



**Asia-Pacific
Economic Cooperation**

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Opening Remarks

Submitted by: China



**Symposium on APEC Supporting the WTO
Negotiations on Trade Related Aspects of
E-Commerce
24-25 March 2021**

Your Excellency Deputy Director-General Yi Xiaozhun,
Your Excellency Dr. Rebecca,
Your Excellency Ambassador Tan Hung Seng,
Dear colleagues,

Good afternoon, good evening and good morning!

It gives me great pleasure to join you at today's Symposium. On behalf of the Department of International Trade and Economic Affairs, MOFCOM, China, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to APEC Secretariat and Shanghai University of International Business and Economics for the thoughtful arrangements, and welcome all the speakers and participants online and offline.

Though the COVID-19 pandemic hit the global economy hard, it has also fast-tracked the digital transformation of the world economy. Since the outbreak, e-commerce and digital economy have achieved a counter-trend growth, and have become a new engine to economic and trade recovery through promoting cross-border flow of goods and services. According to an UNCTAD survey, the global e-commerce market has expanded by 170% since the pandemic. Meanwhile, e-commerce has shown strong potential to facilitate women and SMEs participating in the global value chain, offering a feasible way for alleviating the development deficit of economic globalization.

The rapid development of e-commerce calls for more modernized and adaptive rules and regulations. However, a unified mechanism of rule-based governance in digital economy has yet to be forged under the current multilateral framework. As an important manifestation of WTO's rule-making function, e-commerce negotiations have attracted extensive attention from member governments and the business community. China's proposal to hold this APEC symposium is to provide an open platform for member economies to share positions, policies and regulatory concepts, so as to enhance mutual understanding and help to build consensus in the WTO e-commerce negotiations.

Supporting the multilateral trading system with WTO at its core, is the traditional value of APEC. APEC also has a proud history of pioneering rule-making cooperation on information technology, environmental goods, trade facilitation, and domestic regulation in services, etc. Our achievement has supported WTO in yielding the fruits of **Information Technology Agreement** and **Trade Facilitation Agreement**, and injected impetus to multilateral negotiations. Currently, WTO **Joint Statement Initiatives** (JSIs) on e-commerce, investment facilitation and SMEs, are also under vibrant discussions in APEC. APEC bears the responsibility and has the capability to contribute to these major WTO undertakings.

Dear Colleagues,

Last November, APEC Leaders reached **the Putrajaya Vision**, which will guide Asia-Pacific cooperation in the next 20 years. This new vision once again reaffirms the principles of APEC, which include supporting the multilateral trading system, promoting regional economic integration, and achieving inclusive growth. This year, we will work together toward a comprehensive and feasible implementation plan of the vision. Here, I would like to share with you our views on future APEC economic and trade cooperation:

First, APEC should hold high the banner of multilateralism and carry forward its traditional values of supporting the multilateral trading system. As the most influential regional platform for economic and trade cooperation, APEC needs to steadfastly support the

rules-based multilateral trading system and WTO's core functions of negotiations and dispute settlement. APEC could invigorate the WTO with APEC's deliverables, and assist the WTO to become more adaptive and strengthen its guiding role in international trade and investment. APEC should help to drive economic globalization toward an open, inclusive, preferential, balanced, and win-win direction.

Second, APEC should continue to play the role of "incubator" and "integrator" for rules and regulations, to promote the process of regional integration. The Asia-Pacific region is the pivot of the global FTA network. Currently, RCEP and CPTPP have both made substantial progress, paving the pathways for the realization of FTAAP. We should give full play to the leading role of RCEP and CPTPP in regional economic integration. We need to accelerate the effective implementation of RCEP, to facilitate deeper integration of the regional industrial and supply chain, and forge an integrated market. Meanwhile, CPTPP should become more inclusive, so that its high-standard rules could be recognized and implemented more widely.

Third, APEC should uphold the principles of balance and consensus-based, and contribute to the inclusive and sustainable growth in the region. The Asia-Pacific region brings together the world's major developed and emerging economies, with different economic levels and stages of development. With the spirit of community, APEC should assist the WTO in updating its rules, so as to better reflect the changes of the global economy, and better accommodate the interests of developing members, particularly their calls to address the "digital divide", and thus help developing economies better integrate into the global value chains. This is the unique advantage of APEC as a regional economic cooperation platform, and is our "original aspiration" for establishing APEC.

Dear colleagues,

The recently-concluded Fourth Session of the 13th National People's Congress of China issued the Outline of the 14th Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development and the Long-Range Objectives Through the Year 2035, which clearly stated that China will comprehensively improve the level of opening up, promote trade and investment liberalization and facilitation, and continue to deepen the openness of commodity and factor mobility, and steadily expand the institutional openness of rules, regulations, management, and standards. China will continue to steadfastly expand all-round opening up. As the long-term upward trend of the Chinese economy remains unchanged, China's growth and development will be more closely linked with the Asia-Pacific. China will join hands with all APEC members to build an Asia-Pacific Community of a shared future and a bright future.

Finally, I wish this symposium a complete success.

Thank you!