



**Asia-Pacific  
Economic Cooperation**

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**2021/SOM3/CTI/007**

Agenda Item: VI i

## **Business Mobility Group Convenor's Report**

Purpose: Information  
Submitted by: BMG Convenor



**Third Committee on Trade and Investment  
Meeting  
24-26 August 2021**

## **BUSINESS MOBILITY GROUP CONVENOR'S SUMMARY REPORT TO CTI 3 2021**

### **1. During 2021, how has the forum's work contributed to CTI's objectives of:**

#### **a. Support for the Multilateral Trading System**

APEC Business Travel Card (ABTC) facilitates short-term business travel within the APEC region by streamlining the entry process into APEC economies. It helps facilitate business to business interaction to boost economic growth in the region.

#### **b. Regional Economic Integration, including taking forward the Putrajaya Vision 2040 and contributing to the development of the Implementation Plan in 2021**

The BMG will continue to enhance and facilitate the legitimate movement of all business travellers, including exploring ways to modernise the ABTC Scheme through initiatives aimed at digitising and enhancing the efficiency and integrity of the Scheme. This focus directly aligns with 'Innovation and Digitalisation' within the Putrajaya Vision.

#### **c. Trade Facilitation and Connectivity**

APEC Economic Leaders recognized the increasing need for more efficient flows of goods, services, capital and people. BMG has been tasked to further the work on travel facilitation which includes enhancing the APEC Business Travel Card scheme and focusing on accelerating our region's physical, institutional, and people-to-people connectivity through a long-term commitment.

#### **d. Inclusion**

On 1 September 2015, the validity of the ABTC was extended from three to five years and on 1 March 2021 the BMG rolled out the virtual ABTC to Australia, since that date the virtual ABTC has been rolled out to a further 7 economies. The BMG will continue to transition other economies over the next year.

#### **e. Any other issues**

N/A

### **2. How has the forum helped to fulfil the mandate of the [2021 Ministers Responsible for Trade Statement](#) & [2020 Declaration on Facilitating the Movement of Essential Goods by the MRT](#) (see Appendix B)**

The BMG focuses on facilitating business travel within the APEC region and has digitized the ABTC Scheme which aligns with the MRT Digital commitment. Further, the BMG will continue to consider ways to expand the ABTC to facilitate a broader group of people, including essential people and women.

**3. Main outcomes from most recent plenary meeting**

- Engage in cross collaboration with other APEC sub-fora to focus on the issues raised in the Cross-Border Mobility in the APEC Region report.
- Analyse the feasibility of the APEC Frequent Travel Card as a new scheme or to expand on the current ABTC scheme.

**4. Private sector engagement in 2021**

IATA presented on deliver a presentation on the IATA Travel Pass and the relaxation of travel restrictions.

ABAC attended as an Official Guest.

**5. Cross-fora collaboration in 2021**

The PPWE Chair (Policy Partnership on Women and the Economy) presented on the progress in APEC Fora's Implementation of "La Serena Roadmap for Women and Inclusive Growth 2019-2030".

**6. Was quorum<sup>1</sup> reached at the most recent plenary meeting?**

Yes, 20 economies participated in the BMG Meetings.

**7. Taking into consideration the forum's Assessment Report, what is your Forum doing to maintain/increase its relevance to APEC member economies and increase participation from its members?**

The BMG will consider:

- Re invigorating its agenda to improve business mobility in the region more broadly than ABTC Scheme.
- Include other sub-fora to present in the meetings to have a better understanding of what other groups are focusing on.

**8. Decision points needed from CTI**

- Seek CTI's endorsement of the Business Mobility Group Convenor's Report.

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<sup>1</sup> Quorum requires 14 economies or more. Quorum is measured by member economies (not including private sector) participating. Remote participation is counted.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **FORUM'S CONTRIBUTION TO CTI'S OBJECTIVES**

*Appendix A provides examples of work that contributes to CTI's objectives*

#### **Support for the Multilateral Trading System**

Initiatives that support:

- The multilateral trading system as embodied by the World Trade Organization (WTO) including the 12<sup>th</sup> WTO Ministerial Conference
- The implementation of WTO Agreements / Decisions

#### **Regional Economic Integration**

Initiatives that support:

- Achievement of *the Putrajaya Vision 2040* and development of its Implementation Plan/Action Agenda
- Eventual realization of the Free Trade Area of the Asia Pacific (FTAAP)
- Next Generation Trade and Investment Issues
- Internet and Digital Economy, E-Commerce and Digital Trade
- Global Value Chain Cooperation and Development
- MSMEs' Internationalization
- Environmental Goods and Services/Green Growth
- Services, including implementation of the APEC Services Competitiveness Roadmap
- Investment
- Market Access and reducing impact of Non-tariff Measures
- Intellectual Property
- Business Mobility through e.g. APEC Business Travel Card

#### **Trade Facilitation and Connectivity**

Initiatives that support:

- Supply Chain Connectivity, including implementation of Phase II of the Supply Chain Framework Action Plan (SCFAP II), GVC Blueprint 2.0
- Trade Facilitation, including work that supports implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement
- Connectivity
- Regulatory Cooperation and Convergence

#### **Inclusion**

Initiatives that support:

- Implementation of the Action Agenda on Economic, Financial and Social Inclusion

## **APPENDIX B**

Extracts from 2021 Ministers Responsible for Trade Statement & the 2020 Declaration on Facilitating the Movement of Essential Goods by the MRT

### **Facilitating the Movement of Essential Goods**

#### Export Restrictions and Prohibitions

- Each APEC economy will ensure that any emergency trade measures designed to tackle COVID-19 are consistent with WTO rules.
- Each APEC economy will ensure that any trade measure introduced in response to COVID-19 is notified in accordance with relevant WTO obligations.

#### Non-Tariff Barriers

- APEC economies are encouraged to work together to identify and resolve any unnecessary barriers to trade in essential goods.

#### Trade Facilitation

- Each APEC economy, consistent with its obligations under the WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation, should expedite and facilitate the flow and transit of essential goods.
- APEC economies remain committed to enhance coordination, efficiency and transparency of the border clearance of essential goods, and full implementation of the WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation, to help facilitate trade.
- Each APEC economy should endeavour to expedite the release of essential goods upon arrival, including adopting or maintaining procedures allowing for submission of import documentation and other required information, such as manifests, in order to begin processing prior to the arrival of goods.
- Each APEC economy will endeavour to facilitate the entry, transit and departure of air cargo containing essential medical supplies.
- APEC economies are expected to abide by the International Health Regulations (IHR) (2005)

#### Tariffs

- APEC economies take note of ABAC's recommendation for economies to take tariff liberalisation measures for essential medical supplies

## **APEC Ministers Responsible for Trade Meeting Joint Statement 2021**

### Medical supplies:

Today, we are pleased to announce a standalone statement on COVID-19 Vaccine Supply Chains (Annex 1), which outlines our approach to ensuring the trading environment supports the safe and efficient distribution of COVID-19 vaccines and related goods. We welcome the *Best Practice Guidelines for APEC Customs Administrations* as an operational and practical contribution to help facilitate the distribution of COVID-19 vaccines and related goods. To continue APEC's strong work in responding to the challenges of COVID-19, APEC economies will also agree to consider how to facilitate trade in medical supplies such as those included in the World Customs Organization (WCO) COVID-19 list,<sup>2</sup> and report to us before our APEC Ministerial Meeting in November.

### Digital:

... we will accelerate implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, particularly those articles relating to: the accelerated use of digitalisation for border processes; pre-arrival processing of electronic declarations; electronic documents, electronic certification, electronic payments; expedited shipments; and border agency cooperation.... We agree to embed digital trade facilitation measures taken by APEC members during COVID-19. We task officials to report on progress when we meet again at the APEC Ministerial Meeting in November

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<sup>2</sup> [World Customs Organization: HS classification reference for Covid-19 medical supplies](#)

## **APEC MRT Statement on COVID-19 Vaccine Supply Chains (Annex 1)**

### Vaccines statement: Review Mechanism:

The APEC Secretariat will make a summary report on the actions implemented by economies under this initiative by the APEC Ministerial Meeting in November 2021

- use the WCO-WHO list of COVID-19 vaccines and related goods as a reference for facilitating trade. APEC economies will expedite the flow and transit of all COVID-19 vaccines and related goods through their air, sea and land ports. We will expedite their release upon arrival, including by providing for advance electronic submission and processing of information to enable immediate release upon arrival.
- advance the implementation of the *Best Practice Guidelines for APEC Customs Administrations to Facilitate the Distribution of COVID-19 Vaccines and Related Goods*. We agree to embed the trade facilitation measures implemented during the pandemic, including digitising customs procedures, expediting the flow of goods across borders, and boosting coordination between traders and border agencies.
- While WTO rules permit export restrictions or prohibitions in certain circumstances, we emphasise economies who adopt such measures with respect to COVID-19 vaccines and related goods will evaluate their ongoing necessity as COVID-19 conditions change, in order to ensure they remain targeted, proportional, transparent, temporary, and do not create unnecessary barriers to trade.
- We will consider voluntary actions to reduce the cost of these products for our people, particularly by encouraging each economy to review its own charges levied at the border on COVID-19 vaccines and related goods.
- We will take appropriate measures to prevent criminal exploitation of supply chains and to prevent the entry and import of illegal, dangerous, sub-standard or counterfeit COVID-19 vaccines and related goods. This could include further implementing the *APEC Roadmap to Promote Global Medical Product Quality and Supply Chain Security and related toolkit*.