



SINGAPORE CUSTOMS 新加坡关税局 KASTAM SINGAPURA சிங்கப்பூர் சுங்கத்துறை

**REMARKS BY MR FONG YONG KIAN, DIRECTOR-GENERAL,
SINGAPORE CUSTOMS, AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE
22ND ASEAN DIRECTORS-GENERAL OF CUSTOMS MEETING, 4
JUNE 2013, MANDARIN ORCHARD HOTEL, LEVEL 6, BALLROOM 3**

Mr Peter Ong, Head of Civil Service and Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Finance, Singapore

Outgoing Chair of the ASEAN Directors-General of Customs Meeting, Mr Rozzano Rufino B. Biazon, Commissioner of Customs, Bureau of Customs, the Republic of the Philippines

Dr. Lim Hong Hin, Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN for ASEAN Economic Community

Fellow Directors-General of Customs

Delegates of ASEAN Members States and Members of the ASEAN Secretariat

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

1 A very good morning and warm welcome to all of you here today. Singapore is honoured to host the 22nd Meeting of the ASEAN Directors-General of Customs. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Philippines, for the excellent work during her tenure as chair over the past year.

Review of ASEAN Customs Integration and Harmonisation

2 We have a heavy but interesting agenda over the next three days. We will be discussing the progress of ASEAN customs integration and harmonisation, a key component for the establishment of the ASEAN Economic Community by 2015. To that end, we will review the progress made by the Coordinating Committee on Customs or CCC, the Customs Procedures and Trade Facilitation Working Group or CPTFWG, the Customs Enforcement and Compliance Working Group or CECWG, the Customs Capacity Building Working Group or CCBWG, and the ASEAN Single Window Steering Committee or ASWSC.

3 Achievements over the past one year include the implementation of the ASEAN Harmonised Tariff Nomenclature (AHTN) 2012 by all ten Member States, the completion of the “scale-down version” of Component 2 of the ASEAN Single Window Pilot Project, and commencement of ASEAN Regional Integration Support by the EU (ARISE) Programme which will support implementation of major initiatives such as the ASEAN Customs Transit System. The various working groups have also completed several best practice documents to support customs modernisation and reform in ASEAN. These include the “Best Practice Guide for ASEAN on Advance Rulings on Tariff Classification” by the CPTFWG, the “Enforcement Bulletin Volume IV” and “PCA Bulletin Volume IV” by the CECWG, and the “Compendium for Best Practices in Strategic Management” by the CCBWG.

4 However, I believe that there is agreement amongst all of us that there is much more to be done. At this point of time, we are already at the mid-way mark for the

implementation of the 15 Strategic Plans of Customs Development (SPCDs) for the period 2011 to 2015. The timeline of 2015 for the achievement of the ASEAN Economic Community is just round the corner. Hence, at this Meeting, I would urge all of us to review our progress and provide the necessary guidance for the various working groups to expedite their work going forward.

5 Let me give a few examples. The World Customs Organization (WCO) will be releasing the Harmonised System 2017 amendments in June 2014. This means that we would soon need to prepare ourselves to reconvene the AHTN Task Force, to ensure the timely implementation of AHTN 2017. To ensure the long term sustainability of ASEAN Single Window and the ASEAN Customs Transit System, we need to quickly work out the governance structure and operating model for these projects. These are just examples of some of the important issues which ASEAN Member States would have to quickly move forward on.

Consultation Sessions with Key Stakeholders

6 On the second and third days of this Meeting, a series of consultation sessions will be held with our key stakeholders. They include the Customs administrations of China, Japan and Korea, the World Customs Organization, and key business and trade associations in ASEAN.

7 Over the past few years, ASEAN Customs administrations' partnerships with our dialogue partners have steadily deepened, including the signing of a MOU with China on Customs Cooperation in 2011. During the coming consultations, I believe that we should discuss how to take our cooperation with the Customs administrations of ASEAN

Dialogue Partners to a higher level. ASEAN Customs administrations have received significant amount of technical assistance and capacity building activities from the Dialogue Partners. We should review the effectiveness of these activities and see whether any adjustments are required to better support regional economic integration.

8 To widen the scope of private sector consultation this year, we are holding a joint consultation, instead of individual consultations, with three private sector bodies in ASEAN – the US-ASEAN Business Council (USABC), the Conference of Asia Pacific Express Carriers (CAPEC), and the ASEAN Federation of Forwarders Associations (AFFA). The private sector has lined up a series of informative and insightful presentations for us. I believe this joint consultation will be a useful platform for ASEAN Customs administrations and the business community to strengthen Customs-Business partnerships.

Conclusion

9 In addition to the meeting proper, I hope you will also make time to mingle and network with each other and experience some of Singapore's latest attractions and also, if you like, the Great Singapore Sale, which coincidentally has just started over the last weekend. It is my hope that all of us will enjoy not only the many work-related discussions that we will be having, but also the social events arranged for all of us during our stay in Singapore.

10 With your support, I am certain that we can work together to make this year's Meeting in Singapore a successful and memorable one as well.

11 I wish all of you a very pleasant and fruitful week ahead. Thank you.