



SINGAPORE CUSTOMS 新加坡关税局 KASTAM SINGAPURA சிங்கப்பூர் சுங்கத்துறை

**WELCOME ADDRESS BY MR FONG YONG KIAN, DIRECTOR-GENERAL, SINGAPORE CUSTOMS, AT THE SINGAPORE CUSTOMS WORKPLAN SEMINAR HELD ON 11 APRIL 2013, 9.30AM, AT CONCORDE HOTEL SINGAPORE**

Mrs Josephine Teo  
Minister of State for Finance and Transport

Mr Peter Ong  
Head Civil Service and Permanent Secretary for Finance

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

**Introduction**

1. A very good morning to all of you and welcome. I am very glad you are able to join us at our 2013 Workplan Seminar, where we present our past accomplishments and outline future plans and programmes.
2. This is the first time we have invited our key stakeholders and partners from the public and private sectors to join us. We have with us members of our Customs Advisory Council, CEOs and heads of business and trade associations, as well as our partners from government agencies.
3. Our programme this morning also includes three breakout sessions covering different topics of interest. We will take the opportunity to share how the trading community can benefit from our Free Trade Agreements, Strategic Goods Facilitation Schemes and Mutual Recognition Arrangements. These sessions are meant to be interactive, so that you can take away more from these sessions, and

we too can learn from the sharing of your experiences. If you look around, you will see that our Customs officers are seated amongst our guests, so that there will be ample opportunities for interaction.

4. The theme for our Workplan Seminar this year is 'Partner of Business, Guardian of Trade'. Let me elaborate on this theme.

### **Partner of Business**

5. As a Partner of Business, we strongly believe that close and collaborative engagement between Singapore Customs and the trading community is mutually beneficial. This is why we have put in place TradeFIRST, the Singapore Customs Academy, as well as the system of Account and Relationship Managers to serve our traders. A good partner is someone who engages you in a sustained manner and not someone who talks to you only when there is a need to do so. Because we see businesses as partners, we have been working with you to co-create solutions that benefit you and also meet our regulatory objectives. Similarly, I urge businesses to also see Singapore Customs as partners. A close Customs-Business relationship is essential to build a conducive environment for trade to flourish.
6. This is also why we have invited you to our Workplan Seminar today. In previous years, we invited you to celebrate our annual International Customs Day together with us. We have decided that our Workplan Seminar is a better platform to engage you and share greater insights into our programmes and future initiatives. Through these efforts, we hope that you will be better able to see the relevance and value of our work, and more importantly, give us your feedback, so that our programmes and service delivery can be firmly rooted on good understanding of the business environment.

7. As a public agency, we exist to serve. To hear the views of our customers, we conduct an Annual Traders' Satisfaction Survey to get a better sense of how well we are serving you.
8. The most recent Traders' Satisfaction Survey was conducted from December 2012 to January this year, with 1,200 respondents. This was an increase from about 300 respondents from previous surveys. We made a deliberate effort to have more representation from different customer groups, for example, freight forwarders and declaring agents, licensees and manufacturers.
9. I am glad to share that the survey results showed that Singapore Customs has improved in serving you. In 2012, 97.7% of traders were satisfied with their experience dealing with Singapore Customs, compared to 93.4% in 2011. And 78.5% of the respondents were strongly satisfied, compared to 67.6% in 2011. These results are in fact the highest since Singapore Customs was re-constituted 10 years ago.
10. Singapore Customs also made a marked improvement in our ranking in the 2012 Pro-Enterprise Ranking Survey, jumping from 11<sup>th</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> position amongst the agencies. We improved in all the components surveyed, especially in the categories 'customer responsiveness' and 'transparency'.
11. Last year, Singapore Customs also clinched the Singapore Quality Award. This prestigious award is given to organisations that have attained world-class standards of performance excellence. These results assure us that our work is creating value for the trading community, and that the direction we have taken to partner

businesses is the right one. You can be assured that Singapore Customs will not be resting on our laurels. We will continue on our excellence journey to serve our customers better.

### **Guardian of Trade**

12. Let me now move on to the second part of our theme today, which is “Guardian of Trade”. We are mindful of the need to achieve the twin goals of upholding the law and facilitating business at the same time. For Singapore to thrive as a global trade hub over the long-term, our international reputation for providing a safe and secure trading environment is key. Singapore Customs works closely with other government agencies to uphold the relevant trade-related laws. For example, in January this year, we worked with AVA (the Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority) to intercept an illegal shipment of 1.8 tonnes of raw ivory tusks smuggled from Africa. The estimated value of the shipment is \$2.5 million, and African and Asian elephants are classified as endangered species under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES), of which Singapore is a signatory. Our prompt action in intercepting the illegal shipment demonstrates our resolve not to condone any illegal trading activities on our shores.

13. To enhance the robustness of our trading regime, we have also recently introduced a new declaring agent framework to raise proficiency and professionalism of the industry. Declaring agents play a key role in the supply chain by submitting trade data to the authorities. The new framework is a win-win for business and government: declaring agents can avoid unnecessary errors and compliance issues, and authorities will have accurate trade data. Singapore Customs will continue to

partner other government agencies and businesses to fulfil our role as Guardian of Trade.

### **Customs 2015 Plus**

14. You have received a copy of our Customs 2015 *Plus*, which is our refreshed five-year strategic blueprint. The original version, Customs 2015, was launched in early 2010. While work has progressed steadily under the original strategic blueprint, our operating social environment has also changed since 2010.
  
15. This is the reason we started a mid-term review of our 5-year strategic plan, to update our plans to ensure that they are relevant. At the start of the review, we conducted a series of consultations with relevant agencies, industry leaders, our key clients and also technology vendors to learn more about their future plans and developments relevant to our work. We are grateful for the many valuable insights that we gleaned from these conversations, and they have helped us formulate our refreshed strategic plan which will be unveiled during today's workplan seminar.
  
16. Customs 2015 *Plus* reaffirms Singapore Customs' commitment to partner businesses to address challenges and capitalise on opportunities from domestic and international developments. The goal of Customs 2015 *Plus* is to strengthen trade connectivity to enhance Singapore's economic competitiveness. It consists of four strategic thrusts that will enable Singapore Customs to better respond to emerging challenges brought on by the ever-changing environment.
  
17. Singapore Customs will be embarking on new programmes under Customs 2015 *Plus*. I shall briefly mention a few. Some of these programmes are attempts to break new frontiers and will likely see fruition only beyond 2015.

18. We are all aware that TradeNet is the world's first national single window for trade declarations. Today it remains one of the most efficient systems in the world, processing more than 99% of trade declarations within 10 minutes. We are starting work to conceptualise the next-generation TradeNet. We will soon be consulting companies to garner ideas on what functions the next Tradenet should have and to co-design the new TradeNet system.
  
19. Singapore Customs is studying the feasibility of extending the current paperless clearance procedure for containerised cargoes to conventional cargoes. This will be a challenging task, considering that many parties are involved in handling conventional cargoes, and that such cargoes come in all shapes and forms without unique identifiers. Nonetheless, Singapore Customs will try to look into means to eliminate as much paper as possible from the clearance process. If we succeed, this will be a boost for productivity.
  
20. Lastly, let me also mention TradeXchange, our platform to facilitate business-to-business transactions. Currently, more than 150 companies are reaping benefits from using TradeXchange services. In 2012, we estimated that these companies had gained manpower savings of more than one million man-hours. Recognising the value of TradeXchange, businesses like Audi, IBM and United Microelectronics Corporation have brought their freight-forwarders on board TradeXchange. Under Customs 2015 *Plus*, we can look forward to more innovative services on TradeXchange, such as electronic Title Registry, which will allow title documents such as bills of lading to be transferred electronically. You can learn more on TradeXchange services later by visiting the TradeXchange booth outside the ballroom.

21. Customs 2015 *Plus* is not meant to be a static plan. We know that our environment is dynamic and Singapore Customs will remain agile to fine-tune our plans whenever needed.

### **Conclusion**

22. Singapore Customs has over past few years strengthened our roles as a Partner of Business and Guardian of Trade. Our achievements bear testament to our continued conviction to play these roles well. A picture paints a thousand words; our staff have prepared a slideshow to showcase our key accomplishments in FY2012.

23. I hope you will enjoy our Workplan Seminar and have plenty of opportunities to network with each other. I wish you a pleasant day ahead.

24. Thank you.

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