

Global Conference of Trade Facilitation 2011

Opening Speech Mr Kubis

Ambassadors, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, dear Friends,

It is my pleasure to welcome you all here to Geneva and to open the Global Trade Facilitation Conference 2011 on Single Windows and Supply Chains in the next Decade. This is a vitally important topic in trade development and economic integration and I am very pleased to see so many representatives from the UN member State's missions, the business community and international organisations present in the meeting. I believe that this reflects the growing importance of trade facilitation as a key component of trade policy.

The conference has been organized jointly by the five Regional Commissions of the United Nations and I would like to extend a special welcome to my colleagues from the other four Regional Commissions - serving Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean and Western Asia. Indeed, this is an historic event as it is the first ever joint conference on trade facilitation organised by the five Regional Commissions and follows a decision last year by our five Executive Secretaries to establish a joint approach on trade facilitation issues. This is vitally important in a time of global economic uncertainty because the Regional Commissions are key intergovernmental bodies supporting economic development and integration in their respective regions as well as globally.

Over the next two days you will look at the latest trends, opportunities and technologies for Single Window and information exchange in global trade and you will have the opportunity to contribute discussions that seek to identify related strategic priorities for more efficient and secure cross-border trade, in line with the ongoing WTO negotiations in the Doha round. Over the past ten years, since the development of the UNECE Single Window Recommendations by UN/CEFACT, the UNECE intergovernmental body that works on trade facilitation, the Single Window has become a major instrument for simplifying and automating trade procedures. It is an important tool for supporting

paperless trade and regional and global integration. We are very encouraged by these trends.

At the heart of Single Window is the automation of the information exchanges that control the flow of goods across national borders. The conditions under which this information is exchanged and shared, its accessibility, accuracy, the data formats and the technologies used, are crucial for global trade efficiency. Managing this information skilfully, leveraging its potential, finding new ways to generate, manage, process and utilise this information is vitally important for governments, the private sector and citizens.

So the issues that you discuss over the next two days, and the decisions and recommendations you make, will be a key contribution to the successful operation of the global trading system. I believe if we all join our experiences, competences and forces we can make a real contribution to economic growth and development -- thus helping to make this world a better place, for us and for our children.

We are also committed to assisting you in implementing the recommendations and standards associated with Single Window development and management. We have responded to many requests from UN member States in this regard and, together with the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, launched the UN Network of Experts for paperless Trade, UNNEXT. Today, this Network provides capacity building and peer to peer support for Single Window implementers in our regions. It is supported by many countries and institutions in Asia and Central Asia as well as by donor agencies. We also have an active programme of support delivered through our Regional Advisor on Trade Facilitation. Following the discussions and the outcome of this meeting, we will evaluate whether there is demand for extending the UNNEXT network to include all five Regional Commissions in order to provide a platform which links trade facilitation implementers and practitioners both within and between the different regions of the world.

Ladies and gentlemen, I also want to draw your attention to several side events that we have organised and hosted in association with this Conference - on Wednesday and Thursday of this week. These are the:

- Meeting of the European Port Community System Association (EPCSA)
- Meeting of the Joint Forum Asia Europe Alliance for Paperless Trade (ASEAL)
- Meeting of the African Alliance for Electronic Commerce (AAEC)
- The Joint UN Regional Commission Meeting on Trade Facilitation and next steps to address the priorities discussed at the Conference.
- The UNNEXT workshop on Single Window Project Planning and Implementation organised jointly by UNECE and UNESCAP

Details of all these events are available in the programme.

In closing, I wish you a very successful meeting and I look forward to receiving the conclusions from your conference which I hope will include proposals to Governments and regional and international organizations regarding a joint vision and framework to guide the future of Single Windows and their support to global supply chains. Let me assure you that your opinion and ideas count and that all five of the UN Regional Commissions will be working together in order follow up on the results of your deliberations.