

Welcome Speech at the Opening of Regional Policy Forum on Trade Facilitation and SMEs in Times of Crisis

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Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of China Council for the Promotion of International Trade, I welcome you all to this Regional Policy Forum on Trade Facilitation and SMEs in Times of Crisis. It is encouraging indeed to see so many experts representing a wide range of economies and international organizations across Asia and Pacific in this room today.

CCPIT is honored to be the local partner, together with United Nations ESCAP and the World Bank to host this important policy forum. I noticed among the list of participants, there are scholars, researchers, policy makers and private sector representatives from Asia and Pacific region, as well as officials from relevant government agencies specialized in trade facilitation and SMEs. I believe that this forum will serve as a platform for the extensive exchange of ideas among participants, which will promote further studies and actions leading to a better trading environment at this critical junction against the backdrop of global financial turmoil.

China is a country that relies heavily on foreign trade. Since the financial crisis first hit last November, China's export has seen a dramatic decline as the world economy suffered from low demand in global markets, huge foreign exchange and credit risks, increased operational costs, fund chain problems, and the downscale or even collapse of some enterprises. The impact of this financial crisis is most destructive to China's SMEs in the Pearl River Delta and Yangtze River Delta, where foreign trade is their major business, with Europe and America being their key markets. To meet the

challenge, it is of critical importance that governments come up with practical and effective policy packages that facilitate foreign trade and reinvigorate SMEs. For that reason, I believe our forum here today is a timely gathering of experts from around Asia Pacific that addresses these two very important aspects of the solution, and I sincerely hope this forum will produce some guidance for our way ahead.

SMEs everywhere contribute to GDP growth, employment and innovation in a dominantly large account. We believe SMEs is the most vigorous and fast growing part of our economy and is the foundation of future development. So we should put more attention in improving the business environment of SMEs and facilitate their globalization. However, SMEs is usually easily ignored by policy makers as their voices are too weak to be heard and in some cases, SMEs even found themselves disadvantaged because of discrimination against them. Therefore, I believe there are good reasons for us to look into what is needed to facilitate SMEs' growth and competitiveness.

As the largest and foremost trade promotion organization in China, CCPIT has been working hard to promote trade and investment between China and the rest of the world, as well as to support the development of Chinese SMEs. On August 2nd to 3rd 2008, CCPIT together with APEC Business Advisory Council and Alibaba Group, co-hosted the 2nd ABAC SME Summit in Hangzhou, the "capital" city of Chinese SMEs. It was a grand gathering of more than 10 thousand SMEs from around the Asia Pacific region and produced quality policy recommendations that aim to tackle financial, technological and educational difficulties of SMEs. This year, we will continue our effort and upgrade the Summit to APEC level which will be held again in Hangzhou from 11th to 12th of this September. The theme for this year's Summit is "Constructing a New Commercial Culture in Crisis" and I would like to invite all of you to attend this important event for SMEs.

Distinguished Guests,

In 2009, great expectations are being placed upon the Asia-Pacific region, which has been witnessing a dynamic economic development with considerable potential to overcome the ongoing world financial crisis. I hope this forum, co-sponsored UNESCAP & World Bank, will not only promote communication and co-operation among governments from the region, but also mobilize a series of actions by businesses and academic communities as well. On behalf of CCPIT and the Chinese business community, I would like to assure you our heartiest commitment and full support in this regard.

May this Forum every success. Thank you.