

Welcome Speech for Forum on TIR Customs Transit System

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Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen:
Good morning!

It is a great pleasure for me to be here to attend the opening ceremony of the Forum on Transports Internationaux Routiers(TIR) Customs Transit System in Shanghai, a city teeming with enormous vitality. First of all, please let me begin by extending, on behalf of Shanghai Customs, a warm welcome to our prestigious guests from Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Mongolia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the World Customs Organization (WCO), the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) and the International Road Transport Union (IRU).

Due to economic globalization and regional integration, countries have become increasingly interdependent by way of reciprocal economic cooperation. As the most dynamic continent in the world, Asia has embraced a number of regional and sub-regional cooperation programs. Through this mutually respectful, pragmatic and wide-ranging cooperation, political trust has been intensified and common interests among member countries expanded, imparting a new thrust to Asia's economic development.

Member countries in central Asia border each other, sharing similar cultures and sound political ties. Above all, long-standing friendships have been fostered. Three years ago, the Asia Development Bank initiated the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation program, which has proved itself in practice and is assuming an increasingly critical role in regional economic development. It goes without saying that "A close neighbor is more helpful than a distant relative." Stronger Central Asian Economic Cooperation has taken place in a policy and institutional environment that is fair, open and transparent and under proactive government guidance.

Today, we are gathered here in Shanghai, a very important coastal city which has seen double digit economic growth over the past 12 years, to exchange experiences and insights regarding accession to and implementation of the TIR Customs Transit System and map out the future for the system. The choice of this city as the venue for this forum was therefore significant. Shanghai is the birthplace of everything considered modern in China. In addition, the Shanghai-led Yangtze River Delta Region has been recognized internationally as the 6th largest metropolitan city, after New York, Toronto, Tokyo, Paris and London. It has also become the

region's manufacturing powerhouse and the most vibrant regional economy in China by a large margin, with dominant industries including IT, automobiles, machinery, steel and chemicals. Shanghai is undergoing a period of commercial and economic transformation. So is Shanghai Customs.

Being an international gateway, Shanghai Customs at present has 45 affiliated branch offices with a total staff of 2,938, which comprises merely 6% of the nationwide while the total value of import and export constitutes nearly 25% nationwide. If you take a look at figures of this year from January till September, the total volume of import and export goods under Shanghai Customs supervision and control arrived at 265 billion US dollars, representing a 24% increase over the same period of last year, constituting 25% of the total nationwide. The container throughput soared to 11.8 million TEU. The number of means of transport totaled 103,000, an increase of 14%, Transactions amounted to 7.6 million bills, an increase of 20%. Further to these figures, Shanghai Customs has placed 1988 cases with a total value of 1.2 billion RMB. Duty revenue accounted for 85 billion RMB, up by 7.9% year over year, covering 22% of China Customs total. As such, it can be seen that the foreign trade at the port of Shanghai has maintained its continuous and rapid growth momentum.

While confronting the challenges and pressures, Shanghai Customs, in accordance with the Customs Modernization drive and scientific learning approach, emphasizes both lawful supervision and service improvement, aiming to enhance the quality of service in order to support the economy. It makes contributions to boosting Shanghai's international role in the four areas of economics, finance, trade and shipping and promotes trade facilitation by propelling the progress of a "Mega-Port, Foreign-Oriented Economic Zone and Integrated Customs Clearance" system. You will have the opportunity to see this yourselves during your study tour of the Shanghai Waigaoqiao port. We are confident you will be impressed by the efforts of Shanghai Customs to create favorable conditions for the free flow of goods.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Shanghai is a city where East meets West and tradition meets modernity. I hope this miraculous place will set a positive tone for the success of this forum.

Last but not least, I wish the forum complete success and hope that all our distinguished guests have an interesting and enjoyable time in Shanghai.

Thank you very much!