

Welcome Speech by Vice Minister Guo Songpu on CAREC JCC Seminar (Guangzhou, China, February 17, 2009)

Dear customs colleagues, dear friends, ladies and gentlemen,

I am honored to be here today. First please allow me, on behalf of the General Administration of China Customs, to welcome you all to the beautiful Guangzhou City, and to attend the CAREC Joint Customs Control workshop co-organized by China Customs and ADB.

CAREC countries are not only closed to each other geographically, but also share similar cultures. For years, these countries have cooperated extensively. In recent years, CAREC countries have enjoyed stable society and rapid trade development. The international community is very optimistic on their future development. Stable society and rapid trade development are keys to local economic development and friendly relationship among CAREC countries. However, along with the opportunities, there are also challenges for their development. The financial crisis resulted from US sub-prime crisis is spreading around rapidly, causing significant impact on global economy. Governments are taking measures to counteract.

In the mean time, terrorism, separatism, and extremism are threatening rapid economic growth. Customs is the cross border monitoring and control agency , responsible for trade facilitation and maintaining a safe trade environment. Therefore, we need to further mutually beneficial regional cooperation and reduce negative impact of international financial crisis on regional economic development.

Trade facilitation and customs cooperation are one of the four priorities of CAREC. For eight years, with ADB's support and joint effort of all member countries, the cooperation has been expanding in scope and progressing faster. Significant achievements have been made in terms of simplification and harmonization of documentations, ICT exchanges, risk management, intelligence exchange, capacity building, etc. These achievements have greatly promoted trade facilitation. Meanwhile, the transport corridor with new Europe-Asia Land Bridge as its main body has developed and is developing into an economic corridor. The rapid development of economic and trade demands regional customs to cooperate closer in border port management, and joint control and information exchange, in order to improve clearance efficiency.

This CAREC JCC workshop co-organized by China Customs and ADB serves two purposes. First is to establish a platform to CAREC customs to develop practical cooperation and

improve local economic and trade exchanges. Second is to hear from international customs community on the trend of customs joint control, and learn from member customs their successful experience in promoting joint customs control. Third is to discuss measures, means and approaches to improve border management cooperation, in order to simplify cross-border procedures, reduce clearance costs and improve clearance efficiency. Hereby, I'd like to make some suggestions on CAREC customs cooperation.

First is to continue improving customs exchange and cooperation. Closer customs cooperation is essential to speed up regional economic development and improve clearance efficiency. China Customs would love to work together with all CAREC customs to improve port development, harmonize customs procedures and enhance transparency of laws and regulations, so as to improve clearance efficiency and create a healthy and stable environment that enables smooth development of regional economic and trade.

Second is to expand the scope of cooperation. After years of unremitting efforts, CAREC customs cooperation has already formed a solid foundation, and the expansion of cooperation will benefit all parties involved. While consolidating the existing achievement, we should also actively

look for potential cooperation areas, such as trade facilitation, information exchange, intelligence, anti-terrorism, etc.

Third is to continue with capacity building. Since 2003, with the support of ADB, every year, China Customs funded one training session and workshop for CAREC customs, and a basic training for 1 or 2 weeks in Shanghai Customs College for CAREC customs officials. These workshops and trainings have improved understanding and friendship between China Customs and CAREC customs, and understood better the implementation of Customs in 21st Century Strategy and best practices of international customs, so that we are more determined to improve the customs cooperation. China Customs would like to increase investment and continue to provide support to the capacity building of CAREC customs.

I believe that, with our joint effort, this seminar will be a very successful one.

Ladies and gentlemen,

China and CAREC countries have a long standing friendship. Thousands of years ago, the world famous “Silk Road” was a testimony of our friendship. Now, the cooperation between China and CAREC countries is writing a new chapter of our friendship. Let us joint hands to promote CAREC customs cooperation and contribute to a better future of our regions.

Thank you very much.