

Opening Remarks

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Good Morning.

It is a great pleasure to welcome you to the Forum on e-Government and Trade Facilitation, a topic of great importance to the government and the business community in an increasingly globalized world. We would like to extend a special welcome to our delegates from Afghanistan who are attending our regional trade facilitation forum for the first time.

On behalf of our member countries represented in the Forum, let me thank our public and private sector partners that have made this event possible. Our public sector partners include: the IE Singapore, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Inland Revenues Authority of Singapore, Immigration and Checkpoints Authority, Singapore Customs, Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore, and Urban Redevelopment Authority; and our private sector partners are NCS, CrimsonLogic and ITIS. They have been working tirelessly on the program to ensure this forum is relevant to you, and attending to every detail of logistic arrangement to ensure your pleasant stay and the success of the Forum.

The Forum theme, e-Government and Trade Facilitation, is timely given the ongoing and concerted efforts on the part of our member countries to automate customs and tax services, and to set up institutional arrangements to embark on integrated approach in trade facilitation and logistics development. For example, Mongolia has made significant effort in moving toward an integrated approach in trade facilitation. This is why we have brought together representatives from four relevant agencies and will organize a consultation meeting for the Mongolian delegation. In this regard, the venue is ideal as Singapore has made important strides in e-Government initiatives in tax and customs modernization, trade facilitation, and logistics. Recently, a new government contract was awarded to revamp the TradeNet and develop a next-generation of trade and logistics platform. Further, a number of Singapore firms have been winners and implementers of ADB's technical assistance, and we hope the event will provide occasions for you to continue your consultation on TA-related issues.

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 and tax reforms. Singapore is one of the few countries in the world that has introduced "private sector mindset" in public service delivery. Public services such as customs and tax administration are transparent and efficient. Singapore is also one of the few countries that applies 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 have become a powerful tool to simplify all the trade-related procedures and offer a “one stop” window for exporters and importers. We hope the Singapore’s experiences and lessons learned could be brought home and served as a reference point for our ongoing e-government reforms efforts.

For our Forum partners from the private sector, the event provides an opportunity to engage in face-to-face dialogue with our member country delegates and to better understand their needs. Such dialogue is equally beneficial for our member countries as they are actively looking for private sector partners to implement their customs and tax modernization plans.

For public sector partners such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and IE Singapore with mandate to promote international cooperation 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.

One of ADB's mandates is to play the role of an honest broker in your cooperation and your exploration of broad partnership for your economic development and e-government efforts in particular. We hope that this Forum will deliver the envisaged benefits.

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