**Statement by the Netherlands Dedicated Session Trade Facilitation 21-10-21**

* The Netherlands favors an open, rules-based global trade and investment system, as trade and investments are engines for economic growth and creation of jobs.
* We believe that all countries should benefit from trade and are therefore among the major supporters of Aid for Trade, with programs that achieve impact on the ground and with a longtime focus on trade facilitation and a new focus on digitalization.
* Today we want to specifically emphasize the opportunity of digitalization in Trade Facilitation to give sme’s better access to the benefits of trade
* Improving sme’s economic opportunities and removing barriers to their participation in digital trade is a key component in pursued of economic development and achieving fairer and beneficial outcomes for all.
* We strengthen digital trade and the position of sme’s in e-commerce, such as via Centre for the Promotion of Imports (CBI), ITC, TradeMark East Africa, the Trade Facilitation West-Africa program and the UNCTAD eTrade for Women, eTrade for all and pilots for implementation of the eTrade Readies in Benin and Uganda.
* Also in support of at-the-border reforms such as improving customs procedures, through
  + Paperless trade and automation solutions the efficient flow of goods and services,
  + digital payments,
  + digital customs connectivity,
  + with special emphasis on inclusion and facilitation of (informal) small-scale cross border trade to reduce poverty and inequality through enhanced trade.

[ITC Netherlands Trust Fund V]

* A practical example, we would like to share, is the Netherlands Trust Fund program, managed by the ITC. Where we recently launched the fifth 4 year program.
* I would therefore like to give the word to Anders Aeroe, from the ITC, who will explain how the NTF program contributes to Trade Facilitation with a special focus on digitalization.