

Joint Ministerial Statement

1. We, the Ministers responsible for human resources development from APEC member economies met in Hanoi, Vietnam on September 6, 2014, for the 6th APEC Human Resources Development (HRD) Ministerial Meeting under the theme “***Promoting Quality Employment and Strengthening People-to-People Connectivity Through Human Resources Development.***”
2. We are guided by the Bogor Goals and the need to build on the gains and outcomes of the 5th HRD Ministerial Meeting, particularly initiatives to address the challenges brought about by the global financial crisis while also acknowledging the challenges of the social dimensions of globalization and risks to social protection, as well as those from economic crises and natural disasters.
3. We realize that addressing the social dimensions of globalization requires appropriate support from governments, employers, industries, workers and relevant stakeholders. Improving the wellbeing of workers and their families requires us to foster quality employment opportunities, enhance productivity, increase labour force participation, and improve the skills and competencies of the workforce. We commit to maximizing the opportunities afforded by globalization by improving our workforces’ capabilities, strengthening social protection and addressing inequality in APEC member economies. APEC can help facilitate this through the exchange of information on active labour market measures, good practices and policy tools that help deliver social protection more effectively so we can enable all citizens and vulnerable groups to have an equal opportunities to share the benefits of economic growth.
4. We recognize that some APEC member economies are facing a shortage of skilled labour and that demographic change may exacerbate this problem. By strengthening human resource development and broadening access to education, training and skills in particular, APEC economies could make significant progress in improving and addressing this challenge. This would support greater trade and business development, employment creation and economic growth.
5. We emphasize the significance of appropriate labour and social protection measures, particularly with respect to training and up-skilling. A higher skilled workforce will stimulate labour mobility and help promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth in the Asia-Pacific region.
6. We recall the 2013 APEC Leaders’ Declaration which focuses on promoting connectivity through three pillars: physical connectivity; institutional connectivity; and people-to-people connectivity.

Supporting Inclusive and Sustainable Growth to Address the Social Dimensions of Globalization, Including Equality and Needs of Vulnerable Groups

7. We support enhancing the effectiveness and sustainability of social protection measures and systems. We emphasize the significance of appropriate reform so that APEC economies can address the aging of their populations, which often results in slower labour force growth and rising costs.
8. We promote safe and secure workplaces. Safe workplaces not only protect lives and livelihoods but also support higher productivity and sustainable economic growth. We are committed to reducing the number of workplace fatalities, injuries and illnesses. In this context, we take note of ILO conventions related to occupational safety and health and strengthening capacities of labour inspection systems of APEC economies and other institutional arrangements to create safer workplaces. We also encourage the strengthening of our efforts to prevent worker injury and reintegrate injured workers into the labour force.
9. We acknowledge that the informal economy is sizeable in some APEC economies. Workers in the informal economy may have limited access to quality employment, workplace and legal protection. Vulnerable populations such as persons with disabilities, youth, children engaged in labour, and women make up a disproportionately high number of workers in the informal economy. Where applicable and appropriate, member economies should consider measures to support the transition of workers from the informal to the formal economy. We encourage the extension of social protection systems, as appropriate, to cover informal workers, taking into account relevant ILO standards and within each member economy’s capacity and existing laws and regulations.

10. We recognize that migrant workers, despite their economic contributions, may find themselves in vulnerable situations including a lack of adequate legal and social protection. We should consider ways that APEC could enhance the protection of migrant workers' rights through a balance of responsibilities across economies.

11. We commit to ensuring that persons with disabilities can participate more fully in the labour market and can be employed in disability-inclusive workplaces by strengthening our collective and individual efforts to promote and protect their rights. APEC economies should address the needs of persons with disabilities. This would contribute to advance our goal of inclusive growth. Recognizing that persons with disabilities face many barriers to accessing education, we emphasize the need to ensure that they are educated and can advance to further training and higher education, and to equally compete for employment.

12. We commit to taking steps to better track the number of persons with disabilities in our labour markets, to inform and improve the evidence base for our policy decisions.

Enhancing Human Resource Quality to Meet Supply Chain Demands

13. We stress the significance of exchanging skills and knowledge and building institutional capacity for supporting the integration of economies into the global supply chain. We share the view that comprehensive policy frameworks to meet enterprise and industry requirements in member economies need to focus on enhancing physical, institutional and people-to-people connectivity.

14. We strongly support training programs and skills development to help workers achieve those competencies required to meet industry demand, in today's rapidly changing economy. We agree that a key element in successfully developing training programs for in-demand occupations is the active engagement of industry and particularly employers in skills and training development.

15. We acknowledge the significant role and contribution of youth to APEC economies and recognize that many are finding it difficult to successfully transition from school to work. We are particularly concerned with the number of young people who are neither employed nor participating in education and training. To address this issue, we should improve the skills and employability for young people and foster an enabling environment to create better and sustainable jobs.

16. Recognizing the need for better information sharing and capacity building, we acknowledge the initiatives of APEC economies to establish APEC Human Resources Development Centers. In this regard, we welcome the proposal for establishing such a center in Vietnam.

Facilitating Mobility of Labour and Skills Development

17. We emphasize the significance of promoting the effective management of labour mobility and encourage, including on a sectoral basis, further research and dialogue on this issue.

18. To facilitate mobility, we will continue to: develop a workforce that possesses adaptive skills; strengthen qualifications systems; provide better access to quality education and training; improve the relevance and effectiveness of education and training; further build the partnership among training providers and industry; and to identify skills in emerging fields. We encourage the next High-Level Policy Dialogue on Human Capacity Building, led by the Philippines and Papua New Guinea, to discuss and pursue policies, strategies and actions on these issues.

19. We highlight the need to improve the evidence base that supports the effectiveness of labour market policies, including to: forecast the demand for labour; improve the quality and dissemination of labour market information; promote social dialogue; and to up-skill workers, especially youth, so that they can access decent jobs and meet the demands of industry and the supply chain. In this regard, we acknowledge the importance of skills mapping across the region and the value of broader participation and further development of the APEC labour market portal.

Enhancing the Participation of Women in the Economy

20. We commit to advance women's economic empowerment as a priority for APEC economies. We will strengthen our initiatives to address impediments to women's full participation in the economy

such as workplace gender discrimination, unequal pay, and gender gaps in employment practices and limited access to training, which adversely impact women, their families, their communities, and the overall economy.

21. Ongoing discussions in other APEC fora, such as the Policy Partnership on Women and the Economy (PPWE), have highlighted that more must be done to encourage women's economic development and empowerment.

22. We welcome the outcomes of the APEC 2014 Women and the Economy Forum, and look to build synergies wherever possible, for example, by undertaking initiatives with the PPWE and the Health Working Group to enhance women's labour force participation.

23. Each APEC economy should support practical initiatives that enable the public and private sector to work together, and deliver measurable results to empower women in the workforce. We encourage developing and sharing best practices in addressing work-family balance, ensuring equal pay for equal work, combating workplace gender discrimination, and establishing paid family leave programs.

24. We express our deep gratitude for all arrangements, hospitality and efforts made by the Socialist Republic of Vietnam for the success of the meeting.