

**CLOSING REMARKS**  
**Forum on Public-Private Partnership for Customs Modernization**  
**Deputy Commissioner Alexander Arevalo**  
**16 October 2004, Pan Pacific Hotel, Manila, Philippines**

GOOD MORNING, AS WE WOULD SAY, *MABUHAY!* MEANING  
BEST WISHES, GOOD LUCK, LONG LIVE!

I WOULD LIKE TO START BY EXPRESSING OUR SINCEREST APPRECIATION TO ALL OF YOU WHO HAVE HONORED US WITH YOUR ATTENDANCE IN THIS FORUM. THANK YOU TO THE ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK THROUGH JEFFREY LIANG WHO CO-HOSTED THIS IMPORTANT CUSTOMS MILESTONE. THANK YOU TO TO OUR ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF FROM THE ADB AND BUREAU OF CUSTOMS WHO HAD BEEN SLEEPING LATE TO SUPPORT OUR REQUIREMENTS. THANK YOU, *SPICIVA*, AND AS WE WOULD SAY, *SALAMAT!*

TO MOST, CUSTOMS MODERNIZATION IS COMPUTERIZATION. TO SOME, IT IS LEGISLATION. TO OTHERS, IT IS ADMINISTRATION OR MANAGEMENT. WELL, THEY ARE ALL WRONG; BUT, THEY ARE ALSO ALL RIGHT. CUSTOMS MODERNIZATION REMINDS US OF THE PROVERBIAL BLIND MEN WHO WERE TRYING TO “SEE” OR FEEL WHAT AN ELEPHANT LOOKS LIKE. THE YOUNGEST AND SHORTEST SAYS IT IS LIKE HARD LIKE OF A TREE WHEN HE FELT A FOOT. A TALLER ONE SAYS IT IS LIKE A SNAKE WHEN HE FELT THE TRUNK. THE TALLEST ONE SAYS ITS FLAT LIKE A FAN WHEN HE FELT AN EAR. WE AS THE PRIME-MOVERS MUST ALWAYS SEE CUSTOMS

MODERNIZATION FOR WHAT IT REALLY IS, AN ELEPHANT. IT NEEDS TO BE SEEN IN ITS ENTIRETY EVERY SINGLE TIME. THE INTER-DEPENDENCIES AND INTER-RELATIONS OF ITS DIFFERENT COMPONENTS SHOULD ALWAYS BE KEPT IN MIND FOR US TO SUCCEED.

COMPUTERIZATION IS THE MOST TALKED ABOUT MODE IN CUSTOMS MODERNIZATION. DO NOT COMPUTERIZE FOR COMPUTERIZATION'S SAKE! COMPUTERS ARE A MEANS TO AN END. THEY ARE A CATALYST OR AN ENABLER. YOU AND YOUR PEOPLE ARE STILL THE HEART OF MODERNIZATION.

MODERNIZATION COVERS THE DEPLOYMENT OF HI-TECH, LOW-TECH AND NO-TECH SOLUTIONS. YES, IT IS TRUE THAT THE PEN IS STILL MIGHTIER THAN THE SWORD. SOMETIMES, A LOW-TECH SIGNATURE OR RUBBER STAMP IS FASTER AND BETTER THAN A HI-TECH COMPUTER PROCESS.

TO LEARN FROM ONE'S MISTAKES IS WISE. TO LEARN FROM OTHERS' MISTAKES IS DIVINE. UPON YOUR RETURN HOME, SHARE WITH YOUR RESPECTIVE AGENCIES THE STORIES OF SUCCESS AND FAILURE THAT WE IN THE BUREAU OF CUSTOMS HAVE BEEN EXPERIENCING. WE HOPE THAT YOU IMPROVE UPON OUR SUCCESSES AND AVOID OUR FAILURES.

NO GUTS, NO GLORY! TO GET AHEAD IN THE CUSTOMS MODERNIZATION RACE, YOU WILL NEED TO LEAP-FROG TO BE

AHEAD. SOMETIMES, YOU WILL NEED TO TAKE UNCONVENTIONAL AND UNTESTED MEANS TO ACHIEVE YOUR GOALS. TELL ME OF A CUSTOMS AGENCY THAT IS SUCCESSFUL NOW THAT NEVER WENT OUT OF THE OLD AND ANTIQUATED MOLD OF DOING THINGS.

THIS FORUM ON PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP FOR CUSTOMS MODERNIZATION INDEED SHOWS THAT THE PUBLIC SECTOR AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR REVOLVE AROUND THEIR OWN SPHERES, INTERESTS AND NEEDS. WE HAVE LEARNED THE POTENTIALS OF SYNERGY AND MUTUAL BENEFIT BY PUSHING FOR PUBLIC-PRIVATE COLLABORATION AND TEAMWORK. BY OPTIMIZING THE COMBINATION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS, THE MATH IS NOT JUST ONE PLUS ONE IS EQUAL TO 2, BUT ONE PLUS ONE IS EQUAL TO SIX, SEVEN, EIGHT AND MORE. THE COMBINATION IS MULTI-DIMENSIONAL, MULTI-FACETED. THE RESULT IS A MORE STRUCTURED HARDWARE, SOFTWARE, PEOPLEWARE, POLITICS, ECONOMICS, FINANCING, AMONG OTHERS.

LET US RECALL THE SAYING: A JOURNEY OF A THOUSAND MILES BEGINS WITH A SINGLE STEP. YOU HAVE TAKEN THAT DELIBERATE AND CALCULATED STEPS TOWARD CUSTOMS MODERNIZATION.

MODERNIZATION, ESPECIALLY COMPUTERIZATION, SOMETIMES CAN BE LIKENED TO A TRAIN RIDE. EVERYONE MUST BE IN THE TRAIN STATION FOR THE NEXT TRIP. IF YOU ALL CAN BE

ON THE SAME TRAIN SCHEDULE OR AT LEAST CLOSE TO EACH OTHERS', ALL OF YOU CAN REACH THE FINAL DESTINATION, CUSTOMS MODERNIZATION, TOGETHER. KEEP IN MIND THAT YOU WILL NEED TO FIX THAT TRAIN FOR IT TO RUN FASTER WHILE IT IS MOVING. NO TIME TO STOP.

IN A SCENARIO WHERE THERE ARE COMMON BORDERS LIKE IN YOUR COUNTRIES, SYNCHRONIZATION AND COORDINATION IS THE NAME OF THE GAME. NO COUNTRY WANTS TO BE SEEN AS THE WEAKEST LINK IN THE CUSTOMS MODERNIZATION CHAIN.

FINALLY, WE HOPE THAT YOUR TRAIN TRIP TO MANILA HALFWAY AROUND THE WORLD MOVES YOU CLOSER TO YOUR DESTINATION NAMED: *CUSTOMS MODERNIZATION*.

THANK YOU AND HAVE A HAPPY AND SAFE TRIP HOME.