



Trade Facilitation Program 2005 Update

Preparatory Senior Officials' Meeting on
Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation

14 October 2005
Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic

**Summary of Discussions on Trade Facilitation
Senior Officials' Meeting, 14 October, 2005, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan**

1. A trade facilitation session was held as part of the SOM. Mr. Kubanychbek Kulmatov, Deputy Director, State Customs Inspectorate of the Kyrgyz Republic, highlighted progress and major initiatives endorsed by the Customs Cooperation Committee (CCC) in its 4th Meeting on 7-9 September 2005 in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.
2. Senior officials broadly endorsed the Progress Report, i.e., the medium- to long-term goals, priority areas and performance indicators stipulated in the Report. They broadly recognized the success of the Program and the CCC as an effective coordinating mechanism for the CAREC's Trade Facilitation Program. They welcomed the CCC's efforts to broaden the Program in partnership with private sector stakeholders and agencies relevant to the Program priorities.
3. To further strengthen the coordinating mechanism, the Senior officials stressed the need to establish an effective national interagency coordinating mechanism and called upon the Customs Administrations to act as the lead agency and champion in establishing such national trade facilitation coordinating mechanisms. It was suggested that the Border Guard and Ministries relevant to the Program priorities could also be invited to attend the annual CCC Meeting as a concrete measure to strengthen the coordinating mechanism.
4. Senior officials reaffirmed their support for the Program's phased and pragmatic approach with a combination of (i) promotion of bilateral cooperation initiatives and (ii) training and regional knowledge forums. Bilateral initiatives have demonstration effects and minimize financial and institutional burdens of implementation; and training and knowledge sharing not only supports capacity-building but also contribute to trust- and confidence-building among the CAREC's participating countries. In this regard, the Senior Officials noted with satisfaction the (i) new joint customs control initiatives proposed by MON and PRC following the pilot-testing by KGZ and KAZ at the Akzhol-Kordai border-crossing, (ii) the five regional forums organized in 2005 on the priority areas of the Program, and (iii) bilateral transit and cooperation agreements signed in 2005 between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, Azerbaijan and PRC, and between Uzbekistan and the PRC.
5. Senior officials also noted with satisfaction the efforts to disseminate the Program activities, including (i) launch of a CAREC's Trade Facilitation Program website, (ii) forum proceedings through the CAREC Newsletter, and publications of the *Risk Management Guide* and two country studies.
6. Senior officials reaffirmed their support for the initiatives endorsed by the CCC:
 - (i) bilateral initiatives on (a) harmonization of cargo manifests by KAZ and PRC, (b) joint border control between MON and PRC, and between KAZ and KGZ, (c) pilot-testing on data exchanges for cargo clearance between KGZ and UZB, (d) preparation of an agreement on mutual administrative assistance and customs cooperation between MON and TAJ; and (e) implementation of the Regional Customs Modernization and Infrastructure Development Project by KGZ and TAJ;

- (ii) in-country activities on (a) business process reengineering and development of an “ICT master plans” by KGZ and TAJ; (b) customs modernization assessments by MON and AZE; and (iii) accession to the TIR Convention by PRC; and
- (iii) Regional events on (a) WCO’s New Framework of Standards and Common Data Model hosted by PRC Customs, (b) trade facilitation and customs modernization hosted by the Japan, and (c) a study tour hosted by the Government of Singapore.

7. The session was concluded with Senior Officials’ appreciation of the offer by Kazakhstan to host the Fifth CCC Meeting, tentatively scheduled on the first week of September 2006.