

CAREC's Trade Facilitation Program

Single E-Window/One-Stop Service: The Way Forward

In many countries, companies¹ involved in international trade need to regularly prepare and submit voluminous paper documents to comply with import, export, and other regulatory requirements of government agencies. These documents include cargo manifests, declarations, delivery orders, and payment receipts, among others. The preparation and exchange of these paper documents can pose a serious burden to both government and business community and become a serious barrier to international trade.

One approach to address this problem is to establish a single electronic window. This enables companies to lodge standard-

ized trade-related information and documents only once at a single-entry point. The single electronic window expedites and simplifies information flows between the business community and government.

At present, a number of Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) participating countries are pursuing such practice. To support this, the Asian Development Bank, together with the Thailand Customs Department and World Customs Organization (WCO), conducted a seminar on Trade Facilitation and One-Stop Service on 27–29 July in Bangkok, Thailand, bringing together 23 customs officials from seven CAREC countries and a senior offi-

cial from the Kyrgyz Border Guard Services.

The seminar presented WCO's tools and instruments relevant to one-stop and single-window practices including the (i) Revised Kyoto Convention that provides broad principles on single window and one-stop practices; (ii) New Framework of Standards that promotes customs-to-customs and business-to-business cooperation and information exchanges; (iii) WCO's Data Model that defines the maximum data requirements (by all trade-related agencies); and (iv) Unique Consignment Reference Number that enables customs and traders

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THE WAY FORWARD (from left) S. Limpongpan, Director General of Thailand Customs Department; K. Mikuriya, Deputy Secretary General of World Customs Organization; and N. Siackhachanh, Director of Governance, Finance and Trade Division, East and Central Asia Department lead the Seminar on Trade Facilitation and One-Stop Service in Bangkok in July 2005

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Benefits of the Kyrgyz Experience

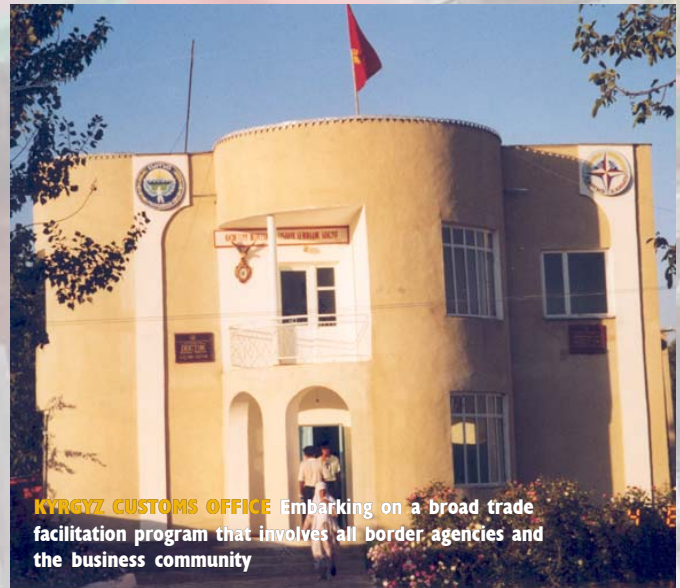
The Kyrgyz Republic is an active participating country of the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) Trade Facilitation Program. It has effectively leveraged support for modernizing customs services and strengthening cooperation with other CAREC participating countries. Its achievements include the (i) reform of the customs legal framework by revising the Customs Code, (ii) launch of a regional customs modernization and infrastructure development project together with Tajikistan, (iii) regional transit development, (iv) pilot testing of joint customs control with Kazakhstan, and (v) bilateral agreements with other CAREC participating countries for mutual customs assistance and exchange of customs statistics.

Modernization of customs services.

Simplifying and harmonizing customs procedures among the CAREC countries depends on concerted efforts in customs legal reforms in line with the Convention on the Simplification and Harmonization of Customs Procedures, commonly known as the Revised Kyoto Convention. Supported by a program loan from the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Kyrgyz Republic is one of the first CAREC countries that revised the Customs Code re-

leased on 12 July 2004. This provided a sound legal foundation to launch a regional project for customs automation and border post-infrastructure development, also supported by a \$7.5 million ADB loan. As part of the regional project, a technical assistance project is being implemented to support business process reengineering, training and change management, and development of an information technology master plan—all essential conditions for introducing a unified automated information system for customs services.

Joint customs control. This customs cooperation scheme enables participating countries to streamline border procedures and collectively economize resources deployed at border posts. The Kyrgyz Republic's and Kazakhstan's customs, both leading this initiative, successfully



KYRGYZ CUSTOMS OFFICE Embarking on a broad trade facilitation program that involves all border agencies and the business community

launched this activity at Akzhol-Kordai border crossing in July 2004. This bilateral cooperation has prompted the Kyrgyz Republic to embark on a broad trade facilitation program involving all border agencies and the business community.

Regional transit development. The Kyrgyz Customs chairs the transit initiatives under the CAREC Program, and has sponsored two regional events to prepare for a CAREC transit strategy. It entered into bilateral transit agreements with Kazakhstan (March 2004) and Tajikistan (July 2005) to improve regional transit conditions and complement the existing international transit system under the Transport Internationaux Routiers Agreement (known as TIR Convention).

Regional cooperation. The Kyrgyz Customs has effectively promoted bilateral cooperation under the program and entered into agreements on mutual administration assistance and customs cooperation with Mongolia (March 2004) and Azerbaijan (December 2004). It also signed an agreement for exchange of customs statistics with the General Administration of China Customs in September 2004. ■

Single E-Window

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to trace the movement of goods.

The seminar also presented the experiences of Japan and Thailand in pilot testing one-stop service and implementing the single electronic window. Japan's experience with single electronic window practice shows that efforts to measure clearance time and identify sources of delay through WCO's time release study could be a catalyst for unifying trade facilitation efforts. In Thailand, having a vision and strong leadership from customs management to es-

tablish a world-class customs administration are essential to steadily moving toward one-stop/single electronic window practices.

These experiences provided important lessons to CAREC countries that are now modernizing customs procedures, developing trade facilitation initiatives, and adopting international standards. ■

¹ These include exporters, importers, freight forwarders, shipping agents, customs brokers, transporters, carriers, and other companies involved in the international movement of goods.