Salutations ….

Ambassadors, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen you are most welcome to this important meeting on *Facilitating Trade in a Secure Environment*, which is a follow up to the UNECE February meeting on trade security, in which many of you participated.

I would particularly like to welcome our co hosts for the meeting, the World Customs Organisation (WCO), and to express my sincere appreciation and complements to them for what I believe is a concrete example of the collaborative approach to trade facilitation and security to which we both aspire.

The purpose of the meeting is to review the work currently being undertaken by the key agencies in trade facilitation and security and to ensure that we are all working in a consistent and integrated manner in these areas. I also hope that the meeting will serve to initiate work on the development of a security management standard and establish the necessary mechanisms to achieve this goal. Finally, I hope that the meeting will encourage the use of existing instruments for trade and transport facilitation and security and will expand the participation of countries and organisations in the development and implementation of these instruments. I think you will agree that this is both a challenging and worthwhile agenda.

Trade security is a key issue for UNECE member states and much work has been undertaken in this area over the past months. I look forward to receiving an update on this work from the organisations present today. However, the potentially disruptive effect of security measures on trade processes remains a concern, as does the need for a more integrated and multilateral approach to security. Further, the capacity, or lack thereof, of many developing economies to implement the new security measures must also be addressed. These are not easy issues to deal with effectively and progress will only be made through thoughtful, diligent and coordinated efforts.

Harnessing and integrating the good work currently being undertaken by organisations in the field of trade facilitation and security should be a priority. We strongly believe in the use (and modification where necessary) wherever possible of existing instruments and standards to address security concerns. In our experience, this is the fastest path to achieving the overall objective of a properly facilitated and secure trading environment and we stand ready to work with all organisations here present to reach this goal. We believe that a collaborative approach to this work will result in a more effective, less disruptive and less costly implementation for both business and government. In this regard, we complement the recent work of the Global Facilitation Partnership in bringing together key organisations for trade facilitation implementation.
Looking at the positive side of the current security situation, I believe that we must take full advantage of the present security pressures to accelerate the implementation of specific trade facilitation tools and instruments that are also security enhancing. I am referring particularly to the utilisation of proper documentary standards, the provision of advance information through the international security chain, the use of risk analysis, the exchange of information between relevant government organisations, and the development of authorised trader and supply chain concepts. All of these offer clear benefits to business while at the same time improve the overall security of the trading system. I acknowledge the current work of WCO and other organisations in this area and welcome WCO’s efforts to enhance the exchange of export and import information between Customs organisations. This has long been a key objective of trade facilitation. I also encourage UNECE member States to ratify the Revised Kyoto Convention as soon as possible as this Convention enshrines many of the approaches that would simultaneously enhance security and facilitate trade.

It is our view that this is a time of great potential for trade facilitation implementation. Never before has the issue of trade facilitation obtained such a high profile in the overall international trade debate and never have the potential benefits of facilitation been more clearly recognised. Despite the recent failure of the WTO Ministerial conference in Cancun, I believe that trade facilitation is supported by most countries and holds potential benefits for all.

I would encourage you in this meeting, therefore, to openly share and discuss your current and future plans for enhancing trade security in order that we may ensure a lined up approach to a secure and properly facilitated trade environment. I would particularly encourage you to participate in the work of UNECE in modelling, standards development and trade facilitation. Specific proposals in this regard will be tabled at the meeting and I am looking forward to a positive outcome that will support and deepen the current work.

In closing I would again like to thank our co-hosts for their support and I wish you every success in your deliberations.