

**INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT
(ITD)**

**ITD Workshop: "Trade Facilitation and the WTO"
Closing Remarks by Ambassador Manaspas Xuto, Executive Director**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank you all for your active participation over the past two days in this workshop on trade facilitation and the WTO. The interest you have demonstrated and the ideas you have expressed have validated our belief that this issue deserves further analysis and discussion. The International Institute for Trade and Development is pleased to have been able to organize this programme as a contribution to the Asia Cooperation Dialogue.

You know that the course is the first of a series of quarterly workshops on trade facilitation, each one highlighting a different perspective. The next workshop, scheduled for early next year, will focus on the activities of the several regional trade facilitation initiatives that involve ACD countries.

These two days have been a very good first step towards improving our mutual understanding of a trade and development issue that is attracting greater attention among policy makers. It is, of course, only a first step. To obtain practical benefits from the investments we have all made in this workshop there needs to be follow-up action. Let me take a few minutes to suggest some next steps.

First, it will help us at ITD to know as soon as possible who will be participating in the next workshop. This will enable us to provide some of the course materials in advance so that you will have the possibility to review and reflect upon the information. I recognize that you cannot decide by yourself whether you or someone else will be able to attend these subsequent

events. Therefore, I will pass on my opening remarks along with these words to your respective Embassy through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in preparation for the next round. Communications will also be carried on with the three countries which were not able to join us this time, namely, Brunei, Qatar and Bahrain. We will also be requesting your assistance in obtaining some basic data about trade facilitation issues and institutions in your own countries in order to provide you with points of comparison and contact in other ACD countries.

Second, while it would be ideal if the same participants are able to follow the entire series of five workshops, we recognize that this may not be possible in all cases, for various reasons. If you are returning for the second workshop - excellent. If other colleagues will participate, it would be very helpful if you could brief them on the information and issues covered in this first session. While the future seminars will not presume familiarity with the materials covered at this first session, it will be possible to proceed further and faster if we can maintain a shared level of understanding.

The specific information presented during the past two days is based on the experience of advisors from UNESCAP. Your questions and observations have helped to identify where additional information is required and this will be reflected in future revisions of the seminar content. Having initiated this cooperative dialogue on trade facilitation, we will be seeking your suggestions on what issues should be emphasized in the content and delivery of the remaining sessions in this series.

Please do not think that our only concern is for actions to improve this ITD seminar series. After all, the true measure of success is whether the information exchanged here contributes to improving trade procedures and practices in your countries. For some of you, the trade facilitation concepts,

instruments and institutions discussed yesterday and today are new and may require further explanation and evaluation. For others, the theory and principles are familiar but putting them into practice has been a challenge. ITD and UNESCAP want to work together with you, both to develop a deeper understanding of the issues and to see that there is appropriate and effective implementation.

I trust that the acquaintances you have been able to make with fellow participants will be helpful in your future endeavours. To those of you coming from your capitals, please accept my best wishes for an enjoyable time during the remainder of your stay in Bangkok and a safe return home. To all of you, thank you again for contributing to the success of this seminar.