

**Welcome speech for Inception by Mr. Shovakant Poudel, DDG, Customs -
Monday, September 25, 2017**

- Respected Secretary Shanta Raj Subedi sir,
- Respected Secretary Mr Rajan Khanal khanal sir
- Respected Secretary Mr. Chandra Kumar Ghimire sir
- Respected Secretary Mr. Sishir Kumar Dhungana sir,
- Mr. Baikuntha Aryal, Chief, International Economic Cooperation Coordination Division
- Mr. Ram Sharan Chimoriya, Director General, Department of Customs.
- Mr. Ronald Anotonio Butiong, Director, ADB, Manila,
- Mr. Sharad Bhandari, Principal Economist, Nepal Resident Mission, ADB
- Ms. Sonoko Sunayama, Senior Economist,
- Representative from the Embassy of Japan,
- Representatives from the private sector,
- My colleagues and staff from Government Agencies,
- National Experts,
- Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Afternoon,

1. It is my immense pleasure to deliver a few works in this **Inception Meeting for the SASEC Customs Reform and Modernization for Trade Facilitation Program** jointly organized by the Department of Customs and the Asian Development Bank.
2. The government of Nepal and the ADB has a long history of cooperation. The first technical assistance was received on 1996 to introduce ASYCUDA in Customs, which was a great leap forward in Customs automation at that time. ADB has also assisted Customs in 2007 and 2013 through different assistance. These all assistances were well perceived and successful.
3. The new Program support would strengthened Trade Facilitation with a \$21 million policy-based loan to support the Government of Nepal's efforts to simplify, harmonize, and modernize the country's trade processes to meet international standards. The technical assistance of US\$1 million would complement Nepal Customs to carry on reform program as envisaged in the program loan policy actions.
4. Prior to this meeting today, the ADB and the DOC yesterday successfully completed a workshop where a work-plan for the implementation of the program was drafted.
5. Today's sessions include presentations and discussion on the program design, economic rationale of the program, a glimpse of the WTO TFA in terms of Nepal and finally a presentation and discussion on the draft work-plan.

6. In this context, I believe that this will be an excellent step to fulfill our commitments to the Trade Facilitation Agreement of the World Trade Organization as well as related international standards on customs.
7. We can see prominent personalities in the program. This is a rare event for us. This has encouraged us to move forward in our mission. I take this opportunity to welcome our respected Santaraj sir, Rajan sir, Chadra sir and Sishir sir to be presented in today's program. I also welcome Mr. Ronald Antinio Butiong and Ms. Sonoko Sunayama for their taking trouble to come and join this event from Manila. I welcome Mr. Sharad Bhadari ji for the participation. I would like to welcome all the dignitaries to avail their precious time for this event.

Thank you.