

Opening remarks at the *Workshop on National Trade Facilitation Strategy of Kyrgyzstan and Business Process Analysis (BPA) Foundation Training* on 14 June 2013 organized by ESCAP in collaboration with the State Enterprise “Single Window” Center for Foreign Trade under the Ministry of Economy, Kyrgyzstan and GIZ Kyrgyzstan

By tengfei Wang

His Excellence Mr. Oleg Pankratov

Distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you all to the Workshop on National Trade Facilitation Strategy of Kyrgyzstan and Business Process Analysis Foundation Training. I also bring the greetings from my senior managers including Mr. Ravi Ratnayake and Mr. Yann Duval who, due to their prior arrangement, cannot join with us today but would like to convey the message that they appreciate fully the importance of today’s meeting.

Distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen,

Please allow me to put today’s meeting in the regional and national contexts. At the Asia-Pacific regional level, some countries such as Singapore or Republic of Korea have often been identified as the global leaders in trade facilitation. In contrast, trade costs of some landlocked developing countries and the least developed countries remain high. The new ESCAP – World Bank trade cost database released recently shows that trade costs of many developing countries are typically 4 to 7 times higher than those of most other middle-income developing countries in Asia.

Kyrgyzstan is a beautiful country with beautiful mountains. It is also a landlocked country and located far from the sea. In this region, the distance from Kyrgyzstan to the closest seaport is 3,600 km, from Kazakhstan it is 3,750 km, and from Tajikistan it is 3,100 km. Considering the fact that over 80 per cent of international trade is conducted by maritime shipping, this means Kyrgyzstan is inherently disadvantaged to be involved in international trade compared with many other countries in the world.

This, probably, can largely explain why Kyrgyzstan is ranked low in various indicators provided by the World Bank such as Trading across Borders or Logistics Performance Index.

However, we notice that substantial efforts have been made by Kyrgyzstan to advance trade facilitation. A noticeable example is the national single window system being developed in the country. We also notice that government and ministries in Kyrgyzstan has demonstrated keen interest to further progress trade facilitation.

In this respect, UNESCAP, as the regional arm of the United Nations for Asia and the Pacific, is willing to provide assistance, whenever and wherever possible.

For the past several years, UNESCAP has intensified its assistance to member countries by providing advisory service and capacity building. For instance, UNESCAP provided technical support to Mongolia to develop mater plan of national single window system. UNESCAP worked closely with its member countries, especially those from Southeast Asia and South Asia to apply Business Process Analysis to strategic trade corridors and nationally important products. These measures have triggered a series of reforms in the countries and brought about tangible benefits in reducing trade costs and delivery time.

Distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen,

(the meeting today)

In organizing today's meeting, we have several objectives in mind.

First, we hope the meeting today can provide a solid basis for Kyrgyzstan to develop towards a fully-fledged and implementable trade facilitation strategy. We understand that a draft strategy has been prepared. This draft strategy well documents the key aspects of trade facilitation in Kyrgyzstan and serves a very useful basis to move towards a fully-fledged trade facilitation strategy. But we feel there is still room for improvement. To this end, today, we will together review the key elements of trade facilitation which can be potentially included in the trade facilitation strategy. We will also together look at the experiences of other countries in developing national trade facilitation strategy. Of course

we are aware that a half-day workshop cannot solve all the problems, but, I hope at the end of workshop, we will have a concrete plan and timeframe to upgrade the existing draft strategy.

Second, we hope the meeting today can provide you with an opportunity to learn the fundamental issues on how to apply Business Process Analysis. In addition, we will together identify the strategic corridors and strategic products for conduction of Business Process Analysis. As I mentioned earlier, for the past several years, UNESCAP has been working closely with Asian countries, especially the Southeast and South Asian countries, to apply BPA to strategic corridors and products. We feel now it is right time to apply this method in this region, especially in Kyrgyzstan.

Distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen,

Before I conclude, I would like to specially express my appreciation to the State Enterprise “Single Window” Center for Foreign Trade under the Ministry of Economy, Kyrgyzstan and GIZ Kyrgyzstan. Without their support, it is not possible to organize this workshop. For the past several days, I had the honor to work with colleagues from “Single Window” Center and GIZ Kyrgyzstan. Their competence and professionalism, and more importantly their enthusiasm to put efforts to advance trade facilitation, are impressive. I have every faith to work collaboratively with them in the future.

Thank you.

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