

WTO World cotton day – Partners’ conference (h.14.30-16.30)

Announcements of prospective support in favour of cotton value chain development

Excellences, delegates, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

First of all, let me express our gratitude to WTO for inviting UNIDO to join the celebration of the World Cotton Day. This celebration represents a major recognition by the United Nations General Assembly on the importance of the cotton as a global value chain.

As we all know, the cotton value chain is extremely diversified and the relevance of the cotton industry goes much beyond single countries’ boundaries. Therefore, it is imperative that development partners, governments and private sector work closely together to create effective synergies, in line with principles of the 2030 Agenda. On this spirit, we would like also to express our gratitude for the Partners’ conference: a platform where UNIDO is willing to fully contribute to with its technical expertise.

Indeed, in the past two decades UNIDO has invested lots of resources in the cotton industry and accumulated a vast experience, specifically in Africa. UNIDO has been supporting the cotton sector at a macro, meso and micro level, from promoting policies and quality standards, to facilitating access to markets and developing skills of technicians and operators.

In this regard, I would like to refer to the “West African Quality Programme”, a regional programme which aimed at establishing a reliable quality infrastructure to facilitate intra-regional and international trade. The programme led to the development of an “African” quality standard for cotton fibre, the publication of a quality manual and the building of capacity of local laboratories to measure and calibrate cotton fibre. The “West African Quality Programme” started in 2001 and soon will give birth to a new programme in West Africa.

Looking ahead, UNIDO is currently developing a large intervention in collaboration with the Government of Burkina Faso. This ambitious project will support the development of sustainable cotton production in Burkina Faso, including organic production, with the scope of mitigating environmental risks and promoting circular business models for all sub-sectors of the cotton value chain.

UNIDO has also initiated another innovative initiative called “The Egyptian cotton project” to support a sustainable and transparent Egyptian “white gold”. The project focuses on building effective Public-Private Partnerships, involving governmental institutions, local companies, international manufacturers, brands and retailers. More details on this initiative are available at the UNIDO booth and will be presented at the side event right after the Partners' Conference. You are all kindly invited to join UNIDO at the event on Technology and Innovation.

As indicated, UNIDO holds technical competence in modernization of the entire cotton value chain, including the textile and garment sectors where most of the value added and employment is generated. One of UNIDO's most recent examples in such work is a project in Armenia. Through the application of innovative approaches such as umbrella branding, digital industrial design, product range and quality upgrading, in 3 years the sector tripled exports in terms of value and the employment at beneficiary enterprises has doubled.

Finally, at UNIDO we strongly believe that the sustainable development of the cotton value chain is anchored on the promotion of innovative IT technologies, including the use of blockchain. That will lead the cotton industry to develop new business models based on industry 4.0, circularity, transparency, and sustainability.

Once again, we would like to reaffirm our full engagement to deepen our collaboration with UNCTAD and ITC as well as with other global, regional and national partners. UNIDO will be available to fully share its experience in quality infrastructure, technology and logistic innovation, policies and standards, digitalization, resource efficiency and circular economy, skill development and partnership with the private sector: all key elements to the sustainable development of the cotton value chain and its by-products.

We hope that with our contribution we'll all ensure an inclusive and sustainable business development, able to efficiently respond to local economies, sector employees, environmental standards, national and international markets, as well as consumers' needs.