Distinguished participants and resource persons,

I am very pleased to welcome you to the ARTNeT Capacity Building Workshop on Trade Research: “Behind the Border” Gravity Modelling. This is the 5th ARTNeT workshop of this kind and the second held this year.

Following the results of the external review of ARTNeT, which revealed that these workshops were among the most useful activities facilitated under ARTNeT, we actively thought to expand the resources allocated to these activities. This workshop is slightly different from previous ones, however, as it is part of a focused and integrated ARTNeT Research Initiative on “Behind the Border” Gravity Modelling.

This initiative not only comprises this workshop, but also some financial support for workshop participants to apply the methodology to relevant policy issues, as well as technical support and a follow-up workshop to discuss preliminary results and further deepen technical expertise on modeling of effect of trade-related policies and trade and investment flows.

In addition, the initiative aims at building an online “behind the border” gravity modeling interface and to maintain up-to-date gravity datasets to selected ARTNeT researchers and research institutions. We have already made much progress in developing the interface and related datasets, and we look forward to getting your comments and feedback on these tools during the later part of the week.

Over twenty researchers are gathered in this room today, from 11 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 analytical tools and techniques, but also to promote intra-regional exchange of information and knowledge among researchers.

Let me conclude by thanking the International Development Research Centre, Canada as well as the Government of France for making it possible to organize this workshop and launch this new ARTNeT Initiative. My thanks also go to Dr. Ben Shepherd for readily agreeing to share his knowledge and experience with us this week, and to India’s Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), a founding member of ARTNeT who has kindly agreed to contribute to the ARTNeT Gravity Modelling Initiative by contributing to the development of gravity datasets and hosting both the follow-up workshop for selected researchers from one the ARTNeT Least Developed Countries.

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

Thank you.