

CENTRAL ASIA CUSTOMS COOPERATION MEETING
30-31 January 2002
Manila, Philippines

Highlights of the Meeting

1. The Central Asia Customs Cooperation Meeting was held during 30-31 January 2002 in Manila, Philippines, with participants from the People's Republic of China (PRC), Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, and from Azerbaijan and Mongolia as observers. Turkmenistan conveyed its regrets for not being able to attend but indicated its intention to participate in similar future activities.
2. Customs cooperation is the focus in the priority area of trade facilitation under the broad partnership between ADB and the participating countries in support of economic cooperation in Central Asia. The Meeting, held at the expert level, provided a forum for the participating countries to discuss and exchange experience in customs modernization in the context of regional economic cooperation. In particular, it presented an opportunity to discuss the role of enhanced customs cooperation in achieving improvements in trade facilitation.
3. The participants confirmed the need for improved customs cooperation and supported the establishment of a mechanism to facilitate this cooperation. In this context a proposal for a specific mechanism was discussed, which consists of a Customs Coordinating Committee at the decision-making level, and Working Groups, if necessary, at the implementation level.
4. The Meeting discussed possible key initiatives to be addressed through the proposed cooperation mechanism. These included:
 - A Regional Seminar on the Revised Kyoto Convention – familiarization of all Customs with the implications of compliance with the provisions of the Convention, particularly in terms of the legislative and implementation aspects.
 - Joint Processing – examination of the potential to undertake joint processing routines at selected border crossings.
 - Regional Training – consideration of the use of regional training centers for joint training initiatives based on the need for common approaches and mutual understanding of customs operations, as well as the introduction of new skills and technologies.
 - Transit Systems – assessment of how simplified transit systems might be introduced to facilitate transport movements of through-transit traffic while retaining appropriate controls.
 - Donor Support Meeting – to obtain information about the different donor organizations active in trade facilitation in the region and their respective

interests/financing mechanisms versus the possible future development needs of the Customs.

5. The countries recognized that they may have different priorities and that further initiatives may be proposed. It was therefore agreed that each country would submit a draft Action Plan indicating the objective, output and implementation methodology for each of its proposed initiatives. ADB, as a Secretariat, would provide a standardized format for these submissions to facilitate evaluation of the draft Action Plans and would consolidate them.

6. While it would be beneficial to submit a consolidated Action Plan in advance of the Ministerial Conference planned for end March 2002, the participants recognized that this might not be practical given the limited timeframe. It was therefore proposed that a high level Customs meeting be held later for the purpose of endorsing an agreed Action Plan.