

Committee on Government Procurement

**SYMPOSIUM ON SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT
REMARKS BY DEPUTY DIRECTOR-GENERAL XIAOZHUN YI
WEDNESDAY, 22 FEBRUARY 2017, ROOM W, 9 A.M.**

Distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning. It is my pleasure to welcome you to the WTO for today's Symposium on Sustainability in Government Procurement. I know that some of the speakers and others present travelled a long way to be here. I certainly appreciate the efforts that have been made.

The importance of today's topic will, I expect, be obvious to all participants: sustainability is, by definition, vital to protect the Earth on which we live and breathe and which nourishes us in countless ways. It is, therefore, also essential to the health and wellbeing of our human societies. Government procurement is a key sector and policy area in which WTO Members can and, increasingly, do seek to promote sustainability, including in its

environmental and, for many countries, its social dimensions. It is, therefore, logical and important to examine the ways in which sustainability and government procurement activities can support and reinforce each other. Equally important is that this be done in ways that are consistent with international trade obligations and with the principle of value for money in public procurement.

I have looked carefully at the programme and the list of speakers is extremely interesting. The discussion is organized around three sets of questions that have been identified by the Parties to the Agreement on Government Procurement. These are:

- a. What is sustainable procurement and what are its main objectives?
- b. What are the key practices of sustainable procurement and how can sustainability be incorporated into the different stages of procurement?
- c. How are sustainability measures in procurement processes practiced in a manner consistent with both

the principle of "best-value for money" and with international trade obligations?

These questions seem to be precisely the right ones on which to focus in light of the Committee's decision regarding the content of its Work Programme on Sustainable Procurement. By making possible a full and thoughtful exploration of these questions with the input of outside experts, the Symposium will provide an essential contribution to the Committee's Work Programme on this issue.

Just so that there is no misunderstanding, I would like to clarify the nature of the activity today. This is not a formal or even an informal meeting of the Committee on Government Procurement. That will occur tomorrow, when the GPA Parties themselves will meet and will no doubt want to reflect on the discussions today and next steps in the Committee's work in this and other areas. Today is a day for direct input to the Committee's work from outside experts and, most of all, for free discussion between the experts, Committee delegates, and

other persons present. To facilitate this, it must be clearly understood that all views expressed during the proceedings are the **personal responsibility of the individual speakers**, and are strictly without prejudice to the views, interests or positions of WTO Members and Observers.

Before closing, I would like to mention another reason why the discussion at the Symposium today is important and useful. Today, there are many misconceptions about the nature and objectives of the international trading system. There are some who feel that it exists only to support trade and is or should be indifferent to other public interest objectives. If one looks, though, at the Preamble to the Marrakesh Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organization, one sees clearly a reference to "**the optimal use of the world's resources in accordance with the objective of sustainable development**", as an over-arching goal of the system. The discussions today will, I hope, be approached in this spirit.

Thanks to all of you for your interest and commitment. I am sure that the day's discussions will be worth your while.

Without further ado, I pass the microphone back to Rob.
