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Singapore Dialogue on the World Trading System

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Prof Chesterman (standing) engaging the audience at the Dialogue

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Multilateral trading remains Singapore's top priority despite having concluded 20 free trade agreements and being in the process of trade negotiations such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership. Guest-of-Honour Senior Minister of State for Trade and Industry Lee Yi Shyan made these remarks at the Second Singapore Trade Dialogue on 30 October 2013.

Organised by the NUS Centre for International Law (CIL), together with the World Trade Organization (WTO) and Singapore Cooperation Programme of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the meeting gathered more than 55 participants, including senior officials from the WTO, government officials and trade and investment policy experts from Asia Pacific. The dialogue examined critical trade issues and addressed challenges that face the multilateral trading system.

"The WTO is the bedrock of Singapore's trade policy," said Mr Lee, "and we look forward to deepening our collaboration with the WTO with the collective aim of ensuring that it remains strong, credible and relevant."



Minister Lee speaking at the event

This two-day forum is especially significant as it served as a platform to discuss issues in preparation for the 9th WTO Ministerial Conference in Bali this December. The outcome of the Bali conference will be critical for the fate of the Doha Development Agenda that has remained stalled for the last 12 years. Attendees also engaged in group discussions on recent themes that should receive more attention from governments such as Global Value Chains, Regional Trade Agreements, and Trade and Investment Coherence.

Also at the event were: Mr Yi Xiaozhun, Deputy Director-General of the WTO; Professor Simon Chesterman, Dean of the NUS Faculty of Law; Dr Patrick Low, Vice-President of Research of Fung Global Institute and Former Chief Economist of the WTO; Mr Evan Rogerson, Director of the Agriculture and Commodities Division of the WTO; Mr Maarten Smeets, Head of Technical Assistance Coordination, Partnerships and Internship Programmes at the Institute for Training and Technical Cooperation of the WTO; Mr Ujal Bhatia, former Ambassador of India to the WTO and an Appellate Body Member of the WTO; Ambassador See Chak Mun, Senior Advisor of Singapore's Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Mr Peter Govindasamy, Director of the International Trade Cluster, Singapore's Ministry of Trade and Industry; and Ms Margaret Liang, Consultant at Singapore's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Dialogue is part of the NUS' WTO Chairs Programme (WCP) where universities and research institutions support the WTO in areas of capacity building, research and outreach activities. The WCP was awarded to NUS in 2011, with Associate Professor Michael Ewing-Chow, NUS Faculty of Law and Head of Trade and Investment Law and Policy of the CIL, as the WTO Chair for Singapore.

By Centre for International Law

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