

## **Opening Remarks**

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Asian Development Bank**

**Forum on Trade Facilitation and Customs Modernization  
26-28 January, Singapore**

**Mr. Ho Wai Yin, Director of IE Singapore, Distinguished Country  
Delegates, Forum Partners from the Public and Private Sectors,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**It is a great honor and pleasure for me to join Mr. Ho to welcome  
you and give the opening remarks on behalf of ADB!**

**On behalf of our member countries represented in the Forum, let  
me thank the IE Singapore for making financial contribution and  
jointly organizing the Forum with ADB. This is the first time that an  
ADB shareholder provides direct financial contribution to an event  
under the trade facilitation program for Central Asia economic  
cooperation. We hope this event will catalyze similar collaborative  
arrangements with ADB's other shareholders in support of this  
eight-country trade facilitation program.**

**I like to express our special gratitude to (i) my friend, Alan Ng, who  
spearheaded in initiating and organizing the forum, (ii) colleagues  
in IE Singapore for working tirelessly and attending to every detail  
to ensure the success of the Forum, and (iii) our private sector**

partners in Singapore for agreeing to share their knowledge and for their hospitality.

The Forum theme, Trade Facilitation and Customs Modernization, is timely considering that there are concerted efforts among the member countries to automate customs services; and the venue ideal because Singapore has gathered ample experience in trade facilitation, and her private sector players are keen to offer assistance through participation in international competition for consulting services. So we hope this will be a win-win event for all the parties involved. Let me briefly explain why.

First, for our member country delegates, the forum offers an opportunity not only to study cutting-edge IT solutions, but more importantly, also to study the underlying principles and initiatives that led to the success of customs reforms. Singapore is one of the few countries in the world that has introduced “private sector mindset” in its public services. Public services such as customs and tax are transparent and made measurable and accountable to traders and taxpayers. Singapore is also one of the few countries that embraces a holistic approach in trade facilitation. An interagency Trade Facilitation Committee was set up long ago to coordinate all the trade-related public agencies. As a result, IT-solutions such as the TradeNet has become a powerful tool to simplify all the trade-related procedures and “one stop” window for exporters and importers. If some of Singapore’s experiences and lessons learned could be brought home and tailored to our ongoing automation efforts, mistakes perhaps could be avoided, and public resources for automation could be effectively utilized. The potential

**saving on public resources could be many folds of our investment in the forum.**

**For our forum partners from the private sector, the event provides an opportunity for you to engage in face-to-face dialogues with our member country delegates and better understand what their needs are and whether your products could be adapted to their ongoing modernization efforts and country circumstances. I am sure such dialogues are equally beneficial to our member countries as they are actively looking for private sector partners to implement their customs and tax modernization plans.**

**For IE Singapore, our co-host with mandate to promote and internationalize Singapore's industries and services, the Forum represents a service to your constituencies by connecting them with their potential clients, and to ADB, as a shareholder, in support of ADB's regional cooperation program.**

**For ADB, we simply hope that the Forum will deliver the envisaged benefits. Part of our development mandates is to catalyze such events and play the role of an honest broker in your cooperation and your exploration of private-public partnership for your customs modernization efforts.**

**With this note, I wish you success in your deliberations.**