

ABOUT THE CCC MEETING

The establishment of the Customs Coordinating Committee is among the initial concrete results of a series of discussions among participating countries about Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation.

These discussions were at the **Senior Officials Meeting** on 9-10 August 2001 with delegations from the People's Republic of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Azerbaijan, followed by the **Customs Cooperation Meeting** on 30-31 January 2002 with the same countries represented and Azerbaijan participating as observer together with Mongolia, and finally the **Ministerial Conference** on 25-26 March 2002 with the same participating countries and Azerbaijan, India, Mongolia, Pakistan and Turkmenistan attending as observers.

Consensus was reached on:

- regional economic cooperation as particularly important to Central Asia and the need for progress in this area,
- transport, energy and trade as priority sectors for the ADB-supported program of Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation
- trade facilitation as an important area, focusing on improvements in customs
- the need for an effective mechanism for implementation.

There was also agreement on the institutional framework as consisting of the following: (i) Ministerial level conference for strategic direction and policy decisions, (ii) Senior Officials meeting to coordinate and ensure effective operational implementation of policy decisions, (iii) Coordinating Committees, for sectoral and other issues, (iv) National Focal Points to coordinate within and among their countries, (v) ADB Secretariat, and (vi) project-specific Working Groups.

The CCC is the mechanism for improving customs cooperation and its establishment indicates that the framework has been activated. Key initiatives would include: (a) regional seminar on the revised Kyoto Convention, (b) joint processing at selected border crossings, (c) regional training, (d) transit systems, and (e) donor support seminar. National Focal Points have also been appointed by each government to facilitate the overall planning, prioritization, and implementation of the program.

CCC members also agreed to propose initiatives and submit them as draft Action Plans indicating the objective, output, and implementation methodology for each initiative.

The objectives of this first CCC meeting are to: (i) agree on the broad objectives and scope of the Action Plans drafted by the respective countries; (ii) discuss and endorse the objectives, scope and terms of reference under the proposed Regional Technical Assistance (RETA) grant on Trade Facilitation and Governance, which is being processed as part of a Regional Customs Cooperation Program supported by ADB; and (iii) formulate a forward-looking training and capacity building program, and a schedule of activities aimed at enhancing customs cooperation over 2002-04.