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Switzerland and ITC launch programme to boost textile and clothing exports from five countries

(Geneva) – Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan are expected to benefit from expanded exports of clothing and textiles under a joint programme launched today by the Government of Switzerland and the International Trade Centre (ITC).

The four-year Global Textiles and Clothing (GTEX) programme is intended to help the five countries build competitive, sustainable businesses and to create long-term employment, especially for women and young people.

“This new programme will continue the excellent partnership between ITC and Switzerland and help us deliver in a crucial sector that employs many women and youth in developing countries,” ITC Executive Director Arancha González said at today’s launch ceremony. “While improving the social and environmental sustainability of enterprises, the programme will address competitiveness issues and tackle many of the obstacles enterprises face in trying to get to market.”

The undertaking is funded by 9.5 million Swiss francs (about \$9.3 million) from the Swiss Government and will be implemented by the Geneva-based ITC in close collaboration with the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO).

“We are pleased to start this innovative programme in cooperation with ITC and the five beneficiary countries in Northern Africa and Central Asia,” said Marie-Gabrielle Ineichen-Fleisch, State Secretary of SECO. “With its comprehensive approach working with enterprises and sector institutions, GTEX will ensure the creation of lasting capacities in our target countries and sustainable results. In addition, we see great potential to link to Swiss industry players to the benefit of both our partner countries and Swiss industry.”

The undertaking will focus on building institutional capacities at the national level as well as working closely with domestic enterprises, in order to ensure lasting progress within the participating countries’ textile and clothing sectors.

Global trade in textiles and clothing stood at \$728 billion in 2016. Out of this, the five target countries of the programme contributed \$8.9 billion of exports, with exports from Egypt and Morocco amounting to approximately \$3 billion each and Tunisia \$2.5 billion. While all beneficiary countries have a strong production base, product and market diversification, as well as customer service orientation, would need to be addressed to maintain and expand exports.

A global component of the programme on ‘knowledge management and strategic linkages’ will complement the national-level efforts. It will support enterprises to learn from regional and global best practices, including on social and environmental sustainability, enabling them to upgrade their operations. In addition, this component will encourage peer learning and regional and global networking, by linking enterprises and institutions to initiatives that will shape the future of the sector. These strategic linkages will reinforce country-level efforts to create additional value and employment.

The project aligns with several of the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including contributing to women’s full and effective participation in business, trade, and equal opportunities (SDG 5), and the integration of developing-country small and medium-sized enterprises into global value chains and markets (SDG 9).

Also present at the launch were ambassadors from the five beneficiary countries.

Notes for the Editor

About ITC

The International Trade Centre 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

About SECO

The Economic Cooperation and Development division is part of SECO's economic competence. We use this expertise specifically for international cooperation, benefiting from direct access to leading economic organisations, government offices and central banks. We focus on advanced developing and transition countries facing specific challenges in regard to development policy. Our programmes are aligned with national and international development strategies. We systematically apply quality assurance, risk monitoring and results driven management as part of our programmes. This is how we make sure that our measures actually have an impact. We obtained ISO 9001 certification in 2001. Since 2007 we have also contributed to efforts to reduce social and economic disparities in the enlarged EU. This contribution falls under Switzerland's European policy and is not part of development cooperation. www.seco-cooperation.ch/about

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