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Dear participants of CCC meeting in Baku, and representatives of Asian Development Bank:

On behalf of the Ministry of Finance of the Kyrgyz Republic and the Revenue Committee under Ministry of Finance of Kyrgyz, I am very pleased to welcome you to the hospitable country of Azerbaijan.

Two years have passed since the establishment of the Customs Cooperation Committee with support from the Asian Development Bank. The Common Action Plan was approved during the first meeting in August 2002 in Urumqi (China), and the seven priority areas have been identified, namely: simplification and harmonization of customs procedures; development of border posts and facilities; development of simplified transit systems, data consolidation, information sharing and ICT development; development of risk management and post-entry audit; development of a regional intelligence exchange system; and capacity building for regional customs organizations.

Since the first meeting, progress has been achieved in several of these areas. In particular, the CCC and the ADB will be interested in the following achievements of the Kyrgyz Customs. First, the passage of the new edition of the Customs Code (Law № 87 of the Kyrgyz Republic) is a significant step in implementing the Common Action Plan. Already, the staff tasked in dealing with foreign trade and customs is being trained. Second, with the approval of the agreement between Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic on the transit of cargo through Kazakhstan, we are hopeful that a significant part of the problems in regional transit will be resolved. This had been our hope since the initiation of the CCC. Kazakhstan expects to approve the agreement in December 2004. Third, a draft Agreement between the Tajik and Kyrgyz governments on transit car cargos was prepared in Dushanbe during the expert meeting. The two governments intend to sign the agreement in early-December 2005, after which it would be ratified by the respective parliaments.

We are now looking forward to the opportunity to sign a similar agreement with Uzbekistan. We believe that fostering a positive

environment for regional transit of goods will receive a positive reaction from the world trade market.

Fourth, on 21 September 2004, a Protocol was signed between the Kyrgyz Revenue Committee and the General Customs Administration of the People's Republic of China, providing for cooperation in information exchange on statistic of external trade. We have already conducted the first data exchange on external trade and its analysis; hence, preparing and agreeing the same procedures with other countries will enable us to create the unified information platform on regional level.

We pay much attention to short-term tasks, such as: implementing a collective control on custom body “Ak-Jol” – “Korday” on Kyrgyz-Kazakh border; combating the flow of prohibited items; providing joint training and seminars; popularizing knowledge of the “principle of one stop” among all state agencies; and dealing with activity on our borders.

As you know, Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan have been working on preparing and implementing the national automated information customs systems, based on technical agreements and accessibility to existing information customs systems of regional countries. We will draw on the lessons from experience of the automatization of the Philippines, the European Union, Mongolia, People's Republic of China, and Kazakhstan, as presented during the Manila Forum. We would be very grateful to any custom service that would have interest in supporting us in our endeavors.

During the Conference of Ministers of CCC member countries in Astana, great appreciation was expressed regarding the activities of the CCC. We are therefore pleased to learn that ADB has confirmed its financial support for the second stage of the Regional Program on Technical Compliance in furtherance of the Common Action Plan.

Finally, I would like to welcome again the participants and to wish them success in their deliberations.

I am very grateful to our Azeri friends and colleagues for their great hospitality, which will enable us to participate in these productive discussions. I would also like to express my thanks to the representatives of the Asian Development Bank, for supporting us in providing this meeting. I wish the ADB continuing prosperity and success in their endeavors and the appreciation of the people and countries that it supports.

Thank you for attention!