

**OPENING ADDRESS BY  
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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT (ITD)  
BEFORE THE WORKSHOP ON TRADE FACILITATION AND THE WTO  
AT CONFERENCE ROOM II OF ITD  
MONDAY, 21 OCTOBER 2002**

Distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen,

I am very delighted that participation in this workshop includes officials from nearly all the original core countries of the Asia Cooperation Dialogue or ACD. Promoting and strengthening regional economic cooperation and integration in the Asian region and beyond through the sharing and exchanging of experiences and knowledge is a major objective of the International Institute for Trade and Development, or ITD. Organization of seminars, workshops, training and research in trade facilitation, among other areas, is within the scope of activities envisaged in the instrument setting up the ITD.

A principal objective of the Asia Cooperation Dialogue is to make Asia a strong partner with other regions. Trade is recognised as the key to creating more wealth for Asian nations and trade facilitation is becoming increasingly important, more so as can be seen from the Doha Development Agenda.

With the aim of promoting a common understanding of trade facilitation instruments and policies, the International Institute for Trade and Development (ITD) is today launching the first in a series of workshops designed for officials of ACD participating countries. Developed in collaboration with agencies of the United Nations, most particularly the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, or ESCAP, the Trade Facilitation Workshop will contribute to future Asia-wide cooperation in the reduction of non-tariff trade barriers and increased competitiveness in global markets.

With the highly positive response to our initiative that you have shown, it can now be expected that a series of two-day workshops will be held on a quarterly basis here at this Institute.

We expect that these workshop discussions will identify new opportunities to increase efficiency and reduce the cost of cross-border movement of goods, services and persons. They will offer an opportunity to develop a distinctly Asian perspective to concepts and practices that have been formulated in other regions. Anticipating that a number of trade facilitation principles will become part of the WTO-rules-based framework in the next few years, I believe that this topic will be a concrete complement to the process of creating our region-wide partnership.

Your participation in this Workshop, and hopefully the others which will follow in periodic sequence, testifies to the determination of all ACD countries to move on concretely in fulfilling our common Asia-wide aspiration.

The Programme Outline for the two-day workshop has already been given to you in the folder. I would just like to point out that all of you, including the distinguished resource persons from ESCAP, are invited to a luncheon at Jamjuree Hall 2, Pathumwan Princess Hotel, a few minutes walk from here. In fact some of you are already staying in that Hotel. Hosting the lunch will be Dr. Kanthathi Suphamongkol, Thailand Trade Representative and Adviser to the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Before concluding these remarks, let me tell you a little bit about how the idea for this workshop came about. On May 1<sup>st</sup> this year, the day this Institute was officially inaugurated, Dr. Kim Hak Su, Executive Secretary of UNESCAP, sent to ITD a message of congratulations, stating in part that—and I quote—“ESCAP as the regional arm of the United Nations in Asia and the Pacific is also very active in building capacity and offering assistance in the areas of trade policy and facilitation to developing countries in the region and as such stands ready to render all possible support to the Institute and undertake joint activities for this purpose.” It is from this beginning that joint efforts have been made to develop a program which would fit in with the Institute’s purpose.

I should, therefore, like to express my profound gratefulness to ESCAP for having cooperated closely with ITD in organising this activity which, incidentally, is the first to be held here at the Institute.

I hope that you all will benefit from the presentations and actively participate in the discussions during this two-day Workshop on Trade Facilitation and the WTO. I also wish you all a pleasant stay in Thailand. If there is anything that you need, the staff of the Institute stand ready to assist you.

Thank you for your attention.