

**WELCOME ADDRESS BY MR FONG YONG KIAN, DIRECTOR- GENERAL,
SINGAPORE CUSTOMS, AT THE APEC CUSTOMS-BUSINESS DIALOGUE
2009, 1 AUGUST 2009, GRAND COPTHORNE WATERFRONT HOTEL**

Mrs Lim Hwee Hua, Minister, Prime Minister's Office, Second Minister for Finance and Second Minister for Transport,

Mr Teng Theng Dar,
Chair, APEC Business Advisory Council,

Distinguished Guests;
Ladies and gentlemen,

1. Good morning and welcome to the 2009 APEC Customs-Business Dialogue. I hope our speakers and participants from other economies who have travelled all the way to Singapore have rested well from your travel. To our overseas participants, I thank you for making the trip here. To all of you, thank you for sacrificing your Saturday to join us today.

Sub-Committee on Customs Procedures (SCCP)

2. APEC was established in 1989 to further enhance economic growth and prosperity for the region and to strengthen the Asia-Pacific community. Since its inception, APEC has worked on the three key areas of trade and investment liberalization, business facilitation, and economic and technical cooperation. Key to achieving APEC's vision is what we now refer to as the 'Bogor Goals' *of free and open trade and investment in the Asia-Pacific by 2010 for industrialised economies and 2020 for developing economies.*

3. Customs is a key factor in achieving APEC's vision of "free and open trade" as the full benefits of trade liberalisation cannot be realised without

efficient customs processes. As such, the Sub-Committee on Customs Procedures, the SCCP, was established in 1994. Its main objectives are to simplify and harmonize regional customs procedures to ensure that goods and services move efficiently, effectively and safely through the region, and to reconcile and facilitate border control.

4. The SCCP adheres to the principles of trade facilitation, accountability, consistency, transparency and simplification of customs procedures. These principles are essential to create a cohesive and pro-trade business environment.

APEC Customs-Business Dialogue (ACBD) 2009

5. The APEC Customs-Business Dialogue, the ACBD, is an annual event to foster understanding and cooperation between Customs administrations and businesses in the Asia Pacific region, which is essential for trade facilitation. Singapore Customs is honoured to organise and host this year's ACBD.

6. The topics for this year's ACBD are priority issues for Customs and the business community. The discussions today will focus on three key areas. Firstly, we will discuss how information technology can be harnessed for trade facilitation so that goods can move seamlessly throughout the Asia Pacific region. Goods need to move quickly but also in a safe and secure manner. So, we will also discuss the latest developments in supply chain security and businesses' experience in participating in authorised economic operator programmes in various economies. Lastly, we will discuss ways to develop an open and transparent relationship between Customs administrations and businesses in the region.

7. The global trade landscape is becoming increasingly complex due to drivers such as proliferation of regional trade agreements, new business models, concerns about security threats, etc. In view of this, Customs can no longer

adopt a "one size fits all" approach in dealing with businesses. Customs needs to better understand the concerns of business, while business needs to know the requirements of Customs. The relationship between Customs and business should progress from one between the "regulator" and the "regulate" to a partnership that results in mutual benefits. The need for open communications between the Customs and businesses to enhance transparency and trust was one of the key lessons from the recently concluded APEC Trade Recovery Programme exercise.

Conclusion

8. Today, you will hear from a panel of knowledgeable and experienced speakers from international organisations, Customs administrations, multinational corporations and small-and-medium enterprises, who will share with us their rich experiences and diverse perspectives. I would like to thank the speakers and the moderators for contributing to the success of today's event. We are also deeply appreciative of Minister Lim for kindly agreeing to deliver the keynote address.

9. I wish all participants fruitful exchanges and frank discussions at today's 2009 APEC Customs-Business Dialogue.

Thank You.