

**Statement by the D-8 Secretary-General, Ambassador Isiaka
Abdulqadir Imam, for the 3rd Customs Officials Meeting
Virtually hosted by the People's Republic of Bangladesh, 24 May
2022**

Mr. Chair,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I feel delighted to warmly welcome all of you to this 3rd Customs officials meeting of D-8 Member Countries to further deliberate on the Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA).

This meeting marks my first attendance at this August assembly of top officials of the Department of Customs of D-8 Member States, since I assumed duty as Secretary General of our noble organization, early this year.

I want to seize this opportunity to thank all of you for being here today and to also express my deep appreciation for your attendance at this very important meeting.

Permit me to extend our sincere gratitude to the current Chair of the D-8, the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, especially the Ministry of Commerce and particularly the National Board of Revenue of Bangladesh for graciously hosting this very needed meeting. We have high

hope that today's discussions will provide the final push required to set the ball rolling for the implementation of the D-8 PTA.

Mr. Chair,
Distinguished Delegates,

As you are all aware, trade relations among member states are one of the key priorities of the D-8 organization, and this aspect has been stressed severally at different fora. In order to boost trade, Members States signed D-8 Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) and Multilateral Agreement on Administrative Assistance in Customs Matters in 2006, both of which have been effective since October 2011. It is in furtherance of the priority placed on increasing the intra-trade which encouraged the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of D-8 Member States to come up with the '2030 Decennial Road Map', which will propel the D-8 organization into economic power house of the world by 2030.

However, one decade after the signing of the PTA we are yet to reap the benefits of this lofty agreement because of the pending necessary customs issues to the path of its operationalization. In this regard, it is of utmost

importance that member states map out strategies for the speedy implementation of the PTA by:

- i. Providing necessary notifications concerning the Rules of Origin & Operational Certification Procedures;
- ii. Sharing Specimen copy of D-8 Certificate of Origin and Application for D-8 Certificate of Origin;
- iii. Updating the specimen signatures and customs stamps previously submitted; and
- iv. Designating a contact office/focal point in the Member States' respective customs authorities.

Mr. Chair,

Distinguished Delegates,

Permit me to appreciate the unwavering commitment of the Member States toward the implementation of the PTA. We appreciate the full implementation by Malaysia, Iran and Turkey, we appreciate the significant progress made by Bangladesh and Indonesia in completing pending internal procedures to provide necessary customs notifications. We wish to encourage Nigeria and Pakistan to expedite action on internal customs procedures for the speedy implementation of the PTA in their respective countries. I am happy to inform this August gathering that we have concluded the finalization of two crucial documents namely, Dispute Settlement Mechanism (DSM) and Trade Facilitation Strategy (TFS) after

several rounds of expert meetings. These two documents will surely ensure the smooth implementation of the PTA. We are hopeful that Egypt will ratify the D8 PTA now that the DSM has been concluded.

Mr. Chair,

Distinguished Delegates,

Let me take this opportunity to appreciate the Republic of Indonesia for introducing some important technical issues into the agenda of today's discussion. The idea of transposing the offer lists submitted by the Contracting Members into latest HS line is important, while the provision of 'Importation by Installment' of Operational Certification Procedures and 'Implementation of Prohibition' of Rules of Origin are equally vital to facilitate the application of common regulations by the customs authorities of the Member States. We also appreciate the idea of Electronic Certificate of Origin introduced by Indonesia, which we note is in alignment with the electronic verification mechanism of the Certificate of Origin being practiced by the Republic of Turkey. We hope that Turkey and Indonesia will share their experiences with other Member States to further develop D8 Electronic Certificate of Origin.

Mr. Chair,
Distinguished Delegates,

I wish to underscore the need for the Custom Departments of Member States to train relevant Customs Officials of their respective countries on the provision of the D-8 PTA and Customs Agreement and implementation of RoO. In this context, and in line with the desire of member countries, I am pleased to inform you all that the Secretariat has approached the World Customs Organization (WCO) to arrange a tailored training program for the customs officials of the D-8 Member States. We are in discussion with the WCO and the training programme was to hold in Turkey from 6-10 June, 2022 but postponed due to the unavailability of WCO experts. We are grateful to the Republic of Turkey for agreeing to partner with the Secretariat and WCO to hold this program in Turkey and wish to inform you that a new date will soon be announced for this all-important Workshop. We have also

approached the World Trade Organization for possible collaboration in the area of capacity building.

Mr. Chair,

Distinguished Delegates,

Last but not the least, it is pertinent to note that a number of cut-off dates were set previously for completing the necessary internal procedures for the full implementation of the PTA. Unfortunately, these cut-off-dates have come and gone and D-8 PTA is non-functional, till date. If we must achieve our ambitious plan of increasing intra- D-8 trade to significant level to meet our vision 2030 agenda and fulfill the commitment of our leaders to this project, the seamless and hitch-free implementation of PTA is crucial. For this purpose, the cooperation of you the officials of the Customs Department of our various member countries are very important. Therefore, I wish to urge esteemed delegates to set an effective and implementable cut-off date to complete all pending customs procedures by the member states with a target to operationalize the D-8 PTA not later than 1st January, 2023, Insha Allah.

I thank you for your kind attention.