



**Asia-Pacific  
Economic Cooperation**

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Session: II

**Questionnaire Survey Report on Topics of Interest  
That APEC Economies Would Like to Discuss at the  
Symposium on APEC Supporting the WTO  
Negotiations on Trade Related Aspects of E-  
Commerce**

Submitted by: China



**Preparatory Meeting for the Symposium on  
APEC Supporting the WTO Negotiations on  
Trade Related Aspects of E-Commerce  
2 February 2021**

# **Symposium on APEC Supporting the WTO Negotiations on Trade Related Aspects of E-Commerce Questionnaire Survey Report**

As stipulated in the Project Proposal, in order to identify the topics of interest on which APEC economies would like to discuss at the symposium, a questionnaire survey among the CTI members was conducted in September & October 2020.

## **1. Participating economies**

There are 10 APEC economies participating the questionnaire survey, they are: Australia, Chile, Japan, the Republic of Korea, the Philippines, Russia, Singapore, Chinese Taipei, Thailand and the United States.

## **2. Topics of interest**

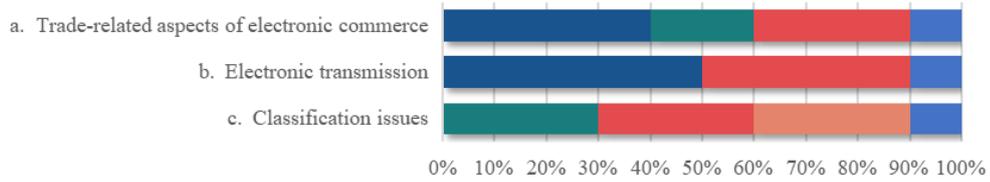
The topics of interest on which APEC economies would like to discuss at the symposium are classified into four categories:

- 1) **Crucial terms in discussions of trade-related aspects of electronic commerce**, among which the most positive topic is electronic transmission (50% very positive), followed by the topic of trade-related aspects of electronic commerce (40% very positive), and the last positive one is the topic of classification issues (30% negative).
- 2) **Establish a sound environment for electronic commerce transaction**, among which the most positive topic is moratorium of customs duties on electronic transmissions (70% very positive), second positive topic is facilitating cross-border electronic commerce (40% very positive) and the attitude towards the topics of electronic authentication and trust services and paperless trading are the same (40% positive).
- 3) **Create a safe and trust-worthy market environment for electronic commerce**, among which the most three topics are personal information protection, cybersecurity and cross-border transfer of trade-related information – importance and challenges (60% very positive), followed by the topic of online consumer protection (40% very positive) and the least positive topic is the right to regulate (30% normal).
- 4) **Promote pragmatic and inclusive development cooperation**, among which the most positive topic is electronic commerce and global value chain (50% very positive), followed by the topic of bridge the digital divide and the topic of research and measurement (40% very positive) and the least positive topic is electronic commerce for development program (40% normal).

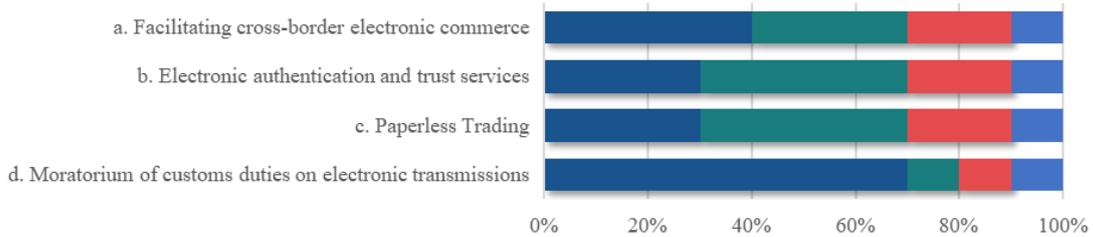
### Topics of interest that APEC economies intend to discuss at the symposium

■ Very Positive ■ Positive ■ Normal ■ Negative ■ Void

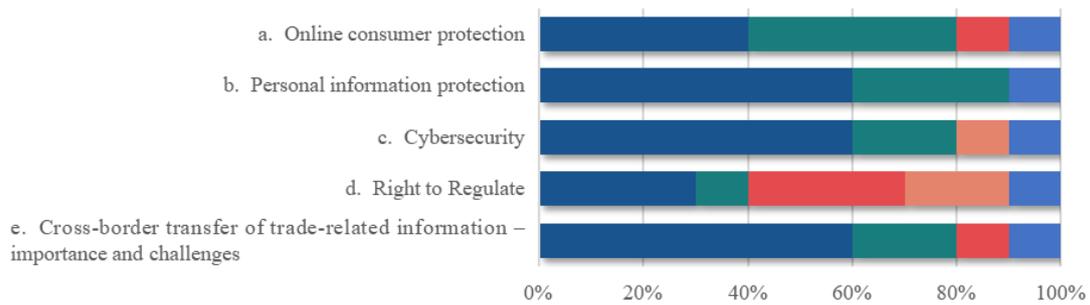
#### Crucial terms in discussions of trade-related aspects of electronic commerce



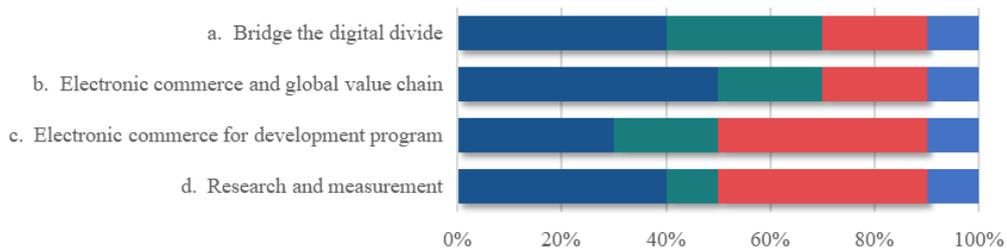
#### Establish a sound environment for electronic commerce transaction



#### Create a safe and trust-worthy market environment for electronic commerce



#### Promote pragmatic and inclusive development cooperation



Note for the value of void : The United States had made clear the priorities in the questionnaire without putting “✓” in the box.

### 3. Other suggested topics

Economy	Topics
the Philippines	Data privacy, free flow of data, data localization, source code, areas for capacity building and technical assistance
Chinese Taipei	Location of Computing Facilities Source Code

The United States	source code, non-discriminatory treatment of digital products, ICT cryptography and core services relevant to e-commerce, location of computing facilities, open government data
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#### 4. The impact of COVID-19 pandemic on e-commerce and WTO Negotiations on Trade related Aspects of E-Commerce

Economy	Response
Australia	From Australia's perspective, COVID-19 has only underscored the importance of digital trade and reinforced the value of WTO negotiations on a set of global digital trade rules.
Chile	The COVID-19 pandemic is impacting very hard on our economies. For Chile, the Electronic Commerce/Digital Economy is a key tool to get the economic recovery after the pandemic. The WTO negotiations are very important to advance in the standards to support all the policies aiming to the economic recovery.
Japan	COVID-19 pandemic illustrates the importance of rule-making in the area of electronic commerce/digital trade and thus would push the negotiation forward.
the Republic of Korea	The COVID-19 has accelerated digital transformation across value chains, from production to consumption, and stimulated the development of e-commerce. Since the COVID-19 pandemic has restricted face-to-face contact, WTO negotiations on e-commerce have faced challenges, but the participating members of the WTO further realized the importance of digital economy and e-commerce negotiations.
the Philippines	The use and adoption of e-commerce will likely continue to grow with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The increased use of e-commerce will also figure more prominently in the business landscape, especially MSMEs. It is also likely that there will be an increase in the use of digital payment channels and mobile wallets. There has also been a boost in online purchase behavior. In relation to the negotiations on trade-related aspects of e-commerce in the WTO, the Philippines is an official member of the Joint Statement Initiative (JSI) on Electronic Commerce. We continue to actively engage in the JSI discussions and support the open and transparent nature of the negotiations. Given the uncertainties brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, participation in such efforts has become even more timely.
Russia	COVID-19 pandemic could be an additional incentive to accelerate global cooperation in the field of electronic commerce, including with the aim of simplifying the cross-border movement of goods and services, maintaining and developing trust environment for all participants of e-commerce, narrowing the digital divide and leveling out the conditions for small businesses. We are convinced that the ongoing negotiation process in the WTO to trade-related aspects of the e-commerce has become even more relevant in this situation.

Singapore	<p>COVID-19 has accelerated digitalisation and underscored importance of e-commerce/digital trade for our businesses. In this regard, developing e-commerce rules in the WTO has gained even more salience. We should redouble our efforts in ensuring substantive progress for the WTO negotiations on e-commerce by MC12.</p>
Chinese Taipei	<p>The COVID-19 has further catalyzed and accelerated the opportunities that e-commerce can offer to enterprises and consumers across the world, whether they are in developed or developing economies. However, there are currently no multilateral rules regulating this type of trade. Consequently, the WTO should formulate rules on trade-related aspects of electronic commerce as soon as possible so as to strengthen the coherence in policy-making, respond to the needs of enterprises, and establish a predictable and sound environment that is conducive to the development of e-commerce.</p>
Thailand	<p>The COVID-19 pandemic has negatively impacted the global economy; yet, created an opportunity to realize that E-commerce is a MUST not only for trade and industry but also the platform of buying and selling products. Moreover, it is expected that the “New Normal” of human behavior, deviated from offline trade, will stay on to the future.</p> <p>Furthermore, the pandemic is a crucial factor that accelerates the global use of E-commerce during the lockdown period. This is considerably beneficial to the on-going negotiations on Electronic Commerce disciplines to be truly useful for facilitating trade through electronic means. An increasing online business also draws attention on the need for regulations related to security and standard of goods and services. Moreover, the pandemic has highlighted some challenges related to electronic commerce such as the digital divide, development of digital infrastructure, including development of legislations on cybersecurity, and personal data protection and privacy.</p> <p>These elements should be addressed so as to build trust and confidence for consumers and users of electronic commerce, create a conducive environment for development of electronic commerce, and support MSMEs to integrate into the global value chain.</p>
the United States	<p>Digital trade is proving to be an essential tool. The Joint Statement Initiative is an important opportunity to establish rules for digital trade that can contribute to lower costs for consumers and businesses, expanded access to digital technologies around the world, and a more transparent and predictable trading environment.</p> <p>In particular, the United States believes that strong rules that ensure the ability of firms to transfer information across borders and prohibit harmful data localization requirements are especially important. Data is the essence of the digital economy; firms across all sectors depend on the free flow of data across borders to trade and compete in the 21st century. This has been made all the more urgent in the face of COVID-19, as scientists’ life-saving work is aided by unimpeded channels to transfer vital data to help combat the virus and digital</p>

	technologies are utilized around the world to enable students to continue their studies, despite the disruption caused by the pandemic.
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**5. The expectations of APEC to make concrete efforts to support WTO Negotiations on Trade related Aspects of E-Commerce**

Economy	Response
Australia	APEC facilitates valuable policy dialogue which can help build understanding on key issues of relevant to WTO E-commerce. APEC's capacity building agenda could also be useful in addressing JSI participant CB needs.
Chile	Chile will keep participating on the negotiation rounds of the initiative.
Japan	APEC would play the role to further encourage APEC economies to participate in rule-making in the joint statement initiative of electronic commerce and cooperate towards achieving commercially meaningful high level outcome.
the Republic of Korea	Seeking free and open trade and investment, APEC can and should play many roles in supporting WTO e-commerce negotiations. In particular, it is possible to narrow the gap in understanding the e-commerce negotiations between the member economies. And in this context, CBNI is essential for those who lack experience in e-commerce negotiations. Furthermore, member economies can better understand each other's different domestic regulatory regimes on e-commerce through webinars or report papers.
the Philippines	APEC is a strong supporter of the rules-based, transparent and non-discriminatory multilateral trading system/WTO and has actively contributed to various areas under negotiation in the WTO, especially in providing the intellectual support on many discussions such as e-commerce, MSMEs, services, investment facilitation and transparency. APEC can serve as an incubator of ideas and initiatives to develop common areas of interests in advancing the issues under WTO negotiations. All APEC economies can continue to work together towards enhancing and facilitating trade in e-commerce and the digital economy through capacity building activities, strengthening dialogue among member economies and building common understanding on the issues under negotiation.
Singapore	As a regional platform, APEC can play a useful role in building capacity and understanding around critical issues in the WTO negotiations on e-commerce.
Chinese Taipei	It is recommended that theme-based seminars be held at APEC to conduct technical discussions on specific topics and enable capacity building through experience sharing in order to support WTO e-commerce negotiations.
Thailand	APEC is an important forum that could integrate and enhance cooperation among members. We see that the APEC could support the WTO negotiations on Trade related aspects of E-commerce through workshops on related issues, and capacity building needs initiatives. Moreover, the DESG is also a crucial

	mechanism for encouraging and strengthening cooperation among members on e-commerce and digital economy issues.
the United States	As APEC is not a negotiating forum, the United States believes these discussions should be left to the WTO. However, APEC can play an important role to educate economies on the importance of policies that facilitate digital trade and enable access to the digital economy as well as ensure industry and other stakeholders views are heard. Additionally, APEC could support the WTO customs duty moratorium on electronic transmissions through examining intra APEC data flows with a view to assessing the economic impact of an end to the moratorium.