

**WTO/ESCAP Third ARTNeT Capacity Building Workshop on Trade Research, 26-30 March
2007, Bangkok, Thailand**

**Opening Remarks of Mr. Xuan Zengpei,
Director, Trade and Investment Division, UNESCAP**

Dear Mr. Patrick Low, Director, Economic Research and Statistics, WTO, Mr. Evan Due, IDRC, Canada, distinguished participants and resource persons,

I am very pleased to welcome you to the Third ARTNeT Capacity Building Workshop on Trade Research. This workshop is indeed one of the core activities of the Asia-Pacific Research and Training Network on Trade (ARTNeT), whose aim is to build the capacity of Asia-Pacific's developing countries to conduct relevant and high quality research on trade and investment policy and facilitation issues.

As you may know, an internal evaluation of ARTNeT was presented to the UNESCAP Committee on Managing Globalization, at its third session, last September.¹ The legislative Committee again commended the secretariat on the implementation of the ARTNeT initiative and the growing collaboration between governments and academic/research institutions. The Committee suggested that the secretariat may work toward further strengthening the capacity of ARTNeT member institutions, making this workshop all the more important.

The first two days of the workshop will focus on the latest developments in trade research, with particular focus on the multilateral trade negotiations, preferential trade arrangements, trade facilitation and the issue of distribution of gains from trade. The second part of the workshop will include hands-on training on computable general equilibrium (CGE) models based on the Global Trade Analysis Project (GTAP).

Over twenty researchers are assembled in this room today, from 18 developing countries of the region and with a special interest in trade issues. I look forward to seeing you work together and learn from each other as the week unfolds. Indeed, the objective of the workshop is not only to enhance your individual knowledge of the multilateral trading system and learn a specific analytical technique, but also to promote intra-regional exchange of information and knowledge among researchers.

Distinguished participants and resource persons,

I am pleased to inform you that during a survey undertaken as a follow up to the resolution on trade and investment adopted at the last ESCAP Commission Session, the Bangladesh Minister of Commerce, the lead sponsor of that resolution, wrote to ministers of the 17 co-sponsors. He received very favorable comments on ARTNeT, among other programmes of the Trade and Investment Division. Seven rated ARTNeT as very useful and 8 as useful. I therefore look forward to the further collaboration of WTO, ESCAP and IDRC through ARTNeT for the benefit of trade research and research-based policy making in the region.

In that context, I am pleased to inform you that an external review of ARTNeT has just begun, in preparation for a second phase of ARTNeT, expected to begin in September 2007. Mr. Supperamaniam Manickam, former Ambassador of Malaysia to WTO, has kindly agreed to lead this review. He will be with us for the next two days and I encourage you to discuss with him any ideas you may have on making ARTNeT even more effective in its second phase.

¹ The internal evaluation report is available as document E/ESCAP/CMG(3/I)/8 in Chinese, English, French and Russian languages at <http://www.unescap.org/cmg/2006/CMG3-I/index.asp>

Distinguished participants and resource persons,

I cannot end my remarks without thanking once again through my dear friend Even Due, the International Development Research Centre (IDRC, Canada) for its continuous support to ARTNeT. I would also like to thank WTO for providing generous financial support and Mr. Patrick Low in particular for taking the time to participate in person in this event and his invaluable advice in many other research activities of the network.

I wish you a successful workshop and a pleasant stay in Bangkok.

Thank you.