

Press Release

Win-win: India ITME Society & SITA-ITC partnership connects the Textile Sectors of East Africa and India virtually

On Friday 23 and Saturday 24 April 2021, the International Trade Centre (ITC), a joint agency of the United Nations and the World Trade Organization, in partnership with India International Textile Machinery Exhibitions (ITME) Society, hosted TextilesExchange 2021. It was a virtual trade fair for the textile industry where Indian and East African textile businesses met potential trading partners and capitalized on market opportunities. TextilesExchange 2021 is under the framework of Supporting Indian Trade and Investment for Africa (SITA), a project funded by the United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO).

Mr S. Hari Shankar, Chairman, India ITME Society, gave the keynote address at the opening ceremony that took place on Friday morning. ***“This TextilesExchange 2021 platform is enabling buyers and sellers to interact based on their mutual business interests. And which will hopefully result in long-term business relationships”***, he explained.

Over 700 business to business (B2B) meetings were planned for the event, and many more happened during the two days of the event. Close to 250 businesses from Ethiopia, India, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda are using the TextilesExchange platform to:

- present their company's products,
- source inputs,
- exchange knowledge, ideas and technology, and
- create vibrant business networks in the process.

Mr Govind Venuprasad, Coordinator, SITA, explained the rationale at the opening ceremony: ***“Covid-19 pandemic with ensuing travel restrictions has limited opportunities to network through physical trade fairs and exhibitions; this has been to the detriment of business and trade. We shall overcome and this that occupies us today will be a distant memory soon! In the meantime, SITA is attempting to fill the gap through virtual means, by hosting this online Trade Fair for the Textile Sectors of India and East Africa”***

On the first day, the participants also interacted with international experts in technical seminars on access to finance and import compliance regulation, two of the biggest challenges for East African Textile companies. Giving Rwanda's perspective at the opening ceremony, Ms. Kanzayire Theopiste, Chairperson, Apparel Manufacturing Group (AMG) of Rwanda, highlighted access to finance as a major challenge for their members, 99% of whom are women. Her remarks were followed by a presentation by Ms. Anda Valla, SITA Project Officer, who announced the launch of SITA's Access to Finance guide that seeks to address this problem. This practical guide will assist companies to get connected to financial institutions.

Three quarters of the East African TextilesExchange delegates were women. Since Textile and Apparel is a women-led sector, growing and strengthening the textile value chain is key opportunity to economically empower women and contribute to sustainable development at the same time. With this in mind, Ms. Sheena Frida from the Kenyan Fashion Council, emphasized the timeliness of the TextilesExchange event, since the sector has been particularly badly hit by the Covid-19 pandemic.

As well as connecting companies with each other to do business, TextilesExchange2021 served as a platform for insights on technology transfer and other partnerships including investments between Indian and East African companies operating across the textile and apparel value chain. In particular, TextilesExchange 2021 focuses on machinery, fibre, yarns, fabric, trimmings and accessories.

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Notes for Editors:

- Some background information on SITA:

The Supporting Indian Trade and Investment in Africa (SITA) initiative was launched in 2015 in Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania – in response to the untapped potential for greater South-South cooperation with India. SITA is funded by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office of the United Kingdom and implemented by the International Trade Centre. Across five priority sectors, SITA responds to the specific challenges that businesses in these countries face with a view to promote economic growth and Sustainable Development, using knowledge, technology and trading opportunities from India.

- The Twitter handles of the relevant organizations mentioned in this release are:
 - @INDIA_ITME
 - @ITC_news
 - @ITC_SITA
 - @FCDOGovUK
 - @AMG_Rwanda
 - @KenyaFashionCo1
- India ITME Society are SITA's longstanding partners and the co-organizers of the event.
- SITA's Access to Finance guide was launched at TextilesExchange 2021 and is available here: <https://www.india-itme.com/elibrary/individual-research-paper/?id=784>

Full recording of the opening ceremony of the event:

<https://stream.mux.com/bntotucMj8ZLR0100p2ankgAy3pfw5X5evY86zOiMevUo/high.mp4>

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