



**Asia-Pacific
Economic Cooperation**

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Opening Remarks

Submitted by: New Zealand



**Twelfth APEC Alliance for Supply Chain
Connectivity Meeting
24 February 2021**

**Opening Remarks to the A2C2: APEC Alliance for Supply Chain Connectivity.
Wednesday 24 February**

*Mr. Blake van Velden, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, New Zealand, Vice-Chair,
APEC Committee on Trade and Investment*

Tēnā koutou katoa. Ngā mihi nui kia koutou.

Thank you for the invitation to speak today.

Firstly I want to recognise the importance of bringing APEC officials and business leaders together.

APEC needs open, dynamic dialogues such as this one today.

It is vital in facilitating APEC's response to COVID-19.

I want to also recognise the New Zealand businesses and organisations participating today, including our panellists. Your attendance shows that open supply chains are critical for our economy, and for the region.

Our immediate priority for global and regional trade: is to ensure we collectively respond to the public health emergency.

This needs to be in ways that both help fight the pandemic and position us for as rapid as possible economic recovery.

Resilient functioning supply chains are a critical part of this. APEC Leaders have already recognised this.

For example, in November 2020, all the APEC leaders committed, and I quote "to cooperate to facilitate the movement of essential goods and services, and identifying and resolving unnecessary barriers to trade and strengthening the resilience of our supply chains."

At the outset of the crisis, due to the explosion of demand and the imposition of trade restrictive measures, the world faced shortages in essential goods necessary to address the health emergency.

At one point, nearly 80 WTO Members had more than 100 new restrictions or other barriers in place. In New Zealand this meant blockages in receiving essential goods such as medicines needed to address the pandemic.

We know that right now, expediting the safe and efficient distribution of vaccines, is top of mind for everyone. In this regard, vaccine supply chains is an issue New Zealand wants to see a clear commitment from APEC.

We have heard businesses, including through a recent Australian led APEC study, say that economies need to reduce regulatory barriers on supply chains. This includes improving paperless trading and regulatory alignment, as will be discussed today.

Between APEC economies, we must redouble our commitment to open markets, respect the rules based global trading system, and encourage economies to unwind distortionary trade measures.

Trade and investment has been the engine of growth and prosperity in our region for three decades now.

As we confront this generation's biggest economic crisis, we must learn the lessons of history, deliberately making the choice to keep our markets open, and to keep trade flowing.

Maintaining, rebuilding and creating more resilient regional and global supply chains will form a key part of our trade-focused economic recovery. Our long term economic futures depend on it.

Consistent with New Zealand's host year theme of:

Join, Work, Grow, Together,

I hope that the discussions today will set the scene for the year ahead – in which we continue to proactively foster consensus and cooperation at all levels of APEC.

Thank you.