First WTO Singapore Chair established at NUS
05 October 2011

The World Trade Organisation, together with the NUS Faculty of Law and Centre for International Law (CIL), launched the WTO Chairs Programme (WCP) in Singapore on 4 October 2011. The launch event was graced by Ambassador-at-Large at Singapore's Ministry of Foreign Affairs Prof Tommy Koh, who is also the Chairman of CIL.

Prof Koh said: "The launch of the Singapore Chair marks another milestone in Singapore's partnership with the WTO." He added that the WTO Chair at the NUS Law School plugs the School into a strong network of 15 distinguished universities around the world who put their thought leadership towards supporting the WTO and its activities.

Also at the launch were the Director of WTO's Economic Research and Statistics Division Dr Patrick Low and NUS Law Dean Prof Tan Cheng Han, together with some 60 invited guests from the public and people sectors, academia, the diplomatic corps, the business community as well as delegates attending the inaugural WTO Policy Dialogue in Singapore.

NUS has emerged as the latest Chair of the programme among 15 others, after a
competitive round of proposals. Assoc Prof Michael Ewing-Chow from the NUS Law School and Head of Trade/Investment Law & Policy of the CIL, was appointed the WTO Chair for Singapore. As the Chair, NUS will support WTO in areas of capacity building, research and outreach activities.

Said Dr Low: "Apart from the many other good things that could be said about NUS, NUS' multidisciplinary orientation is ideally suited to understanding all the complexities underlying international trade relations."

"Free trade faces many challenges today with the Financial Crisis and the slow pace of the Doha Round," said Prof Tan. "We at NUS hope to contribute to [a better] future by supporting these efforts [in promoting free trade] and training a new generation. We want in our own small way to further the work of the WTO."

The event rounded off with a panel session on "The Future of the WTO", moderated by Assoc Prof Ewing-Chow, where Asian WTO Chairs Prof Zhang Lei from China, Mr Riza Noer Arfani from Indonesia and Prof Vu Quoc Huy from Vietnam shared their respective initiatives as part of the WCP.

The WCP, which was announced in March 2009, aims to support and promote trade-related academic activities by universities and research institutions in developing countries. Academic institutions awarded WTO Chairs receive support in course preparation, teaching, research and outreach activities.

The first initiative that the NUS Faculty of Law and CIL are hosting as part of the Singapore WCP is the WTO Policy Dialogue, where critical trade-related issues are being discussed by some 50 senior trade officials and experts from 24 countries over a three-day forum from 5 to 7 October.