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## Women entrepreneurs from Africa and Asia connect with UK companies to diversify their supply chains

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(Manchester) – UK companies explore business opportunities with 50 women-led businesses from ten countries – Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, Bangladesh, Mongolia, Nepal and Pakistan – following a trade mission in Manchester.

As part of the trade mission, British buyers looking to diversify their supply chains met women entrepreneurs working in the fresh and processed agrifood, handicrafts, textiles and apparel, handicrafts, beauty, information technology, and business process outsourcing sectors, through a series of business-to-business meetings.

The trade mission from 10-12 February helps strengthen the UK's manufacturing sector by providing British companies with reliable potential suppliers and reducing production costs, directly supporting the Made in UK strategy to promote high-quality British exports and drive domestic industry growth.

Participating women-led businesses visited UK companies relevant to their sectors, and attended information sessions with sector-specific associations, standards bodies and partnering chambers of commerce to bolster their knowledge of trends, the business environment and UK market entry requirements.

Six of the ten participating delegations are from the global network of SheTrades Hubs—resources centres for women entrepreneurs that are co-owned by the International Trade Centre and host instructions—including in Ghana (Ghana Export Promotion Authority), Bangladesh (Small and Medium Enterprise Foundation), Kenya (Absa Bank Kenya), Nigeria (Nigerian Export Promotion Council), Rwanda (Private Sector Federation – Specialized Cluster), and Mongolia (Mongolian National Chamber of Commerce and Industry).

By collaborating with key stakeholders and enhancing bilateral connections between the UK and the 10 represented countries, the trade mission, company visits, and market-information sessions support sustainable trade for women's economic empowerment.

UK Minister for the Indo-Pacific, Catherine West, said: 'Women entrepreneurs across the world face greater challenges to export compared to their male counterparts, with fewer connections to buyer networks and limited access to key market information.'

'Our SheTrades Commonwealth+ programme aims to counter that – connecting women entrepreneurs from across Asia and Africa to British businesses, increasing choice for British consumers and supporting domestic growth. It's a win-win.'

[Pamela Coke-Hamilton](#), Executive Director of the International Trade Centre (ITC), which led on the organization of the trade mission with the Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce and other UK-based chambers, said: 'We're laying the foundation for women entrepreneurs to meet directly with buyers, scale up their businesses and access new markets, benefiting from global trade opportunities. This trade mission will enable collaboration and knowledge sharing to drive gender-inclusive economic growth, led by the women entrepreneurs – a priority we share with the UK.'

Susana Córdoba, Head of International Trade at Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce, said: 'We were delighted to host this key international event in Manchester. The contacts that have been made here between British businesses and those from across Africa and Asia will strengthen our global ties and lead to future commercial success.'

This trade mission was organized by the UK Government-funded SheTrades Commonwealth+ Programme, in collaboration with the Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce, and in partnership with the London Chamber of Commerce, Greater Birmingham Chamber of Commerce, and West and North Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce.

## Notes for the Editor

**About the Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce** – The Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce is the largest accredited Chamber of Commerce in the UK, with over 4,200 members. With headquarters on Deansgate in Manchester City Centre, the Chamber represents each of the 10 Local Authority areas in Greater Manchester. The Chamber is committed to promoting commerce, community and culture in our city region.

The Chamber is an independent not-for-profit and exists to support businesses and create the best climate for the region to thrive. The Chamber is the recognised voice of business for Greater Manchester - often lobbying on behalf of businesses on key issues such as transport, taxation and business regulation. The Chamber works closely with the Mayor's office and national Government counterparts.

The Chamber supports businesses from micros, right through to large corporates, from networking events to cost management support - the Chamber is here to help businesses grow sustainably.

**About the SheTrades Commonwealth+ Programme** – Funded by United Kingdom International Development and launched in April 2018, the [SheTrades Commonwealth+ Programme](#) aims to foster an enabling gender-inclusive business ecosystem by promoting inclusive policy and data and engaging business support organizations, private-sector partners, and women-led businesses in the Commonwealth countries and its key trading partners, including the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) region.

**About the International Trade Centre** – ITC 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](http://www.intracen.org).

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