NUS co-hosts inaugural WTO Policy Dialogue for senior government officials from Asian economies

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Organised by the NUS Faculty of Law and Centre for International Law (CIL) together with the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the first WTO Policy Dialogue, which brings together some 50 senior trade officials and experts from 24 countries to discuss critical trade-related issues, is being held in Singapore from 5 to 7 October 2011.

Delivering the keynote address, Guest-of-Honour Singapore Minister of State for Trade and Industry Mr Lee Yi Shyan said: "The Policy Dialogue is relevant and timely in its agenda, allowing for substantive discussions about the continued importance of a multilateral trade agenda, the relevance of the DDA (Doha Development Agenda) goals, and the future challenges which we will face together."

With this Dialogue, Mr Lee hoped that there will be open and thoughtful reflections on the WTO negotiations over the past decade as well as some bold and innovative ideas raised to strengthen the WTO as an institution.

WTO's Chief Economist Dr Patrick Low shared that the issues to be discussed will be the evolution of regionalism and preferential trade arrangements, the relationship between climate change and trade policy, trade in natural resources, non-tariff barriers to trade, commodity trade, food security and food prices.

The first of many regional forums to come, the Dialogue seeks to examine critical trade issues and provide an opportunity for in-depth discussions by senior officials from Asian economies attempting to cope with the challenges posed by the current economic and political situation.

"As financial uncertainty continues to dog the US and Europe, it is important that we understand the implications of the current state of trade negotiations as we look towards the future for our Asian economies," noted Prof Simon Chesterman, Vice Dean.
(Graduate Studies) and Professor of Law at NUS.

The distinguished guests participating in the three-day event include Mr Peter Allgeier, Former US Ambassador to the WTO; Mr John Clarke, Former Head of the European Union delegation to the WTO; Mr Ujal Singh Bhatia, Former Indian Ambassador to the WTO; and Mr Li Enheng, Former Minister and Deputy Representative of China to the WTO.

The Dialogue is a result of a deeper relationship between the WTO and NUS following the successful annual Asia-Pacific Regional Trade Policy Courses conducted by NUS from 2007 to 2010 where more than 100 participants from over 25 Asia-Pacific economies gained a comprehensive understanding of the WTO and its functions.