of the project follows a detailed needs-assessment mission carried out by ITC in 2015. Over the life of the project ITC will focus on developing and implementing a national export strategy for the Government of Afghanistan with a special focus on agricultural exports and provide training to government officers on trade policy and trade negotiations. ITC will also support the establishment of a National Trade Facilitation Committee, building the capacity of SMEs to comply with cross-border procedures and requirements, and improving mechanisms needed to ensure a constructive public-private dialogue.

The intervention is recognition of ongoing efforts by the Afghan government to use trade as driver of economic growth, regional cooperation and stability. Afghanistan acceded to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in July 2016 and has placed trade and regional economic cooperation at the heart of its development strategy. Its first action after acceding to the WTO was to ratify the body's Trade Facilitation Agreement.

Speaking at the launch event in Kabul, the EU's Ambassador to Afghanistan HE Excellency Franz-Michael Skjold Mellbin said: 'The EU is determined to ensure that Afghanistan can benefit from the opportunities arising from greater participation in international trade and enhanced regional economic integration. This project will help improve national capacities to design and implement a coherent export strategy and it will help develop and implement a regulatory framework that will guide the reform agenda of the Afghan Government to improve trade links and cooperation.'

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

P: +41 22 730 0111
F: +41 22 733 4439
E: itcreg@intracen.org
www.intracen.org

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

HE Excellency Humayoon Rasaw, Afghanistan's Minister of Commerce and Industries, said: 'International trade is a crucial tool to ensure economic growth and job creation. Trade is a means for Afghanistan's to move away from dependency on aid and on a path towards a future built on engagement with other countries that will help bring stability to the country and to the region.'

ITC Executive Director Ms. Arancha González said: 'Situated at heart of the old Silk Road, Afghanistan is a country shaped by trade. It is a country with huge untapped resources and, by putting in place the right policies and mechanisms, we aim to build a better and more stable Afghanistan that once again finds it place in the global trading system.'

To ensure sustainability, local ownership and long-term impact of the project, ITC will be working with a range of partners, including the private sector, non-governmental organizations, academia and civil-society organizations based in Afghanistan.

Notes to the Editor

About ITC – ITC is the joint agency of the World Trade Organization and the United Nations. ITC assists small and medium-sized enterprises in developing and transition economies to become more competitive in global markets, thereby contributing to sustainable economic development within the frameworks of the Aid-for-Trade agenda and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. For more information, visit www.intracen.org. Follow ITC on Twitter: **@ITCnews**

For further information

Jarle Hetland
Media Officer, ITC
Phone: +41 22 730 0145
Mobile: +41 79 582 91 80
E: Hetland@intracen.org

EU Media Adviser
Abdullah Yadgare
Mobile Phone: +93 (0) 700 17 35 48
E-mail: abdullah.yadgare@eeas.europa.eu