

Geneva, 17 December 2018

**GOVERNING BOARD**

**David Runnalls**

Chair  
Former President & CEO  
International Institute for  
Sustainable Development  
Canada

**Arunabha Ghosh**

Treasurer  
CEO  
Council on Energy, Environment  
and Water (CEEW)  
India

**Beatriz Leycegui Gardoqui**

Partner  
SAI Law and Economics  
Former Undersecretary of  
Foreign Trade  
Mexico

**Pascal Lamy**

President Emeritus of the  
Jacques Delors Institute, former  
Director-General of the World  
Trade Organisation, former  
European Commissioner and  
Vice-President of FEPS  
France

**Ricardo Meléndez-Ortiz**

Chief Executive  
ICTSD

**Jacqueline Muna Mussiitwa**

Founder and Managing Partner  
Hoja Law Group  
Zambia

**Mari Pangestu**

Professor of International  
Economics  
University of Indonesia  
Former Minister of Trade  
Indonesia

**Distinguished Fellows**

**Mark Halle**

Executive Director  
IISD European Office  
Founding Chairman, ICTSD  
United States of America

**Sylvia Ostry**

Distinguished Research Fellow  
University of Toronto  
Canada

**Statement from the Governing Board**

The International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development (ICTSD) operated out of Geneva as a thought leader and source of knowledge for the global trade and development community for 22 years. Launched at a controversial time for the trade system, just before the Ministerial Conference of the WTO in 1996, through highly innovative methods and approach, it rapidly moved on to deliver a foundation for shaping informed discourse, evidence-based argumentation and agenda-setting on global trade and sustainability. ICTSD offered a unique mechanism to complement and enrich global economic governance by providing voice to many otherwise excluded, independent thinking and trusted dialogue platforms.

ICTSD was forced to cease operations on November 30, 2018. Our decision responded to the loss of reasonable expectation of income and the inability of the ICTSD, given its nature, to raise relatively modest funds to bridge finance to fund a period of deep reforms. These reforms stemmed both from our commitment to strengthening ICTSD as well as interaction with our largest core funders on the modernization of governance and internal systems. Since the announcement of closure, the Board of ICSTD and its senior executives have been focused on collaboration with the authorities to ensure an orderly wind-down of the organization.

In the past month, hundreds of academics, thought leaders, students and journalists from around the world have expressed their recognition to ICTSD for its service and frustration with the decision to suspend operations, until then, an unthinkable outcome.

Given local media coverage, speculations on social media and unidentified sources sharing confidential draft documents that present a deceitful and unbalanced story, the entire board of ICTSD would like to ensure clarity on the following:

1. It is with deep regret that we had to decide on ICTSD 's closure given a funding model that we were in process of reviewing. Considered by many as a public good, ICTSD relied on donor funding, operated without an endowment or membership base, was not allowed to build reserves and was not a subject of commercial credit. Although financed by many others for specific projects, it concentrated its core funding on the development cooperation agencies of the UK (DFID), the

Netherlands, Sweden (Sida) and Denmark, to whom we remain grateful for their support throughout the Centre's highly productive life.

2. The ICTSD has never had a more critical role than now: in the midst of an upheaval of the global trade system. As a result of its closure several constituents, many in developing countries, that the Centre helped to provide voice and to inform and offer capacity systematically, may suffer the most from the discontinuation of ICTSD-operations.

3. The executive management and board of ICTSD responded constructively to the requests from UK-DFID to strengthen internal systems and controls and diversify funding. As such the decisions by its major donors not to provide the necessary funds to finance the reforms was unexpected.

4. The board governed with strict principles of transparency and integrity. No reason to open a formal audit or investigation was found. The board recognizes that the organization could be improved. We dispute the overall negative image promoted by some, based on a draft review report and smearing the dedicated and strategic work and outstanding performance of hundreds of individuals in Geneva and around the World, part of the ICTSD teams led by its Chief Executive throughout its 22 years.

5. ICTSD's successive Governing Boards have been composed of highly respected and experienced leaders since 1996. The current Board stands by its decisions. The Board will remain supportive of the causes that ICTSD advanced with such passion and competence, and we are hopeful that when the dust settles on the unfortunate closure of the organization, its partisans, enthusiasts and staff will find new support to continue their battle for an updated global trade system that promotes and delivers on sustainable development.

*Geneva, 15 December 2018*