



SEMINAR

ARE ASEAN FTAs USED FOR ENTERPRISE EXPORTING?

Date: Wednesday, 10 February 2010

Time: 2.30 pm — 4.00 pm

Venue: Seminar Room II, ISEAS

About the Speaker

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Ganeshan Wignaraja is Principal Economist at the Asian Development Bank's Office of Regional Economic Integration. He also represents ADB on the WTO Director-General's Advisory Group on Aid for Trade. Over the last twenty years, he has managed multi-country projects, implemented strategic assignments, and conducted policy-oriented research on international trade, regional integration, economic competitiveness, technology and macroeconomic forecasting. Before joining ADB in 2004, he was in London as Head of Competitiveness and SME Strategy at Maxwell Stamp PLC and Chief Programme Officer at the Commonwealth Secretariat. He has also held research positions at Oxford University, the OECD, the Overseas Development Institute and the United Nations Institute for New Technologies. He has published 12 books including: *Pan-Asian Integration* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), *Competitiveness Strategy in Developing Countries* (Routledge, 2003) and *the Postwar Evolution of Development Thinking* (Macmillan and St. Martins Press, 1991). His research was quoted in the *Economist*, the *Financial Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*. He has a doctorate in economics from Oxford University.



About the Seminar

One of the most interesting trade policy developments in East Asia today is the spread of FTAs, particularly those involving ASEAN. AFTA is the region's oldest agreement and ASEAN has implemented FTAs with large Asian neighbors - China, India, Korea and Japan - and others are under negotiation. These developments underline a significant re-interest in ASEAN internal integration efforts, along with a move towards the formation of an ASEAN Economic Community in 2015 and an eventual region-wide FTA. Yet concerns have been expressed in some academic circles, that AFTA and ASEAN FTAs in general are not particularly effective and use of such agreements by business is extremely limited. This view is sometimes taken to mean that ASEAN countries ought not to expend scarce negotiating resources on FTAs and should instead focus on reducing MFN tariffs. Published data on use of ASEAN FTAs from official sources and firm surveys of exporting behavior under ASEAN FTAs are rare and make it hard to analyze this viewpoint. This talk analyses the issue of whether ASEAN FTAs are actually used for enterprise exporting. As background, the spread of ASEAN FTAs are mapped and economic effects of alternative FTA scenarios involving ASEAN are examined (including the economic implications of the recent ASEAN-China FTA). Then drawing on new data from surveys of East Asian firms and other sources, use of ASEAN FTAs at firm-level and impediments to use are examined. It is suggested that while use of ASEAN FTAs is more than expected, a comprehensive set of policies is needed for East Asian firms to take full advantage of export opportunities presented by ASEAN FTAs.

You are cordially invited to the Seminar.