

**OPENING ADDRESS BY THE
DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF SINGAPORE CUSTOMS
DURING THE SIGNING CEREMONY OF THE STATEMENT ON
STRENGTHENING BILATERAL EXPORT CONTROL COOPERATION
BETWEEN THE MINISTRY OF ECONOMY, TRADE AND INDUSTRY OF
JAPAN AND SINGAPORE CUSTOMS
ON 22 APRIL 2004, SINGAPORE**

1 Good morning ladies and gentlemen. On behalf of Singapore Customs, I would like to welcome Mr Atsuo Shibota, Director-General of Trade Control Department, Trade and Economic Co-operation Bureau, and distinguished delegates from Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI), guests and colleagues, to this significant ceremony to witness the signing of the Statement on Strengthening Bilateral Cooperation on Export Control between Singapore Customs and METI.

OBJECTIVE

2 Indeed, today marks an important milestone between our two agencies in representing our two countries' common interests to enhance bilateral co-operation on export control matters.

3 We have co-operated and engaged in discussions on export controls in many forums. The relationship started gingerly when Singapore officials, at the invitation of Japan, started to participate in the annual Asian Export Control Seminars in late 1990s. Over the years, our communication and understanding of each other grew and I am glad that it has culminated in the signing of this Joint Statement to further strengthen our cooperation on export controls.

BACKGROUND

4 Given the heightened security challenges that we have witnessed worldwide since the 9-11 tragedy, it is necessary for us to take proactive steps to prevent the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and to safeguard our national security interests. Singapore is determined and serious in supporting the global effort to curb the proliferation of WMD. We have always maintained high standards in controlling trade in strategic goods. Since 1970s, we have been state parties to the Biological Weapons Convention (1975) and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (1976). In recent years, we have ratified the Chemical

Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. Since 1 Jan 2003, Singapore has implemented the Strategic Goods (Control) Act, which is administered by Singapore Customs. This control mechanism regulates the transfer of strategic goods and related technologies to prevent rogue traders from exploiting our reputation as an efficient trading hub to illegally procure WMD related items through Singapore.

5 Singapore, and I believe Japan too, shares the view that the proliferation of dangerous weapons threatens all countries and no country alone can tackle this problem. Nor can any country isolate herself from the dangers of proliferation of such weapons and components. More than ever before, countries need to work in close partnerships to build a tight, effective and efficient system of controls.

KEY ELEMENTS OF THE STATEMENT

6 In this context, Singapore Customs has taken the first step to sign the Joint Statement with METI to demonstrate our resolves to prevent proliferation and illegal diversion of strategic goods. The Statement will help to foster closer collaboration through information exchange, cooperative enforcement actions and industry outreach. On industry outreach, both agencies will work together to educate the private sectors on export control laws, regulations and policies.

CONCLUSION

7 Before I conclude, let me assure the business community that the Joint Statement does not seek to restrict legitimate trade between the two countries. What we sought to do is to enhance Singapore and Japan's efforts on export controls so as to provide a more secure trading environment for legitimate trade. We are honoured to be able to work with METI on this endeavour, which will help to create a more secure trading environment for the world.

8 Finally, I would like to say a special thank you to Mr Shibota and his delegates from Japan, who have traveled from Tokyo specially for this occasion. I am deeply honoured and wish them an enjoyable stay in Singapore. Thank you.