



## Interview with newly appointed ITFA Board Member, Johanna Wissing

### Q1. Why did you decide to stand for the ITFA Board elections?

ITFA is one of the key trade finance industry bodies next to organisations like the ICC, BAFT and others, and as such plays a crucial role in bringing together industry players for an open dialogue to address market developments, move new initiatives forward and overall ensure that the voices of key industry participants are heard.

Looking back at my decade long career in trade finance I have been close to ITFA from the very start of my learning about trade, and have benefited a lot from the networking opportunities and education provided through events, the website content and engaging with experienced trade professionals. I was very happy to support the creation of the ITFA Young Professionals network, now known as the ITFA Emerging Leaders, back in 2014 to focus on attracting fresh talent to trade finance and ensuring continuity and bridging the looming generational gap as experienced professionals are retiring from the industry. The original network consisted of ca. 20 people and has grown to way over 100 now. I was also closely involved in the original set up of the Fintech Committee run by fellow board member Andre. Having gained these experiences and seeing how ITFA has constantly evolved, grown and is engaging in very important topics driving the development of trade finance like innovation, regulatory developments and people I had been keen on joining the board for a while and therefore was very happy to be given the opportunity to stand for election.

### Q2. What are your ambitions in your new board position?

I want to work with the other board members to continue focusing on relevant topics and to drive forward the further development of the industry as a whole. What that means to me in practise is: staying abreast with market developments which is specially relevant during volatile times like now, working with regulators to address key issues concerning trade, and encouraging new entrants to trade to engage, educate and network.

My specific role will be to focus on ESG which is a new mandate, and one I am very excited about. Driving positive ESG outcomes, i. e. environmental, social and governance, is not a “nice to have”, but a business imperative in today’s world. Every corporation, public body, MLA, NGO and individual has a role to play and there are numerous initiatives and programmes under way to promote ESG matters and work towards achieving the sustainable development goals. My ambitions in this respect are to educate, engage with other industry bodies, regulators, MLAs and to develop a market environment in which ESG enhancing activities and profitable business go hand in hand.

### Q3. What do you want to achieve during your first mandate?

The world of ESG is very vast and while the topic itself isn’t complex the significant amount of activities under way in this space create an element of complexity and a risk that industry players get lost in the details and can’t see the wood for the trees. I want to address this by working with all relevant participants to identify topics most relevant to trade finance and the ITFA membership. One example that comes to mind is the work that is already under way in respect to the capital treatment of ESG enhancing business activities and to find ways to allow financial institutions to consume less balance sheet for such activities. Another example is to identify and promote technology solutions that can have a positive ESG impact, respectively that enable ESG enhancing business which might otherwise be too complex or too costly without the use of technology.



What will be key in all this is close engagement with fellow board members and with the wider market, so rest assured to start with, I will be on the phone and email a lot.

**Q4. What does ITFA mean to you and what does it represent?**

As I mentioned before I have been close to ITFA since the very start of my trade finance career and I am very grateful for how ITFA has supported my personal career development through networking opportunities, education and the opportunity to learn from a wide range of individuals from many organisations. ITFA to me is like a big family of trade finance professionals and I feel there is huge respect amongst the membership for one another regardless of seniority, experience, location, organisation or any other factors. As an industry body, ITFA has grown a lot particularly over the last decade and has come to be one of the main trade finance industry bodies giving its membership and each individual a voice in the further development of our industry.