

WELCOME ADDRESS BY MR FONG YONG KIAN, DIRECTOR-GENERAL, SINGAPORE CUSTOMS, AT THE INTERNATIONAL CUSTOMS DAY, 9 FEBRUARY 2012, 9.15 AM, THE ORCHARD HOTEL

Mrs Josephine Teo
Minister of State for Finance and Transport,

Distinguished Guests,

Colleagues,

Introduction

Good Morning. A very warm welcome to our International Customs Day celebration event for 2012. It is our honour to have with us Mrs Josephine Teo, Minister of State for Finance and Transport. I am happy to see members of our Customs Advisory Committee, representatives from the trade and logistics community, as well as colleagues from our partner agencies. I want to thank all of you for being here with us for this important event for the international Customs community.

Launch of TradeFIRST in 2011

2 During last year's event to mark International Customs Day, we launched TradeFIRST, which stands for Trade Facilitation and Integrated Risk-based System. TradeFIRST adopts a holistic approach towards facilitating trade by integrating facilitation, compliance and risk management elements into a single one-stop assessment framework. TradeFIRST is the platform for Singapore Customs to partner companies to understand your needs and improve the effectiveness of our trade facilitation and compliance efforts.

3 I am pleased to say that one year after the launch, a total of 262 companies have been certified under TradeFIRST. We have extended customs facilitation schemes to 32 new companies and granted additional facilitation to 21 companies which had moved up in their TradeFIRST banding. We have also been able to customise facilitation schemes to cater to the specific needs of some companies. TradeFIRST has won several accolades and awards, including the Best Pro-Enterprise Idea Award for the public sector in 2011.

4 TradeFIRST is our formula for win-win collaboration with businesses to achieve the twin outcomes of facilitating and securing trade. We are committed to extend the reach of TradeFIRST to bring value to the business community. If you have not yet become TradeFIRST certified, do consider how TradeFIRST can strengthen your partnership with Singapore Customs and help you in your business.

Improvements in Customer Service from Traders' Satisfaction Survey

5 Of course, we are committed to provide excellent service to all our customers in the trading community, and not just to the TradeFIRST certified companies. To reach out to more of our customers, we conduct a comprehensive "Traders' Satisfaction Survey" every year to gauge how well we have done in our work to serve the trading community. The 2011 Traders' Satisfaction Survey involved a sample size of some 700 companies. I am gratified that the survey results showed an improvement in the percentage of companies that rated Singapore Customs positively. On an eight-point scale, 65%, or nearly two-thirds, of the companies surveyed rated Singapore Customs a "seven" or higher, up from 50% in 2010. Improvements in ratings were also recorded across the board, especially in areas such as customer responsiveness and transparency. This is a very positive assurance to

us that we are on the right track and we will continue to work closely with businesses to improve the areas of weakness identified through the survey and develop new innovative schemes to benefit the industry.

Singapore Customs Academy

6 Last year's theme for International Customs Day was "Knowledge, a catalyst for Customs excellence". This is a theme which resonated strongly with me. The role of Customs has been evolving. To cope with increasing trade volume and the challenge arising from the need to facilitate and secure the global supply chain, Singapore Customs has become very much a knowledge-based organisation. The need to harness knowledge not only applies to staff of Singapore Customs, it also extends equally to the trading community. The theme challenged us to think how we can better work with businesses to harness knowledge, with enhancing trade facilitation as the end objective. We concluded that we needed to give a boost to our efforts to provide more up-to-date training courses to the trading community, and that it is instrumental to set up a learning academy geared towards this end. After a year of work, we are both happy and honoured that our very own Singapore Customs Academy will be launched by our Guest-of-Honour, Mrs Teo later this morning.

7 The Academy will start with modest facilities but a lofty goal in mind. The mission of the Academy is to promote sharing of customs knowledge within Singapore and the global community. The vision is to be a leading Academy that advances thought leadership in Customs. But Rome was not built in a day. With your continued participation and support, we will grow the Academy and develop its body of knowledge in partnership with you over time.

8 At this point, I wish to record my appreciation to the Container Depot Association of Singapore, who has been our partner in providing classroom facilities and course management support for us over the past few years.

Theme for International Customs Day 2012: Borders Divide, Customs Connect

9 Lastly, let me introduce the theme for International Customs Day 2012 and also say a few words about TradeXchange. The theme chosen by the World Customs Organisation for this year is “Borders Divide, Customs Connect”. Borders are associated with division; hence the main challenge for Customs administrations is to overcome this division by pursuing connectivity. This year’s theme is a reflection of the

greater importance of Custom in a complex and globalised world. Connectivity encompasses three main pillars: people connectivity, which includes partnerships with the business sector; institutional connectivity, which includes connectivity between customs agencies and with other government agencies; and information connectivity, which acts as an enabler through technology and knowledge solutions.

10 This is where TradeXchange can play a useful role to raise the productivity of the trade and logistic community. In essence, TradeXchange is about providing faster and more seamless connectivity and data exchange between the various players and stakeholders in the supply chain, including Customs. In collaboration with our partners from both the public and private sectors, we have recently introduced new integrated supply chain service offerings to TradeXchange. We would like to take the opportunity to provide an update and I trust that some of you will find that TradeXchange offers a compelling value proposition for your business. At this point, I want to express my special thanks to the Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore (IDA), our key Government partner in the development of TradeXchange.

Conclusion

11 As we celebrate International Customs Day 2012, all of us in Singapore Customs renew our commitment towards making trade “easy, fair and secure”. We will continue to partner businesses, other government agencies and our international counterparts to fulfil our mission of supporting Singapore as a global trade hub. I am very grateful for the strong support you have given to Singapore Customs and I look forward to your continued support.

Thank you.