

**Dialogue on Regional Cooperation for Trade Facilitation:
Building on Existing Regional/Subregional Frameworks and Action Plans**
3 October 2011, Seoul, Republic of Korea

Background

The first Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum and Exhibition was organized in November 2009 in Bangkok, as a joint initiative of ESCAP and ADB in collaboration with the WCO. The theme of the Forum was “Setting the Regional Agenda” and led to a number of recommended actions to be pursued at the regional level including (a) Improve the effectiveness of the existing regional/subregional cooperation initiatives and identify synergies among them and (b) Consider development of a regional TF cooperation program for the greater Asia-Pacific region, building on existing regional/subregional initiatives. Such recommendations were reiterated during the Second and now annual Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum held in Malaysia in 2010, to which APEC and ASEAN Secretariat actively contributed. ESCAP Member States in July 2011 explicitly recommended the Secretariat to support the creation of a region-wide coordination mechanism, bringing together representatives of key regional organizations active in trade facilitation.¹

Following up on these recommendations, ESCAP is inviting relevant regional/sub-regional organizations to a Dialogue on Regional Cooperation for Trade Facilitation, to be held on the side of the Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum 2011.² Dialogue participants will share information with each other on their trade facilitation programmes and frameworks. Beside generally developing collaboration among existing regional organizations, this initial meeting would aim at, inter alia, determining trade facilitation focal points of each organization, identifying best practices or initiatives for possible replication, and harmonizing trade facilitation data collection methods or indicators. The meeting may also initiate work on a common framework or action plan consistent with those already developed.

Participants

The meeting is expected to bring together about 8-12 senior representatives and experts from regional organizations active in trade facilitation, including ESCAP, ADB [GMS/CAREC/.], ASEAN, APEC, ECO, WCO (Regional Office). Other organizations with regional/subregional trade facilitation related programmes and regional private sector associations active in trade facilitation may also participate.

Note: While organizations are normally expected to participate on a self-financed basis, the ESCAP Secretariat may provide partial coverage of travel expenses upon request.

¹ Report of the ESCAP Committee on Trade and Investment, Second Session, Bangkok, 27-29 July 2011.

² <http://www.unescap.org/tid/projects/tfforum11.asp>

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Tentative Programme

Monday 3 October 2011

9:00-9:10	Opening Session ESCAP
9:10-9:15	Self-introduction of participants
9:15-10:00	APTFF 2009 recommendations and related regional United Nations and ADB initiatives ESCAP <i>ADB [GMS/CAREC/.]</i>
10:00-10:15	Coffee Break
10:15-11:45	Regional organizations' trade facilitation initiatives and their action plans ³ <i>APEC</i> <i>ECO</i> <i>WCO Regional Office</i> <i>AFACT</i>
11:45-13:00	Lunch Break
13:00-14:15	Regional organizations' trade facilitation initiatives and actions plans (cont'ed) <i>SCO</i> <i>OCO</i> <i>SAARC Chamber of Commerce</i>
14:15-14:30	Coffee Break
14:30-16:15	Opportunities and Modalities for strengthening inter-regional/subregional cooperation on trade facilitation in 2011 and beyond ⁴ <i>Roundtable discussion</i>
16:15-16:45	Summary of agreed actions and conclusions <i>ESCAP and ADB</i>

³ See Draft guidelines for presentations and discussions.

⁴ Ibidem.