Asian Council on Trade Facilitation Newsletter

Volume 3 January 2015

MESSAGE

We are pleased to publish this latest edition of the Asian Council on Trade Facilitation (ACTF) Newsletter. It features articles that highlight some of the current issues surrounding trade facilitation and trade generation, as well as a report on the breakout session on "Promoting Trade Facilitation and Trade Generation" held in conjunction with the 28th CACCI Conference on September 17-19, 2014 in Kuala Lumpur.

Also included in this edition is the position paper entitled "Trade Liberalization and Facilitation" issued at the end of the Conference. Among the recommendations put forward by CACCI in the paper were the following: a) CACCI needs to encourage and support Government efforts in trade liberalization and facilitation but, as collective Chambers of Commerce across the region, it also needs to take a leading positions to inform Governments of the needs of business and the common processes available through Chambers that can assist to improve trade within global supply chains; b) CACCI calls for Government to work with industry groups including exporters and importers to better improve the outcomes in trade negotiations, in the interests of co-opting business practice and promoting harmonization of international trade, rather than making it needlessly complex; c) CACCI endorses the B20's recommendations on trade and trade facilitation and urges the Governments of members to urgently adopt the protocol on the Trade Facilitation Agreement in the WTO; and d) CACCI calls on members to support the recommendation of the first Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) Business and Trade Facilitation Workshop.

Lastly, this edition features the 24-point Kathmandu Declaration for Sustainable Graduation of Asia-Pacific LDCs issued at the end of a Ministerial level meeting held in Kathmandu on December 18, 2014, as well as the Closing Remarks of the Foreign Minister of Nepal, Hon. Mahendra Bahadur Pandey, at the said meeting.

I hope that you will find this latest edition of the ACTF Newsletter useful and informative. I look forward to receiving your articles for our next issue, and to your continued support of our efforts to promote trade facilitation and trade generation in the region.

May the incoming 2015 be a productive and meaningful one for all of us!

R. B. RAUNIAR
Chairman
Asian Council on Trade Facilitation

Inside this issue ......

Breakout Session at the 28th CACCI Conference
Addresses Trade Facilitation and Trade Generation Issues

The 28th CACCI Conference held on September 17-29, 2014 in Kuala Lumpur featured a breakout session that focused on the topic ***"Promoting Trade Facilitation and Trade Generation"***

The two-huour session aimed to provide a platform for delegates to discuss trade facilitation issues and exchange views on measures to overcome impediments to intra-regional trade, with time-bound action plan if possible, in order to make Asia-Pacific region a global leader in trade, commerce, and investment.

The invited panelists included: **Y Bhg Datuk Dr. Rebecca Sta Maria**, Secretary General, Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI); **Y Bhg Dato' Dr Wong Lai Sum**, CEO, Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (MATRADE); **Mr. Jose Prunello**, Chief, Trade Support Institutions Strengthening Section, International Trade Centre; **Mr. Guido Bolatto**, Secretary General, Torino Chamber of Commerce and Industry; and **Mr. Bryan Clark**, Director, Trade and International Affairs, Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Co-chairing the session were **Mr. Rash Bihari Rauniar**, Chairman, Asian Council on Trade Facilitation and **Mr. Stewart Forbes**, Executive Director, Malaysian International Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and Chairman of CACCI Asian Council on Trade Generation.

The session speakers agreed that trade facilitation serves as a tool to increase trade and that Asia, being a dynamic region, should achieve further success by making an effort to achieve trade facilitation and trade generation.

They also spoke about the challenges of achieving trade facilitation and trade generation (e.g., growing non-tariff barriers, compliance with various international standards and certification, increasing competition, burdensome government procedures and red tape), and what the private sector and governments must do to address and overcome these challenges (e.g., improving the performance of trade support institutions, improving the international competitiveness of SMEs, and strengthening the integration of the business sector).

The speakers agreed that the private sector in the region must assume the equally important role in ensuring the success of trade facilitation agreements, and should lobby their various governments to have this very important agreement.

CACCI organized the breakout session as members recognize the importance and necessity of trade facilitation to develop and expand trade between and among businessmen in the region. They agree that simplification and harmonization of documents within the region is of prime importance, and that non-tariff barriers should be minimized. It helps move goods faster and cheaper across borders. It delivers win-win situation for traders (competitiveness), governments (efficient and transparent procedure, better use of resources), and consumers (avoidance of hidden costs).

CACCI members agree that while there have been increasing global inter-linkages, rapid developments in technology and transport, and speedier movement of goods, much work still needs to be done to achieve the end of a perfectly harmonized, transparent, consistent and expeditious international trade facilitation network. ■

Trade Liberalisation and Facilitation

Following is a position paper issued by CACCI during the 28th CACCI Conference held on September 17-19, 2014 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

WTO

In a world of increasing global trade, products are no longer made in one place with input from one country alone. Manufacturers look to reduce costs and seek component supply from many locations according to price and convenience, in order to produce a good at lowest cost and compete for consumer attention.

In an ideal world, the World Trade Organisation rules and multilateral agreements on global trading frameworks that reduce inefficiencies would prevail, however with the difficulties in finalizing the Doha Round, nations are increasingly turning to bilateral and regional trade agreements to secure advances in competitive supply chains with their major trading partners.

Again, in an ideal world these "smaller" trade deals would be aimed at WTO compliance with an eventual goal of seeing them all linked together under the WTO. To this end, the more similar the trade deals, the more trade facilitating they will be.

In the end, free trade agreements are designed to improve international trade and ultimately reduce costs for consumers. The commercial business interest is to be able to access and comply with the terms of each agreement in an efficient way. To this end, standardisation across international trade is trade facilitating. If producers and manufactures know that by doing something the same way each time they develop a product, then they can predict the requirements with certainty. This means the process can be repeated and then automated, which reduces costs for repetitive processes.

The costs of border crossing can be a sizable component of the final built up costs to production costs for manufactures and ultimately end consumers. Producers need to be aware of all of the rules and systems for each market. Complex market entry requirements mean that companies need to have staff or advisers analysing the entry systems, and then internal staff at each level of the transaction process must understand these requirements so they can take advantage of the entry requirements. Business costs are reduced when these systems are predictable and repeatable.

In the increasingly complex world of international trade, with goods passing through many hands before the final consumer, the traceability of the origin of the goods is increasingly important. The systems to support the statements that importers and exporters require for market entry and for specific rules relating to preferential trade agreements need to be streamlined and harmonised to reduce costs and complexity to business. Harmonisation around commonly used systems reduces costs and the best of these systems are harmonised and already well accepted by business outside of the FTA's. By co-opting the most commonly-used practices already employed by business, rules of origin under FTA's will be less costly and more efficient.

The ASEAN Business Advisory Committee (ASEAN BAC) along with the Asian Development Bank and a number of independent studies have indicated that despite widespread Government interest in free trade agreements, utilisation by commercial companies is low. There may be a number of reasons for this but awareness of the agreement features if often one reason for low use, but similarly difficulty in accessing the benefits is also cited as a reason for low participation.

Given that Australia and many Asian nations are now party to two other regional Free trade agreements in the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and now the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), which both involve largely the same group of Asian trading partners, we are concerned that instead of a predictable harmonised system for trade and investment, each agreement could result in differing approaches covering largely the same markets, (at odds with the pre agreement systems) thus impacting negatively on business costs and reducing progress towards Simplification and Harmonization of Customs Procedures.

Recommendation:

CACCI needs to encourage and support Government efforts in trade liberalisation and facilitation but we, as collective Chambers of Commerce across our region also need to take a leading position to inform Governments of the needs of business and the common processes available through Chambers that can assist to improve trade within global supply chains.

WTO "Bali Package"

In December 2013, WTO members reached consensus on the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) at the Ministerial Conference held in Bali, Indonesia.

The TFA contains twelve articles regarding Trade Facilitation and Customs Cooperation in Section I, ten articles on special and differential treatment for developing countries and least-developed countries in Section II and two articles on institutional arrangements and final provisions in Section III. The TFA deals almost entirely with Customs-related topics.

* **Section I**

Art.1 Publication and availability of information
Art.2 Consultation
Art.3 Advance ruling
Art.4 Appeal/Review procedures
Art.5 Other measures for transparency etc.
Art.6 Fee and Charges
Art.7 Release and Clearance of goods
Art.8 Border Agency Cooperation

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Art.9 Movement of goods intended for import
Art.10 Formalities
Art.11 Transit
Art.12 Customs cooperation

*** Section II**
Special and Differential Treatment for Developing Countries and Least-Developed Countries
- Rules about Categories A, B and C
- Assistance for Capacity Building
- Information to be submitted to the TF CommitteE
- Final provision

*** Section III**
Institutional arrangements and final provisions
- Committee on Trade Facilitation
- National Committee on Trade Facilitation
- Final provisions

Unfortunately recent WTO sessions failed to secure the adoption of the protocol on the Trade Facilitation Agreement.

Irrespective of WTO developments, the World Customs Organisation has developed an online toolkit of information to assist parties to implement the "Bali package".

Asia's FTAs: The Noodle Bowl

In the absence of progress in the WTO, the Governments across the region have negotiated a number of bilateral and multilateral free trade agreements in pursuit of improved trade and investment opportunities which seek to benefit the national and regional economy, our national political interests and importantly our commercial sector.

Country	AANZFTA	TPP	RCEP
Commencement date	2010	Under negotiation	Under negotiation
Brunei	X	X	X
Myanmar	X		X
Cambodia	X		X
Indonesia*	X		X
Laos	X		X
Malaysia*	X		X
the Philippines	X		X
Singapore*	X	X	X
Thailand*	X		X
Vietnam	X	X	X
New Zealand*	X	X	X
USA*		X	
Canada		X	
Mexico		X	
Chile*		X	
Peru		X	
Japan*			X
China*			X
India*			X
Rep of Korea*			X
Australia	X	X	X

The table above indicates the countries involved (or potentially involved) in regional FTA's. Further information on bilateral FTAs is included in the Appendices.

Across these agreements, however, there are a range of administrative instruments in terms of both the methods for calculation to determine origin and also the documentary requirements. Companies need to be aware of the differences in order to take advantage of the terms of the agreement and the documentary requirements. The requirement for knowledge and the document handling process adds real costs to business. Streamlining or harmonisation with existing business practice reduces costs for business. Variations across each FTA (exacerbated if the one country has multiple systems in place) increase the transaction costs to the commercial sector under any given FTA.

Similarly we would imagine that Customs costs also rise with variation in schemes, as officials receiving documents need to differentiate between applicable FTA's as the goods pass through the border.

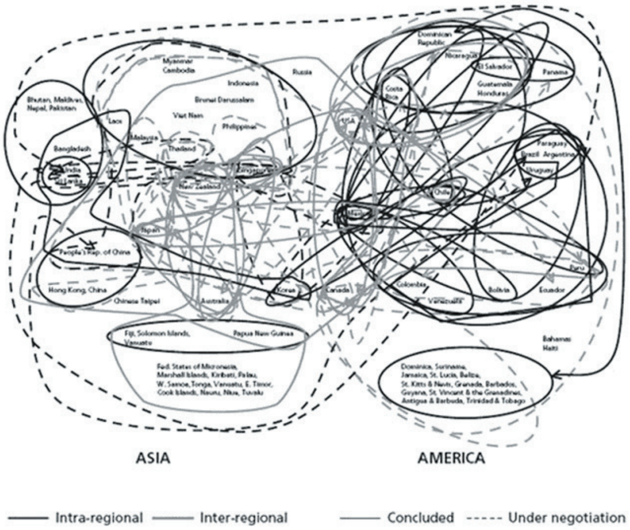
There is increasing concern globally that the rise of bilateral and regional FTA's is causing increased complexity, which in turn is reducing the value of the agreements to the commercial sector. Various commentators have coined this the Spaghetti Bowl, or the Noodle Bowl effect. This reflects issues that overlapping and inconsistent rules and administrative requirements result in confusion for international business.

In recognition of this, in 1953 The International Chamber of Commerce submitted a resolution to the Contracting Parties to GATT recommending the adoption of a uniform definition for determining the nationality of manufactured goods. This resolution proposed the concept of last substantial transformation. This proposal, while not adopted by GATT, was influential and was eventually adopted in the 1974 International Convention on the Simplification of Customs Procedures.

It is also worth noting that at the World Customs Organization two-day conference on rules of origin around the world (Getting to grips with origin, Brussels, 2008) it was reported:

"With regard to preferential rules of origin the Director [Mr. Antoine Manga, Director Trade and Tariff Directorate] of the World Customs Organization emphasized that the growing complexity of various sets of preferential rules of origin could have harmful effects for the international trading system. Customs administrations and the private sector had to cope with a plethora of different rules of origin contained in various trade agreements which sometimes are even overlapping. He reminded the audience of the Conference that the web of incoherent and intricate rules of origin was difficult to administer by Customs administrations and that various sets of rules of origin could also greatly complicate production processes of suppliers which

The "spaghetti bowl" of FTA's in the Americas and Asia-Pacific (2005)



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Trade Liberalization

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were obliged to tailor their products for different preferential markets in order to satisfy the requirements of specific rules of origin. Therefore, economists spoke about a 'spaghetti bowl' phenomenon of rules of origin."

Currently FTAs do not necessarily incorporate the WTO Bali package, nor the WCO tools on this subject.

Recommendation:

CACCI calls for Government to work with industry groups including exporters and importers to better improve the outcomes in trade negotiations, in the interests of co-opting business practice and promoting harmonisation of international trade, rather than making it needlessly complex. CACCI should support establishment of and involvement in local trade facilitation committees as required within the Bali package.

B20

The recent B20 Summit in Sydney recognised that international trade is the world's growth engine. It is essential to securing global job creation and higher living standards. Trade will be critical to the G20's objective of raising global growth by at least 2 per cent above business-as-usual targets over the next five years. Therefore, it is concerning that trade growth is still well below pre-global financial crisis levels.

The international business community strongly urges G20 Leaders to stamp their authority on the global trading system by securing trade as a core feature of the G20 Agenda. **A targeted set of four** high impact **B20 recommendations** , if implemented, could generate up to $3.4 trillion in GDP growth and support more than 50 million jobs across the G20 economies. This would be akin to adding another Germany to the global economy. Business therefore encourages each G20 economy to incorporate an ambitious domestic reform agenda, which explicitly targets trade-enhancing measures, into their Country Growth Strategies. This will encourage countries and businesses to allocate their scarce resources to the industries and activities where they are most competitive, acknowledging that 'Made in the World' is the reality of modern global trade.

The recommendations cover:

- Rapidly implement and ratify the Bali Agreement on Trade Facilitation
- Reinforce the standstill on protectionism and wind back barriers introduced since the implementation of the standstill, especially non-tariff barriers
- Develop country-specific supply chain strategies
- Ensure preferential trade agreements realise better business outcomes

Recommendation:

CACCI endorses the B20's recommendations on trade and trade facilitation and urges the Governments of members to urgently adopt the protocol on the Trade Facilitation Agreement in the WTO.

Indian Ocean Rim Business and Trade Facilitation Workshop

With the participation by government as well as private sector representatives from 12 member-states (Australia, Comoros, India, Iran, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Malaysia, Seychelles, South Africa and Tanzania), two dialogue partners (France and the USA), the International Trade Centre (ITC) and the World Bank, the first Business and Trade Facilitation Workshop was held in Mauritius on 4-5th August 2014.

Member States agreed that the World Bank's Doing Business Index was a good benchmark to measure the propensity of countries to carry out continuous reform in trade and business facilitation. Countries need to emulate the best frontier countries in order to improve their domestic practices.

Since no global consensus could be reached on the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) at the last WTO meeting, participants agreed that the implementation of TFA could nevertheless be implemented by countries unilaterally.

The currently DRAFT Recommendations from the workshop address a range of issues including:

a. pursuing an agenda for IOR region business and trade facilitation at the World Bank by formulating a Business and Trade Facilitation Regional Implementation Plan;

b. establishment of an intra-private sector consensus in the region in order to educate private sector cohorts on policy positions prior to high level negotiations.

c. a feasibility study on the business travel card across IOR region,

d. peer-to-peer learning mechanisms on: (i) customs procedures and documentation, (ii) registration of companies, and (iii) emulating the example of the Australian Trade Links as a platform for information sharing.

e. Members expressed interest in a Free Trade Area for IORA.

Recommendation:

CACCI members support the recommendations of the first IORA Business and Trade Facilitation Workshop.

Conclusion

From the perspective of commercial business it would be preferable if the Doha Round of trade talks were finalised, a global agreement for liberalised trade (including of facilitation arrangements) were concluded. However, recognising this is not likely in the short term, large regional preferential trade agreements are the next best option.

Within this framework, however, we support continued action on simplification and harmonisation of customs procedures. The issue then is what to harmonise and what to simplify.

At a business level, the International Chamber of Commerce, working with the World Customs Organisation has been at the forefront of improved trade facilitation procedures for over 110 years. The systems developed over this time are: Effective, Efficient, Accepted, and Predictable.

These need to be the hallmarks of Government actions in trade facilitation.

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR TRADE FACILITATION FOR THE SASEC PROGRAM 2014-2018

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) Program started in 2001, and comprises Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal. SASEC was designed to be a project-based initiative at the onset, and although the take-off years were met with many challenges, it gradually gained momentum with the support of regional technical assistance from the Asian Development Bank (ADB). ADB's Regional Cooperation Strategy for South Asia, 2011-2015, which was approved in December 2011, identified three priority areas for cooperation: (i) trade facilitation; (ii) transport and (iii) energy.

2. The SASEC Trade Facilitation and Transport Working Group (TFTWG), which met in Bangkok (October 2011), Kolkata (March 2012) and Thimphu (November 2012), discussed priority activities, which included (i) a subregional trade facilitation program; (ii) cross-border road corridor and border infrastructure development; and (iii) technical assistance to support capacity building and institutional development for transport and trade facilitation. A SASEC Trade Facilitation Week was held on 25-28 March 2013 in Bangkok, Thailand, which had served as a platform among senior officials from SASEC countries, Maldives, and Sri Lanka, as well as senior representatives of relevant international organizations to exchange knowledge and information on (i) issues and best practices on trade and transit facilitation, (ii) primary constraints to trade facilitation, and (iii) practical measures to address these issues and constraints. On the last day of the Trade Facilitation Week, a SASEC Customs Subgroup was established to help prepare, formulate, and implement a strategy and road map for customs modernization/ reforms.

II. THE IMPORTANCE OF TRADE FACILITATION

3. The priority accorded to trade facilitation reflects the countries' recognition of both its enormous challenges and potentials. South Asia is among the least integrated region in the world. Bottlenecks in trade facilitation have been identified as the leading nontariff barriers (NTBs), which reduce intra-regional trade in South Asia. SASEC countries generally rank low in the World Bank "league tables". In 2011 for instance, Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Nepal ranked in the lower half of the Doing Business Survey. They were classified as belonging to the "logistics unfriendly" countries in the Logistics Performance Index (LPI). India has been the exception.

4. Estimates of the impact of trade facilitation on trade flows, industry competitiveness, and overall welfare indicate that significant incremental benefits would emanate from improvements in trade facilitation. Recent modeling work for South Asia showed that: (i) the removal of tariffs have relatively lower impact on trade than for improvements in trade facilitation; (ii) trade facilitation reforms will have large impacts on South Asian countries' trade among themselves and the rest of the world; and (iii) lowering border costs will enhance greater outsourcing potentials for greater cost competitiveness and will impact significantly on intra-regional trade such as in textiles and clothing in Bangladesh, and for the automobile and other manufacturing industries in India.

III. TRADE FACILITATION ISSUES

5. Trade facilitation in South Asia faces complex and numerous challenges. The major issues include cumbersome customs procedures, inadequate cross-border facilities, and limited and poor transport connectivity. Many of the trade facilitation issues are common across the SASEC countries, although their specific impact may differ at the national level due to differences in geography, legislative regimes, institutional capacities and type of goods traded, among others. The main constraints tend to be concentrated in relation to the processing of import traffic where the "control" aspects are more prevalent. Key trade facilitation issues are listed below, and explained in Appendix 1.

IV. CURRENT TRADE FACILITATION INITIATIVES

6. Trade facilitation in South Asia is currently being addressed through a number of initiatives at the national and subregional levels. Subregional initiatives pursued through the SASEC Program are supported by multilateral organizations such as the ADB, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), WCO, as well as from the Government of Japan.

7. In November 2012, the SASEC Trade Facilitation Program was

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Strategic Framework

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initiated, supported by ADB through a budget support loan/grant of $47.67 million—$21 million for Bangladesh; $11.67 million for Bhutan; and $15 million for Nepal. The Program's objective of enhancing the processing of cross-border trade will be pursued through three components: (i) the development of modern and effective customs administrations, which would focus on assisting the three beneficiary countries in acceding to, and complying with, the provisions of the RKC, as well as helping them in applying WCO's Framework of Standards to Secure and Facilitate Global Trade (SAFE Framework); (ii) streamlined and transparent regulations and procedures, which involve the development and upgrading of automated customs management systems including the establishment of National Singe Windows (NSW); and (iii) improved services and information for traders and investors, which would involve the development of trade portals and the establishment of trade facilitation committees in each country. To complement the SASEC Trade Facilitation Program, ADB approved in August and September 2013, four technical assistance projects—one each for Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Nepal, and one regional—funded by the Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction for $1.5 million each. The aim of these projects is to help (i) build capacity for customs reforms, (ii) carry out analytical work and provide policy advice on customs modernization, and (iii) promote customs cooperation and knowledge sharing among SASEC countries. ■

Key Trade Facilitation Issues in SASEC

Customs:

- Excessive documentation: The overall volume of documentation required to obtain clearance remains to be a core problem resulting in higher transaction costs.
- Inadequate implementation of modern customs procedures: Customs' current approach to enforcement and compliance is still based on a combination of both physical and documentary control mechanisms that potentially conflict with modern customs organizations best practice.
- Limited application of information and communication technology: Despite the increase in information and communications technology (ICT) applications in customs operations, it is used primarily as a transaction recording system to generate a customs declarations database, rather than as a fully-automated processing system as envisaged under the Revised Kyoto Convention (RKC).
- Lack of transparency on import-export requirements: Low ICT capacity and usage, and the absence of trade portals and websites have hindered the more transparent dissemination of import, export, and transit requirements.
- Weak compliance with World Customs Organization's Revised Kyoto Convention: The slow implementation of modern customs procedures reflects in large part, the weak compliance with the World Customs Organization's (WCO) RKC.

Standards and Conformance:

- Lack of compliance with technical standards: Technical regulations, standards, and conformity assessment procedures vary between SASEC countries, compounded by the lack of a common or harmonized approach to using the correct standard and conformity assessment procedure to ensure compliance.

Border Facilities:

- Lack of adequate border facilities: The logistics sector in South Asia is largely undeveloped, and generally suffers from inadequate transport infrastructure (road, rail, maritime, and air transport) and border infrastructure.

Transport Facilitation:

- Lack of through transport arrangements: One of the critical factors preventing SASEC from achieving its full trading potential is the absence of transport facilitation arrangements, although partial transit exists for landlocked countries such as Bhutan and Nepal.

Legislative, Regulatory, and Institutional Dimensions:

- Need for legal and regulatory changes and reforms for trade facilitation: SASEC countries each have unique legislative mechanisms that could affect the timing and effective implementation of trade facilitation initiatives.
- Need for improved coordination among various stakeholders involved in trade facilitation: Trade facilitation comprises a complex set of functions that involve multiple ministries and agencies, which makes coordination a significant challenge.

Moving toward the ASEAN Economic Community

By Rebecca Fatima Sta Maria ,The Star/Asia News Network

In early 2006, ASEAN senior economic officials were given this challenge by their ministers: craft the economic future of the grouping; an economic community not by 2020, as stipulated in ASEAN Vision 2020, but in 2015.

Thus began the work toward an economically integrated ASEAN.

Translation: the free movement of goods and services; and freer movement of capital and talents among the ten member states.

In 2006, when the proposal to push for the realization of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) in 2015 was mooted, it made economic sense.

We had just come out of a major economic crisis, and initiatives toward the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) were well on the way. We were looking forward to the next steps toward deeper economic integration.

So we drew up the AEC Blueprint as the guiding framework, and the AEC Scorecard to ensure that we did what we said we were going to do. And in all fairness, we have worked tirelessly to ensure that implementation was on track.

But as 2015 dawns on us, we are confronted with questions about the very essence of the AEC. Economic pressures brought on by global economic uncertainties are putting a strain on efforts toward regional economic integration.

Member states appear to be buckling under the pressures of protectionism. But short-term relief will not augur well for the long-term benefits of the region.

Then there are the skeptics and naysayers. Given the range in economic development, diverse political and economic systems and cultural differences, can ASEAN be molded into a community?

More disturbing are questions such as, "Are we ready?" and "Are our SMEs ready?" or fear-mongering questions such as "Will we see an influx of labor in our shores come 2015?"

Rodolfo Severino Jr., the former ASEAN secretary-general, is quoted as saying, "The main challenge is this first, the lack of awareness of the benefits, particularly of the benefits of regional integration."

Our critics have been relentless. OK, perhaps this reflects our failure to communicate our achievements, our plans. Note to self: step up public engagement!

So what have we to show for ASEAN economic integration? The ASEAN Free Trade Agreement is in full implementation, and has been in full implementation since Jan. 1, 2010.

Member states are on track with the liberalization of the services sectors. Our investment agreement is in place. We now have an agreement to facilitate the freer movement of skills among member states.

To be sure, ASEAN was pragmatic in its approach to economic integration. Right at the outset, it was clear that the grouping was not looking to be a Customs union.

Open Regionalism Approach

That would evolve with time. Because of the differing economic and political systems, as well as differing levels of economic development, the grouping adopted an open regionalism approach.

This would mean that regional economic integration would not be a drag on the growth plans of the member states.

Rather, we took the "rising tide" stance, a "prosper thy neighbor" attitude as we addressed the development gaps among member states.

This approach has panned out successfully for the grouping. It has contributed positively to the region's economic growth and industrial development.

Greater economic integration is also evidenced in the involvement of our companies in the global and regional supply and value chains.

There are more than 600 Malaysian companies operating in ASEAN, capitalizing on the robust growth of the region. Likewise, Malaysia is also host to a number of companies from the region.

We have done much to harmonize our "at-the-border" trade facilitation. The ASEAN Single Window (a system of speeding up cargo clearance) is progressing.

The pilot initiative for self-certification (a system where exporters take responsibility for certifying Customs documentation instead of going through governments) is also looking promising.

Intra-regional trade continues to grow and now amounts to just over 24 percent of the groupings' global trade of US$2.5 trillion.

ASEAN's share of global foreign direct investment is also up, increasing from 15.1 percent in 2010 to 17.4 percent in 2013, to total US$122.4 billion. And ASEAN has been growing over 5 percent per annum in recent years.

We have done a lot to break down trade and investment barriers among the 10 member states. But there is much for us to do.

Our "to do" list includes work on financial integration and inclusion, confronting and removing non-tariff barriers, improving connectivity and regulatory coherence, strengthening key institutions to ensure good governance and inclusive and sustainable economic development, legal harmonization, and improvements in tax-related matters.

Dr. Rebecca Fatima Sta Maria is secretary-general of the Ministry of International Trade and Industry.

Source: The China Post, December 3, 2014

FBCCI' NTM Desk for Monitoring Non-Tariff Measures

South Asia has enormous potential focusing economic integration and move the region to unprecedented prosperity. There is immense opportunity for trade generation through economic cooperation among the SAARC countries to achieve prosperity and to maintain sustained growth. But regional trade does not get a momentum in South Asia mainly due to lack of proper trade facilitation. Major trade facilitation issues to be focused for enhancing economic integration in this region are the improvement of infrastructure, including warehousing facilities at land customs stations, reduction of numerous non-tariff measures most of which relate to standards and testing requirements and the development of integrated cross-border management across the region.

NTMs (Non-Tariff Measures) are considered as the major obstacle in trade liberalization among the SAARC countries. It is now becoming very important to focus on the NTMs issues for advancing trade cooperation among the SAARC countries for economic integration. In this context, Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FBCCI) has set up the NTM (Non-Tariff Measures) Desk with cooperation of SAARC TPN (SAARC Trade Promotion Network) and GIZ (German Development Cooperation) with a view to regularly monitoring and reporting the NTMs (Non-Tariff Measures) in the SAARC region and use the information as the basis of lobbying and advocacy for reduction and elimination of NTMs in the countries and in region.

The NTM Desk will collect information on non-tariff measures/ barriers or other obstacles faced by the exporters during exporting their products. NTM Desk will consult with the exporters and other stakeholders (C& F Agents, Customs Officials, Land Port officials) on regular basis to get the information. Seminars, public private dialogue, capacity building program etc. on NTMs issues will be organized. The Desk will also undertake field visits to major land customs stations (LCS) and ports through which major volume of the products are traded and learn the situation from the traders, transporters, and officials respective views on cost, steps and time.

The NTM Desk already started its function and officials are closely working with the stakeholders to point out the NTMs. Initially Fruit Juice/ drinks and other food items have been selected as the priority products to work on NTMs. Officials of the Desk already visited Benapol Land Port of Jessore district, Sheola Land Custom Station and Tamabil Land Custom Station of Sylhet district and Sonamosjid Land Port of Chapai Nawabganj district to get information on infrastructure facilities and others.

They exchanged views with local customs officials, land port officials, Chamber leaders, Business leaders, C & F agents, investors, transport drivers, workers and other stakeholders. During discussion a number of issues on NTMs were raised that may be resolved through coordination / negotiation with Government and other concerned. Issues raised by the stakeholders on NTMs are as follows:

The trade imbalance between India & Bangladesh is a major concern for many years. The imbalance is because of various trade barriers. Removal of the barriers could help to improve the trade.

North-East region of India remain a market with a significant export potential for Bangladesh because of its close proximity to Bangladesh and the high cost of trade transaction with the rest of India.

Apart from inadequate border infrastructure on trade, tariff and non-tariff barriers impede the growth of trade from Bangladesh to India.

Although India has granted Bangladesh duty-free access to all items except tobacco and liquor, there exists reportedly several types of local duties. Bangladeshi exporters have to pay customs surcharges and other duties, including basic duty of customs, additional duty, countervailing duty and so on.

Poor logistics for land ports, cumbersome customs requirements, manual clearance, excessive inspection as an excuse for security, lack of warehouse facilities in many land ports, and no testing facility nearby in any land port are the major issues to be focused for trade facilitation through land ports.

Attention should be paid to enhance the export basket of Bangladesh. We also need exportable products with brand popularity, better quality and competitive pricing to increase the exports to India with a view to taking the benefits of zero duty in the Indian market.

Specific views on major bottleneck for trade with neighboring countries:

Lack of adequate customs and port facilities: Poor logistics, lack of warehouse facilities, narrow and poor condition of roads in most of the land ports both of India and Bangladesh, also no testing facilities in any Indian land port bordering Bangladesh, etc. are major hurdles in the way of smooth movement of goods exported by Bangladesh to India.

Need for building dedicated bypass roads and multi-lanes to reduce congestion at LCSs, expanding areas at LCSs with appropriate parking and warehousing facilities. LCSs should be equipped with standard weight, lift machines, scanners etc. Coordinating development of LCSs on both sides of the two country's border is very important. Automation and proper traffic control system are also very much required at the LCSs.

Cumbersome export procedures of documentation: This is the major hurdles hindering the trade between Bangladesh and India. Number of documentation and processing for assessment must be rationalized. Standardization and harmonization of

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FBCCI NTM Desk

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customs procedures should be ensured.

Non-acceptance of test certificates issued by Bangladeshi Laboratory: Quality standard certificate issued by BSTI of Bangladesh is not accepted by India. In the absence of testing facilities in the locality (Indian side), the samples are sent to far away laboratories which is the main barriers for exporting food items from Bangladesh. It is necessary to establish testing facilities at major border points of India and sign mutual recognition agreements with commensurate strengthening of the BSTI.

Non-availability of advantage of 5-20% of random sampling: As per the Circular No 3/2011- Customs of Government of India dated January 6, 2011, certain categories of processed food/food items, the testing requirement may be relaxed (5-20% of random sampling) if 5 consecutive shipments are found satisfactory. But due to the sub clause 7(b) (iii) of the circular the

concerned land customs authority of India has the full authority to reject the advantage. So the advantage of the provision depends on the satisfaction of Indian customs authority.

Bonded Warehouse Issue: Processed food exporters find it difficult to access the north-eastern states of India as the region's customs authorities have set a new rule asking the traders to store the imported products in bonded warehouses (from June 1, 2010) until the completion of laboratory tests on shipments. To take a bonded warehouse the importers need a Bank Solvency Certificate. The earlier practice was to store the goods in the importers' warehouse.

National Treatment for Bangladeshi products: Bangladeshi products are supposed to get 'national treatment' from India, but they do not get it. National treatment would have assured that Bangladeshi goods would not be subjected to any obstacle that Indian goods exported from India to Bangladesh do not face. During export of fruit juice from Bangladesh to India, the customs authorities of India frequently change their positions about where to print the expiry date of the juice -- on the bottom of the bottle or on the label of the bottle.

Such changed rules increase the cost of production.

Lack of Banking services in border areas also hampers the trade. Banking service should be ensured at Border points.

Non- availability of mobile phone network: Proper networking of mobile phone should be ensured at the LCSs for smooth trade communication.

Visa and travel restrictions: Procedures for obtaining Indian visa should be simplified at least for the businessmen.

Coordination of Concerned Departments: Coordination meeting among the Bangladesh Customs, Land Port Authority, BGB, C&F Agents, exporters, importers and other stakeholders should be held on regular basis with a view to improving the services of the LCSs which will also help for trade facilitation. The meeting may be held at field level and headquarter level as well. Excessive inspection as an excuse for security may be reduced at the LCSs through joint inspection by Customs and BGB.

Concerned Offices near the Land Ports/LCSs: Branch Offices of EPB, BOI and BSTI may be established near all the active LCSs for better trade facilitation.

Road/ Railway communication: Both road and rail communication must be improved all over the country both for import and exports.

FBCCI NTM Desk will increase its area of works gradually. The Desk is planning to hold dialogues and seminars on issues related to export promotion, development of infrastructure for trade facilitations, regional trade, etc in near future where representatives both from Government and private sectors and other stakeholders will be invited. Capacity building programs will also be taken for trade bodies to develop understanding and knowledge about NTMs and NTBs.

NTM Desks have also been set up at FICCI (Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry), FPCCI (Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry) and CNI (Confederation of Nepalese Chambers). NTM Desk will also be set up at the National Chambers of other SAARC countries. It is expected that NTM Desks will be helpful in making timely decisions and identifying NTMs and the problems which are being faced by the exporters in the South Asian countries.

Source: FBCCI Business News ■

Honorable Minister for Commerce, Mr. Tofail Ahmed, M. P., today officially launched the study report "NTMs in South Asia: Assessment and Analysis". The program was organized jointly by Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Dhaka (MCCI) along with the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI), SME Foundation, and Export Promotion Bureau. (Source: MCCI, September 10, 2014)

Kathmandu Declaration for Sustainable Graduation of Asia-Pacific LDCs

Issued at the end of the Ministeral level meeting on Sustainable Graduation of Asia-Pacific Least Development Countries held in Kathmandu, Nepal on December 18, 2014.

1. We, Ministers and representatives of the least developed countries have met in Kathmandu, Nepal, from 16-18 December 2014 on Graduation and Post-2015 Development Agenda and adopted this Ministerial Declaration;

2. We welcome the participation at the meeting of development partners, organizations of the United Nations system, the private sector, academia and civil society;

3. We collectively renew our ambitions to graduate from the LDC category by fulfilling the graduation criteria. In this regard, we recall UNGA resolutions 59/209 of 20 December 2004 and resolution 67/221 of 21 December 2012 on a smooth transition for countries graduating from the category of least developed countries. We underscore that our efforts towards graduation are underpinned by our ownership and leadership, as the primary responsibility for development lies with the countries themselves, but they need to be supported by concrete and substantial international measures in a spirit of shared responsibility and mutual accountability;

4. We emphasize that graduation from the least developed country category is an important milestone. We note with appreciation that some LDCs in the region have already met the criteria for graduation, while some others have expressed their commitment to reach the status of graduation in the next few years. As we identify key drivers of graduation based on our national development strategies, we call upon our development partners to provide adequate incentives and support measures to countries in the process of graduation and beyond in order to accelerate their progress in a sustained manner;

5. We recognize the challenges and vulnerabilities imposed on some of the LDCs, including those that are also small island developing states in the Pacific. In this regard, we acknowledge that climate change is a crucial factor that should be considered in the development of their national graduation assessment and strategies and development partners should support these strategies;

6. We also emphasize that graduation should not be seen as an end goal, but should rather be regarded as a means to achieve structural change, poverty eradication and economic diversification in the country and thereby contribute to the sustainable development goals in an accelerated and effective manner. In this regard, we underline that our efforts and those of our partners, towards fulfilling the graduation criteria are ultimately aimed at making a transformative change in our economies and in the lives of people so that, unlike the MDGs, we do not fall behind in the realization of the post-2015 development agenda and SDGs;

7. We also reaffirm the decision of the General Assembly, at its current session, that all relevant organizations of the United Nations system, led by the Office of the High Representative for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, should extend necessary support to countries aspiring to graduate in the preparation of their national graduation and smooth transition strategies and the sharing of best practices and lessons learned;

8. We acknowledge that productive capacity-building is essential to foster structural transformation for accelerated and inclusive growth, employment generation and poverty eradication, and thus should be at the center of national policies and international support measures for graduation and smooth transition. We call for strong national leadership, effective action and enhanced and coherent international support to substantially upgrade human and institutional capacity-building, enhance investment in physical infrastructure development, improve access to energy, which should be accompanied by improved trade, investment and development finance at all levels, including at the local level, enhanced capacity in the areas of private sector development, technology and innovation, investment and financial services. Adequate and sustained support should also be provided to the LDCs moving towards a low carbon economy. In this regard, we welcome the Cotonou Agenda for productive capacity building in LDCs adopted in Cotonou on 31 July 2014;

9. We underline the growing importance of regional cooperation and integration in the context of Asia-Pacific LDCs especially in the areas of economic cooperation and trade integration; investment promotion, infrastructure, connectivity, energy, water, climate change and disaster risk reduction and other relevant areas. We call for effective sharing of best practices, knowledge, technology and financing arrangements in all relevant areas of development between the Asia-Pacific LDCs and their development partners. The unique geographical position of most of the Asia-Pacific LDCs, especially their close proximity to major actors in regional and global value chains, bodes well for their prospects of beneficial integration into regional and global economy and trade. Further, emerging economies in the region are moving up the value chain, leaving behind growing space for Asia Pacific LDCs to develop vibrant and competitive manufacturing and services activities, achieve fundamental structural transformation, and build resilient economies;

10. We are concerned that the pace of reduction of trade and investment costs within and across our borders for

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our private businesses is not as rapid as we wish. To enhance our productive capacities, we need to ensure that the competitiveness of our firms is enhanced substantially. We call on development partners to increasingly re-orient their assistance to sectors that reduce trade and transaction costs, and encourage economic and legal reforms that reduce regulatory burdens on citizens and organizations. As LDCs, we recognize the support provided by the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) to the LDCs' progress towards graduation and to recently graduated countries during the transition phase and beyond. We call for an alignment of the next phase of the EIF programme with the timeline of the Istanbul Plan of Action;

11. We are deeply concerned that LDCs, including those with mountains and fragile ecology, low-lying coastal areas, which are most vulnerable to the negative impacts of climate change, and those that are subjected to sea-level rises and other climate vulnerability, are disproportionately affected by the adverse impacts of climate change due to their location, low income, lack of institutional, technical and financial capacity, and greater reliance on climate-sensitive sectors like agriculture and fisheries. This is exacerbated by desertification, land degradation, drought, floods, cyclones and other natural and man-made disasters. Therefore, least developed countries must be provided with adequate levels of resources in order to enhance their resilience to climate change;

12. We note the recent conclusion of the UNFCCC COP 20 and call for strong commitment to ensure an ambitious, robust, forward looking and binding agreement in Paris that fully and effectively takes into account the concerns, interests, requirements and aspirations of the LDCs;

13. We note the Local Climate Adaptive Living Facility (LOCAL) hosted in LDCs aimed at enhancing their direct access to climate change financing mechanisms. We encourage all LDCs, in particular from the Asia-Pacific region, to take advantage of this facility to enhance their local governments' capability to discharge their responsibility in the implementation of the National Adaptation Plans;

14. We underscore the fundamental need to strengthen national capacity building for increased resilience against all kinds of disasters, shocks and crises, buttressed by enhanced, coordinated and timely support by development partners, with a view to detecting and rapidly responding to such shocks and crises. In this regard, we call upon all development partners to further scale up their financial and technical support to least developed countries' risk mitigation and resilience building strategies. As a concrete action, we propose that a "crisis mitigation and resilience building action plan" should be expeditiously established with the support of development partners, emerging development partners for the south, international and regional development banks, climate related funding mechanisms and the UN system organizations. We call upon the Secretary-General of the United Nations to take the lead in this regard with the support of the UN-OHRLLS;

15. We emphasize that the acute energy gap faced by the Asia-Pacific LDCs is a binding constraint on their structural transformation and sustainable graduation. We acknowledge actions by Governments of these countries in improving an enabling and supportive policies and appropriate regulatory frameworks to promote investments in the field of energy. However, necessary finance for achieving the energy goals and scaling-up successful initiatives in LDCs remains a serious challenge for Asia-Pacific LDCs. Adequate and effective financial and technical support by development partners together with new blending finance mechanisms would be crucial to the success of our efforts. We also stress that the least developed countries should receive a special focus throughout the United Nations Decade of Sustainable Energy for All (2014-2024), with a view to ensuring the realization of the objective of universal access to energy for all by 2030, as well as other energy related goals and targets set out in the Istanbul Programme of Action.

16. We call for full and timely implementation of the eight priority areas of the Istanbul Programme of Action, especially productive capacity-building, for which least developed countries need additional, preferential, concessional and the most favourable treatment for LDCs' access to markets, finance, technologies, know-how and other resources. We also call for differential and flexible treatment in undertaking international commitments and obligations that are not commensurate with their capacity, needs and stage of development, to be called "differential and preferential treatment for least developed countries''. This principle should be applied in the articulation of the post-2015 development agenda, outcome of the third UN Conference on Financing for Development, sustainable development goals, outcome of the Doha Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations, International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, climate related processes and funding arrangements, as well as all other relevant processes. Graduation strategies and policies of LDCs must be duly reflected in all these global processes with a view to providing adequate financial, technical and institutional support;

17. We underscore that good governance, inclusiveness and transparency, as well as domestic resource mobilization and inclusive and responsive global finance and economic architecture are critical to the acceleration and sustenance of the development process of the least developed countries and that these efforts need to be given concrete and

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substantial international support in a spirit of shared responsibility and mutual accountability through renewed and strengthened global partnership;

18. We stress that the particular challenges faced by some least developed countries regarding conflict and their human, economic and social implications need to be recognized and their stability enhanced to achieve sustainable development.

19. We reaffirm our full commitment to mainstreaming gender considerations in national development plans so that graduation is not only sustainable but also just and fair. We recognize that our girls and boys are our future and that women are the equal partners in development and make vital contributions to all our economies. We commit to investing more in creating an enabling environment for ending violence against women and girls and ensuring a life of dignity, so that they can contribute to their full potential. We solemnly acknowledge that without ending discrimination against women, graduation out of LDC status would be fragile and less meaningful;

20. We emphasize that specific and dedicated initiatives targeted at priority areas need to be undertaken as a joint effort by LDCs and their development partners with a view to rapidly closing the existing resources and capacity gaps of LDCs in critical areas. In this regard we call upon our development partners to ensure timely and effective operationalization of two seminal and concrete initiatives of the UN Member States, namely the Technology Bank for LDCs and the Investment Promotion Regime for LDCs;

21. We call upon our development partners, including donour countries and countries in the South, as well as UN System organizations, international financial institutions, regional development banks and other stakeholders such as the private sector, civil society and foundations to ensure adequate, effective and timely implementation of all commitments and actions in favor of LDCs to support their efforts towards graduation in the spirit of renewed and strengthened global partnership, and urge, among others, to:

i. fulfil their ODA commitment of 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of gross national income to least developed countries on a priority basis and review their ODA commitments, as agreed in the Programme of Action, and to allocate at least 50 per cent of ODA and the Aid for Trade disbursement to least developed countries taking into account the unique structural handicaps and constraints as well as the severity of development challenges faced by this group of countries. ODA should be directed more towards building productive capacity and the leveraging of other sources of development financing;
ii. fully operationalize the Green Climate Fund as a matter of urgency with the goal of mobilizing \$100 billion per year by 2020 and its appropriate allocation to LDCs for the promotion and facilitation of their clean development mechanism projects;
iii. increase substantially foreign direct investment flows to least developed countries through targeted promotional measures and adequate incentive structures to the private sector;
iv. provide duty-free, quota-free market access, on a lasting basis, for all products originating from all least developed countries; adopt simple, transparent and flexible preferential rules of origin applicable to imports from least developed countries and effective to overcome supply side constraints;
v. facilitate and accelerate negotiations with acceding least developed countries on the basis of the accession guidelines adopted by the World Trade Organization General Council;
vi. ensure full cancellation of multilateral and bilateral debts owed by all least developed countries to creditors, both public and private and to put in place appropriate debt relief and debt workout mechanisms for LDCs going forward;
vii. take concrete actions to promote orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration; to respect the rights of migrants and their families; to reduce the transaction cost of migrant remittances to less than 3% and eliminate remittance corridors with costs higher than 5%;
viii. take specific actions with a view to increasing and broadening LDCs access to knowledge resources;
ix. ensure immediate implementations of the WTO services waiver decision and accord special priority and preference in services sectors and modes of supply of export interest to the least developed countries, and undertake measures to extend specific preferences to least developed countries services and service suppliers, including under mode 4, so that least developed countries will be able to enhance their participation in services trade;
x. further extend the transition period under article 66.1 of the TRIPS Agreement of the WTO so that LDCs can make full use of flexibilities provided by the Agreement as long as they remain in the LDCs category, and fully operationalize commitments under Article 66.2 by implementing meaningful technology transfer to LDCs.

22. We take this opportunity to emphasize the critical importance of mid-term review of the IPoA to be held in 2016. We recall with genuine appreciation the decision of the General Assembly to welcome the generous offer of Turkey to host the Mid-term Review Conference in Antaliya. In this regard, we note with satisfaction the decision of the UNGA as regards

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the modalities of this conference and requests all member States, the UN system, and all other stakeholders to ensure full success of the mid-term review and thereby also further contribute to the graduation process of LDCs in a more coherent manner;

23. We appreciate the efforts of the Government of Nepal in bringing the Asia-Pacific LDCs together for a frank and focused discussion on graduation of LDCs and hope that the momentum generated by the Kathmandu meeting will be carried forward to integrate these issues effectively into forthcoming global processes;

24. We express our profound gratitude to the Rt. Hon. Sushil Koirala, Prime Minister of Nepal for his full support and inspiring message to the conference. We thank the Government of Nepal for organizing this meeting and for the generous hospitality extended to us during our stay in Kathmandu. We express our appreciation to UN-OHRLLS and UNDP for co-organizing the event and the financial contributions by the Governments of Germany, the Netherlands and Norway.

Ministerial Meeting of Asia-Pacific LDCs on Graduation and Post-2015 Development Agenda

Closing remarks by Hon. Mahendra Bahadur Pandey, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nepal

Closing remarks by Hon. Mahendra Bahadur Pandey, Minister for Foreign Affairs, during Ministerial Meeting of Asia-Pacific LDCs on Graduation and Post-2015 Development Agenda in Kathmandu, on 18 December 2014.

After three days of intensive deliberations on many important aspects of the LDCs' development, we have come to a successful conclusion of the Ministerial meeting. During six thematic sessions and two sideline events, we covered a wide range of issues surrounding pathways to graduation.

This meeting assumed greater significance as it provided an excellent opportunity to share the status of our actions as well as experiences. It has also been a forum to share our commitments to the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPOA), express concerns over the development constraints confronting us, appreciate

Hon. Mahendra Bahadur Pandey

the progress made by each other and, more importantly, highlight the needs for enhanced partnership and support to address our specific situation in a spirit of shared responsibility and mutual accountability.

In the course of the Meeting, many insightful perspectives have been presented, inspiring experiences have been shared, valid questions have been raised, and some practical recommendations have also been made. As a result, we have before us, the Kathmandu Declaration for Sustainable Graduation of Asia-Pacific LDCs, which we adopted just a while ago. What we require now is the commitment and willingness from all stakeholders to transform these plans into our actions. On our part, let me assure you that Nepal stands ready and committed to implement these action plans at home and carry forward LDC agendas incorporated in it to all appropriate global fora in partnership with you all.

In view of the number of countries and size of population, the LDCs form an important segment of the international community. Any dialogue about sustainable development will not be complete without ensuring sustainable development of LDCs in Asia Pacific, Africa and Latin America.

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As the Rt. Hon. Prime Minister Sushil Koirala rightly mentioned in his inaugural address, and I quote, “We do not want to see the coming decades as yet again missed opportunities for sustainable, equitable and inclusive development. The international community will lack moral authority to pursue other agenda while leaving large chunks of humanity to grapple with dehumanizing conditions of poverty and hunger.” End of quote.

While graduation marks a transformative shift in the development paradigm of the LDCs, the process of graduation calls for a meaningful partnership based on effective support mechanism to succeed. The goal of graduation is closely interlinked with the post-2015 development agenda. The discourse of development will lose its essence if it does not have the vision and mission to transform the lives of the poorest people. The Post-2015 Development Agenda, as it has been marked by an unprecedentedly broader and inclusive consultation process, has instilled greater optimism into the peoples in LDCs. They see it as an opportunity for transformational change in their lives and the societies they live in.

The draft Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to succeed the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2015 will soon be open for intergovernmental negotiations. The outcomes of these inter-governmental debates will determine the model of development for the next fifteen years having significant implications for the livelihood and dignity of the people in LDCs. Therefore, as the process moves from consultation to negotiation, we must act individually and collectively to ensure that LDC priorities are well integrated in the Post-2015 Development agenda together with adequate support mechanism.

While all LDCs share much in common they have also been confronting some country-specific challenges. We have learnt during our deliberations that we have our own strengths and weaknesses not only with regard to different aspects of development but also in respect of the criteria for graduation. I therefore see the need for taking into consideration the respective concerns and prospects of LDCs while forging necessary partnership.

As LDCs are also endowed with enormous human and natural resource potential for world economic growth, welfare and prosperity, a strengthened global partnership that aims to address the needs of LDCs is also expected to contribute to the cause of peace, prosperity and sustainable development for all. The partnership we envisage is thus a sustainable partnership for mutual benefit. Moreover, our emphasis on deeper integration will also widen the scope for such partnership while significantly contributing to the poverty alleviation through promotion of trade and investment.

LDCs in the Asia-Pacific region have announced the goal of graduation. It will remain just an ambition unfulfilled if it is not supported by the development partners. We are therefore in favour of broader and comprehensive partnership in the spirit shown in the IPOA to turn our aspiration and prospects into reality. We aim to attain prosperity through creating economic opportunities for our people so that our pathways to graduation and transition that follows become smoother and sustainable.

As the IPOA constitutes the source of guidance and inspiration for LDCs to graduate, it is important that our development partners ensure full and speedy implementation of all commitments in favour of LDCs as elaborated in the IPOA. Their commitments with regard to ODA, market access, debts, investment, productive capacity building, infrastructure development, building resilience to vulnerabilities, etc are critical to the graduation process.

This meeting would not have been a success without your presence, Hon’ble Ministers, development partners and UN agencies, and without your delegations’ active participation and valuable contribution. I would once again like to extend sincere thanks to all of you for the importance you have given to this meeting despite your busy schedules.

I am confident that this meeting would further promote understanding, solidarity and partnership among LDCs, development partners and UN agencies necessary for effectively addressing the challenges confronted by the Least Developed Countries in their pathways to graduation.

As this Ministerial meeting has been the first initiative undertaken in the context of graduation goal in the region, I am fully confident that it will generate further momentum for the overall wellbeing of the people in LDCs.

Thank you very much.

Bryan Clark: 'The IORA will establish a Free Trade Area among member countries'

Bryan Clark

Australia took over the Chair of the Indian Ocean Rim Association from India in November 2013 and will keep it until November 2015. As head of the IORA, Australia wants to bring a new impulse to this regional organisation in launching Business facilitation as a strategy for economic development.

A workshop was organised at the Hennessy Park Hotel, Ebène this week grouping the authorities and the private sector of member countries on how to improve the business and investment climate through business facilitation in using the World Bank Doing Business report as benchmark. News on Sunday met Bryan Clark of Australia, Chairman of the Indian Ocean Rim Business Facilitation, after the workshop to know more of the strategy adopted by IORA and the conclusions reached at the workshop.

Australia has been at the head of the IORA since November 2013. What is the strategy put forward to develop this regional organisation?

I should underline that a lot of good things have happened during the recent months. Member countries have been doing things individually and it seems that there was a long way to go to harmonise these activities into a collective activity. There was need for a complete re-organisation and that even the private sector seemed to need good training in that direction as both public and private sectors do not know of the potential that exists in the whole region, with 30% of the world population to deal with and with the fastest growing economy which will reach around 9 billion USD by 2025. The Statistics is a revelation in itself. The total export potential in the IORA region turns out to be US$ 453.1 billion.

In terms of market access, Australia (US$ 67.4 billion) is identified as the largest market for bilateral exports of the IORA countries followed by India (US$ 60.4 billion), UAE (US$ 58.2 billion), Thailand (US$ 57.4 billion), Malaysia (US$ 40.8 billion), and Indonesia (US$ 31.1 billion). It is clear that the South-East Asia sub-region with US$ 285.7 billion market provides the largest export opportunities to the member countries. Although most regional economies are projected to gain a fair share in the regional export market, the market access opportunities may differ among them while considering the sectoral export potential.

In terms of individual country markets, Malaysia provides the highest export potential (US$ 48.8 billion) and Mozambique is the lowest (US$ 3.2 billion) in the region. The other countries that have relatively large trade potential include India, South Africa, Iran, Kenya and the UAE with shares of 7.9 per cent, 7.6 per cent, 7.4 per cent, 6.1 per cent and 5.9 per cent, respectively.

As for Australia itself, that has a 350,000 membership in its Chamber of Commerce and Industry, it wishes to play a key role during its mandate at the head of the IORA. We want to promote cross-border initiatives with the simplification of red tapes and reduction of delays by using modern technology such as the Single Window. We also proposed a Business Travel Card and wishes that the IORA region is transformed into a Free Trade Area for member countries.

How is it that a big country like Australia chose a small one like Mauritius as venue for such an important meeting?

The current workshop was held following discussions at the first economic and business conference held here in July 2013. It was suggested that business and trade facilitation be subject of further deliberation among member states. The Government of Mauritius assumed leadership of this initiative, with the participation by government as well as private sector representatives from 12 member-states: Australia, Comoros, India, Iran, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Malaysia, Seychelles, South Africa and Tanzania with France and the USA as dialogue partners as well as the International Trade Center and the World Bank.

What were the main questions discussed during this workshop?

Member states agreed that the World Bank Doing Business Index was a good benchmark to measure the propensity of countries to carry out continuous reform in trade and business facilitation. Countries need to emulate the best frontier countries in order to improve their domestic practices. The concerns evoked pertained to sustaining the appetite for continuous reform among IORA member countries, engaging non-state actors in working towards improved trade facilitation.

The other concern was that given the private sector's central role in the implementation of business and trade facilitation, the private cohort needs to be trained. This would also allow an integration of informal cross border trade activities within the official structure. Discussions were thus pursued on the need for capacity building among the private sector of IORA countries in order to allow inclusive growth. The Comoros

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Bryan Clark

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suggested the potential creation of a Regional Chamber of Commerce and Investment Promotion agency and participants agreed that governments should move away from the role of business regulator to that of a facilitator.

What are the main recommendations after these discussions?

We issued an 8-point communiqué after this conclave which will be further developed in the next Business Forum to be held in Perth, Australia in the second week of October of this year. This forum will be chaired by Foreign Minister Bishop of Australia. Among the main conclusions are: that IORBF to consider pursuing an agenda for IOR region business and trade facilitation at the World Bank; IORA Secretariat to consider assisting in the capacity-building of member-states with reference to business and trade facilitation; the need to have private sector standing working groups within IORBF in order to educate on policy positions; IORBF should work towards the creation of an intra-private sector consensus among IOR region private sectors; the introduction of an IORA Business Travel Card; the need to run a study on the procedural hurdles in business travel across IOR region; IORA to consider the need to establish a platform or an IT interface in order to disseminate peer information without requiring the movement of people and finally member states should indicate to IORA what the recommended step forward is in terms of capacity-building and peer-to-peer learning mechanisms. All these will be further discussed for implementation at the Perth meeting next October.

Source: www.defimedia.info, 8 August 2014

Indonesia: A Potential Leader in the Indian Ocean

Indonesia is well placed to play a leading role in developing a better regional architecture for the Indian Ocean.

By Awidya Santikajaya

Image Credit: REUTERS/Damir Sagolj

On his recent trips to the APEC, ASEAN and G20 summits, Indonesian President Joko Widodo spoke of how he saw Indonesia's role as a "global maritime axis." Recognizing Indonesia's status as the world' s largest archipelagic state and its location at the crossroads of the Indian and Pacific oceans, Widodo emphasized the importance of making Indonesia's strategic maritime position the cornerstone of foreign policy. This new policy raises an interesting question: How will Indonesia define its position in Indian Ocean, given its role as next year's chair of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA).

For decades the main focus of Indonesia's diplomacy has been ASEAN and its northern region. This makes sense, particularly given close economic times between Indonesia and countries in East Asia (both Northeast and Southeast). Now, with his maritime vision, Widodo intends to expand Indonesia's active diplomatic presence from merely ASEAN-centric to the broader Indo-Pacific arena.

But if it is to play an effective and constructive role, Indonesia will need to carefully understand the Indian Ocean region and be clear on what it actually could contribute.

Underdeveloped Regional Architecture

The Indian Ocean is growing in strategic and economic importance. Approximately 20 percent of global sea trade is carried through its waters. A recent study by the French Institute for the Exploitation of the Sea revealed that ship traffic in the Indian Ocean has grown by more than 300 percent over the last twenty years. Understanding the strategic significance of the Indian Ocean, its littoral and island states have been taking steps to bolster their naval capabilities.

As a result, the Indian Ocean is now home to some of the world's largest defense budgets. For instance, India allocated $5.8 billion on modernizing and expanding its navy in 2014, becoming the largest spender in the Indian Ocean region. Among other purposes, the money was used to complete its aircraft carrier Vikrant and activate the reactor aboard the *Arihant*.

Meanwhile, China was heavily involved in the construction of ports in Myanmar, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Seychelles and Maldives. Although Chinese officials were at pains to insist that these ports are being built entirely for commercial purposes, the growing Chinese military contacts and economic assistance in the region has raised questions about its long-term naval ambitions for the Indian Ocean.

The naval buildup in the Indian Ocean itself raises security questions. However, the situation is further complicated by other persistent issues, such as piracy (particularly off the coast of Somalia), the existence of states that are non-signatories to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, and the

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Indonesia: A Potential

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unclear future of the U.S. military power projection from Diego Garcia. These increasingly complex security challenges are unfortunately not being well managed.

The regional architecture in the Pacific region provides a contrast. Certainly, there are ongoing disputes in East Asia, with tensions in the South China Sea and the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, but a phalanx of multilateral forums, from ASEAN and its “plus” schemes to APEC, offer a strong basis for the countries of East Asia to cooperate and uphold the common interest.

In the Indian Ocean region, however, the regional security architecture is underdeveloped. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) consistently stumbles on India-Pakistan rivalry. This leaves the IORA, previously the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC), as the only pan-regional forum with the potential to manage complex relations in the Indian Ocean.

Recent years have seen some efforts to strengthen the IORA. As the current chair, Australia has proposed economic cooperation initiatives, such as IORA Business Week and an economic declaration, setting up a fund of $1 million to boost economic activities in the Indian Ocean region. More importantly, IORA has begun to recognize maritime security as one of its main priorities, as revealed at the 13th IORA’s Meeting of the Council of Ministers (MCM) in Perth last month.

These positive developments notwithstanding, IORA’s progress has been modest. It faces at least three main challenges. First, the IORA is not yet an effective institution. It was designed as an ambitious grouping with interest in too many complex areas, including maritime security, trade and investment, fisheries management, cultural exchange, and many more. Since its establishment in 1997 it has been unable to effectively cover these areas. Economic cooperation initiatives and people-to-people links within the IORA framework are still very limited, albeit with some small improvements of late.

Second, the Indian Ocean lacks a regional identity and is plagued by considerable distrust. The distinct differences among the states that span a vast area from Australia to South Africa make it difficult for the IORA to define any common interest. Limited security cooperation and joint exercises are not enough to address the fragile balance of power. True, there have been some security cooperation initiatives beyond the IORA, such as Milan and the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS), but those arrangements are focused on operational matters, are had little to do with policy and strategy. More importantly, the current initiatives do not effectively accommodate external powers. China, the United States and a few other nations have become IORA dialogue partners, but the current arrangements give them little scope to play constructive roles.

Finally, the Indian Ocean rim lacks the political will to set up an effective regional institution. The highest-level meeting help by the IORA at present is a council of foreign ministers; there is as yet not summit of heads of government. The various IORA working groups are handled by senior officials or at even more junior levels. Security meetings involve the chiefs of navies, not defense ministers.

A Role for Indonesia

Clearly, to avoid a runaway rivalry for regional power and influence, greater efforts to maintain regional stability in the Indian Ocean are needed. And it is here that Indonesia could play a role, helping to strengthen the IORA and turn it into a respected, mature regional forum.

Widely recognized as a longstanding proponent of regionalism in East Asia, Indonesia is well placed to encourage the same in the Indian Ocean. As the primus inter pares in ASEAN, Indonesia has sought to promote norms by initiating a significant number of ASEAN documents, such as the ASEAN Charter. One important Indonesian legacy in ASEAN is the Treaty of Amity of Cooperation (TAC), which became a central element for promoting peace and cooperation. Together with other ASEAN countries, Indonesia also successfully included the major powers in the Pacific in the East Asia Summit (EAS), which is anchored by ASEAN. Moreover, in the Indian Ocean, Indonesia has no conflict with any other state. In cooperation with Malaysia and Singapore, Indonesia even offers an example of trilateral security cooperation through the Malacca Strait Sea Patrol.

For its two-year chairmanship of the IORA, which will commence less than one year from now, there are at least five main reforms Indonesia could consider. First, to conceptually carve out shared interests and norms, Indonesia could propose a TAC-like treaty for the IORA. An Indian Ocean treaty of friendship and cooperation could build trust and attenuate suspicions. The current IORA charter only addresses the economic objectives of the association, and does not cover the increasingly pivotal security and safety elements.

Second, Indonesia could propose that the peak IORA decision-making body be elevated from the council of foreign ministers to the summit level. This would be an important step in encouraging political will among IORA members. With a regular summit, IORA will move from the project-by-project agenda it has pursued for years, to a more systematic and structured strategic focus. Meanwhile, there should be more meetings at the ministerial level, including between IORA defense ministers. A defense ministers forum would be crucial to address security issues more comprehensively and to facilitate confidence building measures among IORA members.

Third, Indonesia could help accelerate the ascension of Myanmar, Maldives, and even Somalia to IORA membership. It could also approach

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Indonesia: A Potential

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Pakistan, which is currently not an IORA member despite its status as a littoral state. The more inclusive IORA becomes, the more legitimacy it has to build trust within the region.

Fourth, IORA should be more effective at bringing its dialogue partners into its broader cooperation projects. It is vital that external powers do not feel marginalized from any initiatives and processes in IORA. Dialogue partners should be encouraged to participate in IORA projects, including policy-setting and security dialogues. A formal meeting between IORA and its dialogue partners could be modeled after the EAS, where EAS leaders usually meet for one day directly after ASEAN leaders conclude a two-day summit.

Finally, Indonesia could develop an action plan for both the short and long terms, so that the IORA has better tools and guidelines to monitor the effectiveness of its cooperation projects. The association needs to define tangible outcomes that could be achieved within a certain timeframe. Learning from ASEAN, which define its objectives in the three pillars of the ASEAN Community, IORA could select a limited number of priorities with clear purposes and instruments, instead of working on wildly ambitious but hollow commitments.

If Indonesia intends to reinvigorate IORA, it needs to start preparing to do so now. One particularly urgent task is setting up a research institute/ think tank, focusing specifically on Indian Ocean issues, which Indonesia currently lacks. This institution could play a crucial role as a leading actor in Track II diplomacy and give the Indonesian government better outreach on IORA projects both domestically and internationally.

Indonesia has the potential to influence the direction and shape the dynamic of the Indian Ocean region. Referring to its diplomatic eloquence in the Southeast Asia and Pacific regions, Indonesia could constructively remake IORA as the premier regional forum for cooperation.

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Source: The Diplomat, December 12, 2014

WCF delegates attend International Certificate of Origin Council meeting in Colombo

Five chambers from Australia, Bulgaria and France have joined the International Certificate of Origin Accreditation Chain during the ICC World Chamber Federation's (WCF) International Certificate of Origin Council (ICOC) meeting in Colombo. The event was hosted by ICC Sri Lanka on 18-19 November 2014 and gathered chamber trade facilitation experts from 30 countries.

WCF delegates attend International Certificate of Origin Council meeting in Colombo

"The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry is pleased to join the Certificate of Origin Chain. As the assessment body in Australia for documentary evidence of origin, our entry into this network represents a good fit with our existing standards. Our new membership is also in line with the global push towards trade facilitation and harmonization of customs procedures.

We look forward to working with ICC WCF on the rollout of the Certificate of Origin scheme in the coming months," said Kate Carnell, CEO of the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI).

ACCI was also appointed as 10th member of the International Certificate of Origin Accreditation Committee.

The Council session, chaired by Peter Bishop, Deputy Chief Executive Officer of the London Chamber of Commerce, was an opportunity for members to provide input and learn more about the work of the ICC Commission on Customs and Trade Facilitation.

ICC Policy Manager Donia Hammami outlined the priorities of the Commission on Customs and Trade Facilitation as well as ICC's close ties with the World Customs Organization. The benefits of partnerships between business and customs were part of the discussion and chambers were invited to share their experiences and activities.

Mr Bishop said: "Our discussion with Ms Hammami allowed us to interact and share perspectives on needs of small- and medium-sized enterprises, and the natural role of chambers as trade facilitators."

A roundtable also opened the floor to receive feedback from chambers on ICC's position on defining non-preferential rules of origin.

A report paper concerning the role of chambers in trade facilitation, prepared by WCF, was circulated to participants to gather their input. This official paper aims to reinforce chambers' position as trusted third parties and to clarify their common standing on new issues defining trade facilitation.

An electronic Certificate of Origin statement was also endorsed by the e Certificate of Origin (eCO) Task Force and the members of the Certificate of Origin Council, allowing chambers understanding of and defining eCO terminology to better address issues relating to eCO acceptance by customs. This official statement can be found on the Chamber services page .

The meeting was followed by a workshop on the ATA Carnet system with ICC Sri Lanka, Sri Lankan customs authorities and the World ATA Carnet Council. The ATA Carnet is managed globally through the ICC World Chambers Federation.

Source: ICC news and media, 5 December 2014

Certificates of Origin

WCF provides a critical advocacy and representation role at the global level, promoting the role of chambers as competent authorities in the issuance of COs and the acceptance of electronic COs.

Summary

Millions of COs are issued every year, facilitating trade around the world. Since as early as 1898, chambers of commerce have been issuing non-preferential COs and more recently, closely working with Customs authorities, issuing preferential COs.

The 1923 Geneva Convention and subsequent Kyoto Convention have seen governments formally recognize the important role chambers play in this domain, deeming them competent authorities and credible trusted third-parties in the issuance of COs.

Virtually every country in the world considers the origin of imported goods when determining the duty that will be applied to the goods or, in some cases, whether the goods may be legally imported at all.

In addition, COs may be needed to comply with letters of credit, foreign customs requirements or a buyer's request.

The main CO is the 'non-preferential type,' which certifies that the country a particular product originates from does not qualify for any preferential treatment. A 'preferential' certificate, on the other hand, enables products to benefit from tariff reductions or exemptions when they are exported to countries that extend these privileges.

WCF's Certificate of Origin services

WCF reinforces and enhances the unique position that chambers of commerce hold in issuing and guaranteeing certificates.

WCF's International Certificate of Origin Guidelines establishes the standard procedures for issuing and attesting COs by chambers. This set of international standard rules and procedures reinforces the trust and integrity of the chamber CO "chain", not only for benefiting traders but also Customs administrations.

The guidelines:

- Support transparent issuance standard procedures
- Provide assurance for independent, responsible, and accountable issuance
- Give credibility to the COs issued by chambers of commerce
- Raise the level of acceptance by customs administrations and the business community

Building upon these guidelines, WCF provides a critical advocacy and representation role at the global level, promoting the role of chambers as competent authorities in the issuance of preferential COs and the acceptance of electronic COs.

WCF provides an international accreditation system for chambers, creating a vital global CO chain that reinforces their interconnections in delivering this service. Training and capacity building programmes would be available to support this work. ■

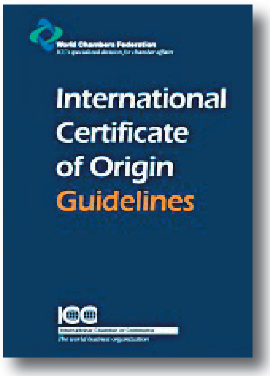
Publications

CO Guidelines

The ICC WCF International Certificate of Origin Guidelines is a unique manual detailing international procedures and guidelines for chambers in the issuance of non-preferential certificates of origin.

A Certificate of Origin is a document which identifies the origin of goods being exported. It is required by customs as one of the key bases for applying tariff rates. Most chambers of commerce and some trade associations have been authorized by their Customs agencies to certify non-preferential, and in some cases, preferential certificates of origin.

Thus, a chambers' role in the issuance and attestation of Certificates of Origin is both unique and vital in facilitating international trade.



The ICC WCF International Certificate of Origin Guidelines is the result of 18 months' work by ICC's World Chambers Federation, incorporating the best practices from several national chambers and organizations to produce the first international procedures and guidelines manual for chambers in the issuance of non-preferential certificates of origin.

Widely accepted, they have been translated into six languages, with the WCO acknowledging its contribution to the harmonization of issuance procedures and as "a most welcome promotion to trade facilitation and contribution to a more efficient and effective trade environment, both for governments and the trading society".

The Guidelines cover: Use/purpose of COs; Definitions and language; The role of chambers; Authority of chambers of commerce; Place of issue; Printing and distribution of forms; Price and issuing fees; Issuing process of certificates; Determination and verification of origin; Supporting documents; Concessions and prohibitions; Training requirements; Changes or problems with certificates of origin; A supplement for CEO's; and Printable sample letters and forms.

By: ICC World Chambers Federation
Publication Date: 2006
Number of Pages: 59

New Report: Asian Region will gain from Taiwan's participation in Regional Trade Agreements

Taiwan is one of the advanced economies in the Asian region and is an important link in the regional supply chains for manufactured products, particularly electronic products.

Yet Taiwan has not been invited to participate in the spate of activity over the last decade and recently accelerated in Australia, to open markets through Free Trade Agreements.

Recently completed research demonstrates the economic benefit to the Asian region of Taiwan's participation in regional arrangements to build free markets. Taiwan and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) - An Australian Perspective, models the contribution from Taiwan participating in the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP).

The RCEP was initiated at the 2009 East Asia Summit. It aims for a regional free trade area in the Asia Pacific region with GDP totalling US$21.3 trillion, encompassing ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) as well as Australia, China, India, Japan, the Republic of Korea, and New Zealand.

The RCEP negotiations parallel the negotiations for a Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) (in which Australia is participating but not Taiwan). Both the RCEP and the TPP negotiations will be stepping stones to a bigger Free Trade Area among all the APEC economies. This idea was endorsed at the recent APEC Summit in Beijing for consideration.

Within a decade we will see the biggest Free Trade Area in the world forged among the APEC economies. It will represent nearly two thirds of global production.

Taiwan's inclusion in RCEP is both desirable and beneficial for Australia and other RCEP economies: almost all RCEP countries would reap greater economic gains under the agreement and it would support frameworks for more open markets in the region.

The report reveals:

- There would be additional economic gains for almost all RCEP economies resulting from trade liberalisation were Taiwan admitted to join RCEP. ASEAN countries could achieve GDP gains of up to 26 percent and China's GDP could increase 8.5 percent. Taiwan would also be one of the main economic beneficiaries.
- Taiwan is an advanced economy of the Asia Pacific region, a significant trader and a growing source of foreign investment, particularly in China. Taiwan is important to global manufacturing supply chains and strategically important to key export supply chains in Asia Pacific.
- Taiwan's participation in regional free trade agreements would strengthen the bilateral relationship with Australia and advance Australia's strategic policy objectives in the Asia-Pacific region to create regional frameworks that support economic integration, open markets and good governance.

It was commissioned by the Economic Division of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Australia and will be formally presented in 2015. Details are to be advised.

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About ITS Global

ITS Global is a consultancy that specialises in public policy in the Asia Pacific region. Its expertise encompasses international trade and economics, direct foreign investment, environment and sustainability, international aid and economic development, and corporate social responsibility and management of strategic risks. Its public sector clients have included the Asian Development Bank (ADB), AusAID, the OECD, the Department for International Development of the UK (DFID), the Ministry of Economy Trade and Industry of Japan (METI), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the ASEAN Secretariat, and the APEC Secretariat. For more information visit www.itsglobal.net ■

Published by the Secretariat, Confederation of Asia-Pacific Chambers of Commerce and Industry
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