

Opening Remarks
by
Ms. Noy Siackhachanh
Director, Governance, Finance and Trade Division
East and Central Asia Department
Asian Development Bank

Second Customs Cooperation Committee Meeting
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Introduction

Thank you, Mr. Parpiev for the warm welcome.

Distinguished Country Representatives,
Resource Persons,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great honor and pleasure to join Mr. Parpiev in welcoming you and opening this Second Customs Cooperation Committee (CCC) meeting. On behalf of Asian Development Bank, the Secretariat of the CCC, I would like to thank the State Customs Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan for hosting this meeting.

Second Customs Cooperation Committee Meeting

As you are well aware, the CCC in its first meeting in August 2002 endorsed a seven-point Common Action Plan (CAP) and institutional arrangements for its implementation. This Action Plan includes the following components:

- (i) simplification and harmonization of customs documentation;
- (ii) development of border posts and facilities;
- (iii) development of simplified transit systems;
- (iv) data consolidation/information sharing and ICT development for customs operations;
- (v) development of risk management and post entry audit;
- (vi) development of a regional intelligence system; and
- (vii) capacity building for regional customs organizations.

Five expert groups were established on (i) simplification and harmonization of customs documentation and procedures chaired by the People's Republic of China, PRC; (ii) joint-border processing chaired by Kazakhstan; (iii) development of transit systems chaired by the Kyrgyz Republic; (iv) data sharing and ICT for customs operations chaired by Uzbekistan; and (v) risk management and post-entry audit chaired by PRC. Additionally, two working groups (respectively chaired by PRC and Uzbekistan customs) were established to coordinate expert groups' work and report progress to the CCC.

Four regional meetings were held in 2003, including a joint working group meeting in April in Almaty, Kazakhstan. These meetings contributed to the progressive development of a detailed work program to implement the CAP. The meetings at the Issyk-kul in August 2003 and Urumqi in September 2003 were particularly useful in adjusting and narrowing the scope of the work program according to the shared priorities among the CCC member countries.

As you could see from the Progress Report circulated to you a month ago, the Customs Cooperation Program under the CCC framework supported by ADB has achieved visible progress in its initial stages of implementation in all seven areas. Future progress and sustainability would critically depend on country ownership of the proposed work program and its effectiveness in addressing issues of shared concerns. Its implementation would also depend on an effective coordination mechanism among the member countries and the Secretariat. As such mechanism has yet to be further developed, I hope that you will be able to resolve the coordination issue over the next two days.

Based on the discussion and agreement among CCC members, a joint statement for customs cooperation of the region will be prepared to submit to the coming Inter-Ministerial meeting. Given the evolving nature of the regional customs cooperation program, this Progress Report together with the Joint Statement will supersede all previous documents in guiding CCC activities in the near future.

I look forward to your discussion and fruitful deliberation.

Once again, on behalf of ADB, I would like to express my sincere gratitude for your participation and strong support for this meeting.

Thank you.