



## **RSIS launches a new Centre and Programme to train government and business leaders in trade negotiations**

Official Opening of the Temasek Foundation Centre for Trade & Negotiations

16 October 2008, Singapore

The S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Nanyang Technological University (NTU), launched the Temasek Foundation Centre for Trade & Negotiations (TFCTN) today. Established with an initial donation of S\$1.28 million from the Temasek Foundation, the grant will enable the Centre to embark upon its agenda of increasing knowledge of trade negotiations and building the capacity of government and business leaders in Asia.

Speaking at the Official Opening of TFCTN, Mr Goh Geok Khim, Chairman of the Temasek Foundation, said that the capacity building of trade policy specialists in the region was closely aligned to the foundation's mandate of contributing towards the development of a prosperous and connected Asia, and that with better trained trade policy specialists, it would hopefully lead to greater economic integration and growth in Asia.

The need for capacity building among developing countries is pressing as they face a lack of resources and expertise needed to effectively enter trade negotiation and participate in economic globalisation. Ambassador Barry Desker, Dean of RSIS, NTU, in his welcome address at the TFCTN Official Opening, emphasized the pressing need for developing countries to participate meaningfully in ongoing economic negotiations. Trade negotiations, according to Desker, are complex and prohibitive to countries which lack trained officials capable of interpreting the many acronyms and terms of reference. He is however, confident that by providing government officials and business leaders with high-quality research and training, TFCTN will be able to "contribute to economic growth and development" in Asia in this time of economic uncertainty.

TFCTN is one of the first centres in Asia that provide training and capacity building for trade and negotiations. The Centre achieves this through programmes like the TFCTN Executive Programme, specialised executive courses on trade law and trade policy, workshops, conferences as well as collaborative work with international researchers and practitioners. The first programme, starting at the end of October, will be the TFCTN Executive Programme, a 6-week long training programme for mid-level government officials from around the region.

The TFCTN Executive Programme seeks to provide the government officials with the practical, interdisciplinary knowledge needed to effectively participate in international trade negotiations as well as assist regional states in implementing World Trade Organisation (WTO) and Free Trade Agreement (FTA) agreements domestically through training and to create a greater awareness of the rules of various trading regimes.

Policy makers from the trade and foreign ministries of Bangladesh, Brunei, Cambodia, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Laos, the Maldives, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam will be in Singapore for the TFCTN Executive Programme, which lasts from 29 October to 5 December.

Training the programme participants will be experts and practitioners from the fields of world trade, international law and economics. Experts like Lim Aik Hoe, Counsellor in the Trade in Services Division, WTO; Patrick Low, Chief Economist and Director of Economic Research and Statistics, WTO as well as Razeen Sally, co-Director of the European Centre for International Political Economy, will be sharing their knowledge of topics like intellectual property rights issues related to trade negotiations as well as the dispute settlement mechanism of the WTO.

Beyond building competencies of policy makers and top business executives in world trade, TFCTN will be extending its reach into other areas as well. TFCTN will be assisting the Ministry of Trade and Industry, Singapore, in the hosting of the APEC 2009 Symposium.

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**Background Information**

**About the Temasek Foundation Centre for Trade & Negotiations**

The Temasek Foundation for Trade & Negotiations is a policy research centre at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University. The Centre is dedicated to improving the process of international negotiations, with a particular focus on increasing capabilities and access for developing states. The Centre uses rigorous empirical research to create new ideas and to generate informed debate leading to practical policy alternatives for improving global negotiations on trade and economic issues. Countries which are unable to participate effectively risk losing out on the process of globalisation.

**About the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies**

The S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) was inaugurated on 1 January 2007 as an autonomous School within the Nanyang Technological University (NTU), upgraded from its previous incarnation as the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies (IDSS), which was established in 1996.

The School exists to develop a community of scholars and policy analysts at the forefront of Asia-Pacific security studies and international affairs. Its three core functions are research, graduate teaching and networking activities in the Asia-Pacific region. It produces cutting-edge security

related research in Asia-Pacific Security, Conflict and Non-Traditional Security, International Political Economy, and Country and Area Studies.

The School's activities are aimed at assisting policymakers to develop comprehensive approaches to strategic thinking on issues related to security and stability in the Asia-Pacific and their implications for Singapore.

**About Temasek Foundation ([www.temasekfoundation.org.sg](http://www.temasekfoundation.org.sg))**

Temasek Foundation is a non-profit philanthropic organisation anchored in Singapore that seeks to contribute to sustainable growth and a bright future of hope and opportunities for people in Asia. The foundation works with partners to support programmes that develop people through health care, education and research, programmes that build bridges between peoples, programmes that build institutions of excellence through good governance and ethics, and programmes that rebuild lives and livelihoods affected by natural disasters.