



**Asia-Pacific  
Economic Cooperation**

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**2015/SOM2/017**  
Agenda Item: 5.3

## **Concept Paper - Promoting Disability-Inclusive Development in the Asia-Pacific Region**

Purpose: Consideration  
Submitted by: China



**Second Senior Officials' Meeting  
Boracay, Philippines  
20-21 May 2015**

## **Executive Summary**

Based on discussions at SOM1 and broad exchange of views among APEC members, China drafted the Concept Paper on Promoting Disability-inclusive Development in the Asia-Pacific Region, in co-sponsorship of Australia, Malaysia, Peru and the United States.

China proposes to set up *the APEC Group of Friends (GOF) on Disability* with voluntary participation from all APEC members during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Senior Officials Meeting and Related Meetings, and to convene the meeting of *the APEC GOF on Disability Issues* during the 3<sup>rd</sup> Senior Officials' Meeting and Related Meetings in cooperation with the host. China would like to take the responsibility to chair *the APEC GOF* meeting in cooperation of member economies and will coordinate the preparedness of the meeting.

*The APEC GOF on Disability Issues* will promote awareness and knowledge sharing for the participation of persons with disabilities in the regional economic development, meanwhile trigger cooperation among APEC members with a view to contribute to the outcomes of future APEC Economic Leaders' Weeks.

*The APEC GOF on Disability Issues* will report to SCE. The SCE meeting on 19 May 2015 discussed this issue and agreed on the Concept Paper, and recommend the SOM to endorse it.

## **Required Action/Decision Points**

It is recommended that Ministers or Senior Officials:

### **Endorse the Concept Paper**

**Concept Paper**  
**Promoting Disability-inclusive Development in the Asia-Pacific Region**  
*(submitted by: China)*  
*(cosponsored by: Australia, Malaysia, Peru, the United States)*

**Background**

According to the World Report on Disability, jointly issued in 2011 by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank, more than one billion people, or about 15 per cent of the world's population, are estimated to live with some form of disability. The Asia-Pacific region has nearly 650 million persons with disabilities and a large portion of them are living in conditions of hardship and poverty, and thus in great need of economic and social support.

Persons with disabilities are entitled to enjoy meaningful, active and collaborative participation in the shared prosperity and advancement of the region. They have huge creative potential and various skills to create enormous economic wealth as long as they could fully enjoy equal rights in an accessible environment. Furthermore, the participation of persons with disabilities in the economic field could also provide impetus to economic growth, while offering reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities.

Sustainable growth cannot be achieved without inclusive development strategies. Indeed, there are references to disability issues in the outcome documents of previous APEC Economic Leaders' Meetings and Ministerial Meetings. *The APEC Accord on Innovative Development, Economic Reform and Growth*, adopted by our Leaders last November in Beijing, emphasized the disability issue. These all show APEC's determination to bring equal opportunities and widely shared benefits for all member economies and individuals, including persons with disabilities.

In view of the above, a High-level Meeting on "Equal Access, Inclusive Development" was held in Beijing on 10 November 2014, during the APEC Economic Leaders' Week, with participation of representatives from various APEC members. A Joint Initiative on Equal Access and Inclusive Development for Persons with Disabilities was introduced and accordingly, an open-ended "Group of Friends on Disability Issues" (GOF) was launched

with 6 founding members, namely, Australia, China, Hong Kong, China, Mexico, the Philippines and the United States, and joined by Russia afterwards. GOF is intended to seek common ground, share experiences and identify ways to bring about inclusive development that equitably benefits persons with disabilities.

Considering that the theme of APEC 2015 is “Building Inclusive Economies, Building a Better World” and the priority areas of this year also reflect the importance of promoting inclusive growth, disability issues, centered on disability and economy, could therefore fit in. It is proposed that APEC members initiate discussions and consultations on equal access and inclusive development for persons with disabilities through economic cooperation. Building on all these efforts, it is expected that APEC members could achieve fruitful outcome on cooperation on disability-inclusive issues.

### **Goal**

- To promote information-sharing and understanding for the participation of persons with disabilities in the regional economic development among APEC members;
- To promote the participation of persons with disabilities in economic field as a new area of regional cooperation and economic growth among APEC members;
- To explore cooperation among APEC members on disability issues, with the aim to contribute to the outcome of future APEC Economic Leaders' Weeks.

### **Proposed Cooperation Areas and Immediate Actions**

#### Proposed Cooperation Areas:

- Share information, resources and good practices on disability issues among APEC members.
- Provide equal opportunities to persons with disabilities and adopting practical measures to ensure their right to equal access to regional economic and social development.

- Implement measures to create reasonable accommodation and enabling conditions to ensure access to an inclusive quality education, professional and technical training and employment opportunities, including through reducing barriers for persons with disabilities to do business.
- Encourage the service sector and other industries to meet the needs of persons with disabilities as a sizable, untapped consumer base, and acknowledge that such services should adequately meet their needs at affordable prices.
- Exchange views on fostering international cooperation in the field of assistive technology for persons with disabilities.
- Facilitate trade in assistive devices throughout the region, including through streamlined procedures for customs clearance.
- Promote access to public and private transportation to enable persons with disabilities to travel and live independently.
- Promote how information and communications technologies (ICTs) can enable persons with disabilities to participate in the rapidly developing digital and internet economy and upgrade significantly the level and quality of their participation in all aspects of regional economic and social activities.
- The aforementioned areas constitute the initial proposed cooperation directions. With a step-by-step approach, APEC members could expand and explore new areas of cooperation, bearing in mind APEC's nature and strengths, not replacing nor duplicating the work of other special agencies on disability issues.

Proposed Immediate Actions:

- To convene a meeting of “*APEC Group of Friends on Disability Issues*”, with voluntary participation from all APEC members. The GOF established during the High-level Event in 2014 could make contributions in this regard. *The APEC Group of Friends on Disability Issues* could build on the progress of work of the GOF.
- To set up *the APEC Group of Friends on Disability Issues* during the 2<sup>nd</sup>

Senior Officials' Meeting and Related Meetings to be held from 10-21 May, 2015, in Boracay, and in cooperation with the host, to convene the meeting of *the APEC GOF on Disability Issues* during the 3<sup>rd</sup> Senior Officials' Meeting and Related Meetings to be held from 24 August to 8 September, 2015, in Cebu. Detailed arrangements of the meeting will be worked out inter-sessionally during SOM2 and SOM3. China will gladly and readily coordinate the work during the process, and would like to Chair the *APEC GOF* meeting with cooperation from APEC members. It is suggested that the Concept Paper is adopted during SOM2, in order to leave enough time for the preparatory work.

- *The APEC Group of Friends on Disability Issues* will report to SCE on its work of promoting disability-inclusive development in the Asia-Pacific region. *The APEC GOF* would be an open forum for coordination on disability issues. Should the *APEC GOF* wish to continue meeting beyond 2015, plans for future meetings of the *APEC GOF* and development of its TOR are open for discussion and subject to the decision of members. Close coordination of *the APEC GOF* with HRDWG and other related fora is encouraged and needed. We also expect the APEC Secretariat to provide its support.
- Building on the aforementioned efforts and with a view to making contributions to this year's APEC cooperation, it is suggested that APEC members discuss how the disability-inclusive issues could be reflected in the outcome documents of the APEC Economic Leaders' Week. Media publicity on APEC discussion on disability-inclusive issues is also encouraged.