Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear colleagues,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you all at the hybrid event “Facilitating trade in the Kyrgyz Republic: progress and prospects”.

Today, many of you are in Bishkek, in other countries in Central Asia. This includes countries part of the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA).

And some of you are in Geneva and in Europe.

I thank you for joining this virtual event.

This event concludes several years of our collaboration on trade facilitation and capacity-building efforts in the Kyrgyz Republic.

I would therefore like to share with you my reflections on the process and prospects of facilitating trade in the Kyrgyz Republic.

During my recent visit to Bishkek in March I was truly impressed with the accomplishments reached by the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, the Ministry of Economy and Commerce, the National Trade Facilitation Council and the Kyrgyz Economic University.

I was delighted to see that the implementation of the UNECE project helped to strengthen the capacity of local authorities for implementing the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement.

This close cooperation between UNECE and the Kyrgyz Republic over the last year and a half has brought a number of benefits:

- improvement of national capacity of the Kyrgyz Republic, within effective implementation of priority measures under the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement,
- improved education on trade facilitation related matters,
- increasing the pool of experts on WTO and trade facilitation related matters;
and, importantly, the implementation of the priorities outlined in the National Strategy for Sustainable Development of the Kyrgyz Republic until 2040.

As documented in the UN Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, produced by UNECE for the Pan-European region, the Kyrgyz Republic increased in the rate of implementation of trade facilitation measures:

- from 38% in 2019 to 70% in 2021.

This is a big achievement, and it is important to continue this trend.

I am pleased to note that UNECE cooperation with the Kyrgyz Republic has supported the country in a number of collaborative actions:

- It has provided a forum for dialogue
- It has supported the creation of new projects between the government and the private sector, including small and medium-sized enterprises and the academic community.

And today, I am also delighted to highlight the results of our collaboration with the successful National Trade Facilitation Roadmap 2021-2025 of the Kyrgyz Republic.

- UNECE’s cooperation led to the creation of a comprehensive strategic framework to overhaul the country’s trade facilitation reforms.
- And since the launch of the Roadmap in July 2021, more than 20 percent of the Roadmap measures have already been implemented.

Twenty national agencies and organizations have been assigned to implement 59 activities by 2025. This includes

- the development of a risk management system,
- the establishment of a trade facilitation center and
- acceding to the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-Border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific.

All of this also supports the implementation of the SPECA Trade Facilitation Strategy. We will surely discuss this, with representatives of all SPECA countries, at the forthcoming SPECA Working Group on Trade this coming autumn.

In addition it's important to mention the development of two Business Process Analyses on Textile Exports and Imports of Pharmaceutical Products. They surely will assist national stakeholders to identify bottlenecks and propose recommendations to decrease the time and costs for export and import for traders.

I also pleased that UNECE helped to boost the capacity of academia. On the basis of a grant-based Memorandum of Understanding with UNECE, the Kyrgyz Economic University (KEU), successfully strengthened the capacity of Kyrgyz stakeholders to engage in and benefit from international trade.
The capacity-building activities organized by KEU with UNECE support brought together more than 200 experts. These include officials, and industry representatives from across the country and region. The project brought them together to share best practices, approaches, and perspectives for our journey to contribute to the education on trade facilitation, as well as in the digital economy and cross-border paperless trade in general.

Taking this approach, the Kyrgyz Economic University now is in a position to build a network of local trade facilitation experts. Such a network of experts will help ensure the long-term sustainability of its Competence Center for Trade Facilitation, and of the respective support to the country’s trade policy making.

The Kyrgyz Economic University deserves recognition for being the first educational institution in Central Asia to specialize in trade facilitation. There is surely large potential in sharing this knowledge with other countries – and academic institutions – in the region.

As a result of this project, we have all taken a step forward. I am deeply grateful to the International Trade Centre: it is great to work together on a wide range of projects in Central Asia promoting trade.

I want to thank the consultants, experts from public and private sector, and colleagues from the international organizations who contributed to this project.

And while we conclude our work under this project, I am confident that there will be more opportunities for our future cooperation. As you know, the Central Asian Region is an important region for the UNECE, and we are ready to support the SPECA process on a wide range of issues, including the implementation of:

- SPECA Principles of Sustainable Trade
- SPECA Innovation Strategy for Sustainable Development

And let me add to this UNECE’s work on our cross-cutting priority topics, mandated by our membership:
- The transition to a circular economy and the sustainable use of natural resources
- The digital and green transitions.
Both offer great opportunities for the country!

With this, I wish you successful deliberations and I look forward to opportunities to collaborate in the future.

Thank you.