

Capacity building for the Front Line Officers and MSMEs of Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar to Implement ASEAN-Hong Kong FTA Tariff and Rules of Origin



The Capacity building for the Front Line Officers and MSMEs of Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar to Implement ASEAN-Hong Kong FTA Tariff and Rules of Origin is one of the approved projects under the annual AHKFTA ECOTECH Work Programme for 2020. Due to COVID-19, the AHKFTA Joint Committee approved the request of the Ministry of Commerce of Myanmar, as the proponent of the project, to postpone the project. The project was proposed to equip front-line officers and MSMEs representatives from Cambodia, Lao and Myanmar MSMEs with knowledge and skills on how to correctly apply tariff preferential treatments and implement the commitments under AHKFTA. A consultant was hired to develop a Handbook on Rules of Origin (ROO) of the AHKFTA. Following the completion of the handbook, the implementing agency held a Capacity Building for MSMEs representatives and officials handling rules of origin issues in CLM countries to provide “coaching clinic” session to provide in-depth consultations on how to apply the tariff preferential under AHKFTA correctly, which was held on 3-4 July 2023 in Nay Pyi Daw, Myanmar. The Capacity Building proved to be a useful avenue for attending CLMV officials to consult with the consultant of the project to learn about best practices on how to support MSMEs in least-developed countries in taking advantage of AHKFTA and other free trade agreements.

U Minn Minn, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce delivered the opening address. He underscored the importance of understanding the tariffs and rules of origin under the AHKFTA and other free trade agreements for MSMEs to get optimal benefits from the application of preferential tariff treatment under these agreements. The Capacity Building was attended by high-level officials from the Department of Trade, Myanmar Customs, Mr. Gusmiadirrahman, Deputy Director of FTA Affairs, Directorate General of Customs and Excise Indonesia, who is also the ASEAN Co-Chair of the AHKFTA Sub-Committee on Rules of Origin, the AHKFTA ECCOTECH Support Unit, and 44 participants from Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar. The Capacity Building discussed salient features of the Rules of Origin (ROO) Chapter, including the

Operational Certification Procedures (OCP), under the AHKFTA, including case samples in determining the origin criteria and applying tariff preferential rates. Two consultants of the project, Mr. Phan Manh Ha, and Ms. Dang Thi Hai Binh, who is also the Deputy Head of the Division of Origin of Goods and IPR, Viet Nam Customs, facilitated the Capacity Building.

Overall, the participants supported the organization of the Capacity Building and appreciated the work of the consultant, which would facilitate their work in the future. Some participants expressed hope that similar capacity building be held more often to help officials from least-developed countries, such as Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Myanmar, to share best practices and learn from other AHKFTA Parties on the effective ways of implementing ROO and OCPs.

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