



**AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY
PHNOM PENH**

PRESS RELEASE

AUSTRALIA'S REGIONAL WTO INITIATIVE

Progress towards helping countries in South East Asia participate in the global trading system will take a step forward in Phnom Penh with the opening of a two-day workshop on 7-8 December 2003 to design an Australian Government funded program aimed at enhancing the capacity of countries in the region to engage with the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

Countries participating in the regional WTO Capacity Building Program are Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam. Thailand is a founding member of the WTO and Cambodia was accepted as a member at the recent Cancun Ministerial Meeting. Vietnam and Laos are in the process of accession.

The workshop will focus on building a stronger understanding of trade policy options within the WTO framework and at enhancing regional capacity to undertake quality research and analysis of the impacts of WTO agreements.

The workshop follows extensive consultations and will be attended by participants representing government Ministries, academic institutions and the business community.

Following the Doha Ministerial Meeting of the WTO, the Australian Government announced a commitment of around US\$2.2 million for a regional WTO Capacity Building Program. This design workshop progresses preparations toward the successful realisation of that commitment.

For more information please contact:

Ms Fleur Davies, First Secretary (Development Cooperation)
Australian Embassy
Tel 213 470 (ext 308)