

**ASEAN-U.S. Enhanced Partnership
Global Technical Regulations Roundtable
Bangkok, Thailand**

On October 25, Mr Kenneth Feith from the United States Environmental Protection Agency led a roundtable discussion on the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN/ECE) World Forum for Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations (WP 29). Mr Feith's presentation was the central feature of the ASEAN-U.S. Enhanced Partnership Global Technical Regulations Roundtable, an event designed to advance the discussion in ASEAN on automotive regulations harmonization and promote wider ASEAN participation in WP 29 proceedings.

Mr Feith, who as a Senior Scientist and Policy Advisor with the Environmental Protection Agency is a key U.S. Government interlocutor with WP 29, provided a detailed outline of the history of automotive regulations harmonization initiatives in the UN. Feith also focused the discussion on both the 1958 Agreement of the UN/ECE on international technical harmonization in the motor vehicle sector as well as the 1998 Global Agreement, also administered by the UN/ECE. The two agreements are similar in that they both aim for the establishment of harmonized technical regulations on motor vehicles and parts. Yet, as Mr Feith illustrated, the agreements differ significantly on questions of mutual recognition, decision mechanisms, and legal obligations imposed on signatory countries.

Over 30 roundtable participants concluded that ASEAN countries, whether automobile producers or not, can increase their participation in global harmonization efforts through the 1958 and 1998 UN/ECE Agreements. Furthermore, it was noted that, perhaps due to the relatively recent emergence of the 1998 Global Agreement (entered into force in 2000), the distinctions between the 1998 and 1958 Agreements are not always clear. Participants concluded that more discussions and events similar to the Global Technical Regulations Roundtable would be helpful for ASEAN governments contemplating acceding to the 1998 Agreement. The roundtable surmised that, given high levels of production and use of automobiles in the ASEAN region, as well as the ASEAN's long-term plan to harmonize automotive regulations, questions of ASEAN participation in the UN/ECE system should remain integrally linked to regional harmonization discussions.

Senior officials from ASEAN member automotive regulatory agencies, as well as private sector representatives, participated in the roundtable. The U.S. Department of Commerce and the ASEAN Consultative Committee on Standards and Quality (ACCSQ) jointly organized the event. Mr Feith's presentation can be found online at: <http://www.buyusa.gov/thailand/th/biofuel.html>. Follow-up activities are expected to feature prominently in the ASEAN-U.S. Enhanced Partnership 2008 Work Plan.

