

## **Opening Remarks**

**Ms. Noy Siackhachanh  
Director**

**Governance, Finance and Trade Division  
Central and West Asia Department  
Asian Development Bank**

**Fifth Customs Cooperation Committee Meeting  
11-13 October 2006, Astana, Kazakhstan**

Honorable Finance Minister Korzhova,  
Distinguished Members of the Customs Cooperation Committee,  
Country Delegates,  
Resource Persons,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my honor to join Minister Korzhova in welcoming you and opening the fifth meeting of the Customs Cooperation Committee (CCC). My Director General, Mr. Juan Miranda, sends his apologies for not being able to join us in Astana and speak before you today. Due to pressing official matters, he had to cancel his trip last Saturday. On behalf of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), distinguished country delegates and resource speakers, I would like to thank the Customs Control Committee of the Republic of Kazakhstan led by its Chairman, Mr. Askar Shakirov, for hosting this event, and for the warm hospitality and excellent arrangements that they have extended to us. We also give thanks to our dear friend, Mr. Baurzhan Abdishev, Deputy Chairman of Kazakhstan Customs and his team of staff, for their hard work in organizing this meeting. We are fortunate to be holding this event in this thriving city of Astana.

The CCC has evolved as a solid institutional mechanism in promoting regional trade facilitation initiatives under the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) Program. The presence of

heads and deputy heads of customs administrations in this meeting confirms your active leadership in pursuing trade facilitation efforts and regional cooperation.

Distinguished members of the CCC, this Fifth Meeting again provides a venue for two purposes: (i) your deliberation on a Joint Statement to provide guidance on future directions and priorities, and (ii) knowledge-sharing with presentations from the World Customs Organization (WCO), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), and Thailand Customs Department, in addition to country presentations from CCC member countries. In this regard, let me extend a warm welcome, on behalf of the CCC, to our eminent resource speakers. Mr. Kunio Mikuriya, Deputy Secretary General, WCO, and Dr. Sathit Limpongpan, Director General of Thailand Customs Department, are active supporters of the CAREC trade facilitation program, having graced past CCC events on several occasions, generously sharing international best practices and country experiences relevant to CAREC member countries. We are also pleased to have with us for the first time, Mr. Jan Hoffman, Economic Affairs Officer, UNCTAD, to share the key ingredients required for logistics development and trade facilitation. Our own colleague, Mr. Chin Choon Fong, Assistant General Counsel of ADB, can also provide advise on legal matters related to ADB public sector operations .

In order to facilitate our continued collaboration, I encourage you to discuss among yourselves, and inform us of your proposed activities to be supported under the Trade Facilitation Program over the next two years. What are the initiatives and specific activities, including regional forums, that you would like ADB to support? With heightened demands to ensure a

safer world trade regime, customs administrations are faced with increasing challenges to facilitate global trade. Your deliberation on CCC's future work program could take into consideration the emerging issues that affect the role of customs administrations. This meeting will also be an opportunity for you to decide on your proposed venue for the next CCC Meeting.

Since the fourth CCC meeting in Ulaanbaatar in September 2005, there has been substantial progress in furthering your immediate objective of promoting concerted customs reforms and modernization through (i) bilateral initiatives, (ii) country-specific customs modernization efforts, and (iii) training and knowledge-sharing. Notably, the Kyrgyz and Kazakhstan Customs are pilot-testing another joint customs control initiative at the Aktilek-Karasuu crossing point. Similarly, Mongolia Customs is discussing a joint control pilot-test with the People's Republic of China (PRC) Customs at a crossing point to be agreed by the two countries' customs administrations. In support of country-specific initiatives, ADB will soon approve an investment project to modernize customs administration in Mongolia, following similar assistance currently being implemented in the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan. In line with this, Afghanistan has welcomed ADB support for a needs assessment study on customs modernization. A similar study will be launched by ADB in Uzbekistan in 2007.

To promote capacity building on priority areas and address implementation issues, several regional forums have been organized including: (i) Seminar in the Republic of Korea last December, focusing on trade facilitation and e-governance, (ii) Singapore Forum in January, covering issues related to customs automation and information technology

(IT) platform for trade and logistics, (iii) Seminar in Tokyo, in April, on trade facilitation and customs modernization, and (iv) Seminar in Urumqi, PRC, in July, on WCO's framework of standards and customs data model.

We are pleased that the CCC has continued to serve as an effective vehicle to tap the support of the international community in promoting trade facilitation initiatives in the region. The Government of Singapore, Japan Customs and the Customs Service of the Republic of Korea have sponsored study-tours and regional forums this past year to further customs cooperation. The International Road Transport Union (IRU) has been actively engaged in your program. With ADB support, IRU will be conducting training seminars this October for Mongolia and Kyrgyz customs officials to support your initiative to develop transit systems. ADB also facilitated the assistance of the Government of the Republic of Korea to Mongolia and Azerbaijan for the development of these countries' e-customs feasibility studies. ADB, as the CCC Secretariat, together with other development partners, will continually explore opportunities to draw international support for your collective endeavors.

Ladies and gentlemen, to support your long-term goal of promoting an integrated approach to trade facilitation, ADB is preparing a regional technical assistance to support the development of an integrated regional trade facilitation strategy for each CAREC member country. This initiative will hopefully be useful in your efforts to promote interagency cooperation and partnership with the private sector, in support of trade facilitation.

If we may reiterate again, please let us know of your proposed activities that we can support under our Trade Facilitation Program over the next two years, and your proposed venue for the 6<sup>th</sup> CCC Meeting.

Under the same cooperative spirit within CCC that has prevailed for the past years, I am confident that your reform and modernization efforts will contribute to the creation of an enabling trading environment for the business community. ADB will continue to be your partner in this undertaking.

I look forward to your meaningful discussion and successful outcome of this meeting.

Thank you for your attention.