



**Asia-Pacific
Economic Cooperation**

2016/SOM1/CTI/056

Agenda Item: 8

BMG Convenor's Summary Report to CTI

Purpose: Consideration
Submitted by: BMG Convenor



**First Committee on Trade and Investment Meeting
Lima, Peru
28-29 February 2016**

OAA ISSUE AREA:

CONVENOR'S SUMMARY REPORT TO CTI

1. PROPOSED WORK PLAN FOR 2016 IN RESPONSE TO 2016 APEC PRIORITIES, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO APEC LEADERS/ MINISTERS/SOM DECISIONS OF 2015:

A) SUPPORT THE MULTILATERAL TRADING SYSTEM

(Not applicable)

B) ADVANCING REGIONAL ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

Achieving the Bogor Goals

Exploring an FTAAP

Global Value Chain Cooperation

MSMEs Internationalization

Next Generation Trade and Investment Issues

Environmental Goods and Services (EGS)/Green Growth

Services

Investment

At its first meeting in 2016 in Lima, Peru, the Business Mobility Group (BMG) agreed to the following key actions to help reduce transaction costs of doing business in the APEC region:

- Modernise the APEC Business Travel Card (ABTC) Scheme to the fullest extent possible by pursuing an APEC-wide online lodgement system to increase the efficiency, convenience, and desirability of the product, in support of the Bogor Goals and in line with the recommendations of the End-to-End Review of the ABTC Scheme.
- Improve consistency of processes and regulatory requirements, as far as possible, in all economies so that use of the ABTC is a seamless, convenient, business travel experience.
- Consider further innovations to the ABTC to ensure it continues to be able to meet its goals of facilitating trade and investment in the region by remaining a superior travel facilitation product.

C) STRENGTHENING COMPREHENSIVE CONNECTIVITY AND INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

Implementation of the Supply-Chain Connectivity Framework and Action Plan (SCFAP)

New Initiative/Target for Supply Chain Connectivity/Trade Facilitation (Post-SCFAP)

Contributions to the implementation of the APEC Connectivity Blueprint for 2015-2025; APEC Multi-year Plan on Infrastructure Development and Investment; and APEC Travel Facilitation Initiative

The BMG will continue to work collaboratively on projects identified in the APEC Travel Facilitation Initiative (TFI), working closely with the TFI Steering Council and relevant APEC groups, to enable more efficient, more secure travel.

In support of people-to-people connectivity, the BMG will also continue to enhance traveller facilitation and border integrity in the APEC region through the outcomes of the ABTC Programme Management Assistance Project. This included the creation of a network of technical experts and processing managers who form an APEC-wide community of best practice on ABTC administration. This will result in more consistent, efficient processing and to better pre-clearance times.

D) EXPANDING REGULATORY COOPERATION AND ADVANCING REGULATORY CONVERGENCE

Standards and Conformance
Good Regulatory Practice
Food Safety
Cooperation with the Economic Committee, Services and Regulatory Reform
New Regulatory Issues, etc.

In 2014, the BMG concluded a review of legal infrastructure standards. This review aimed to assist in further developing economies' legal immigration infrastructures, which are critical for economies to achieve consistent border management practices and procedures. Members agreed at SOM3 2014 that the next review will be conducted in 2017.

The BMG also began finalisation of its survey of all economies' ABTC pre-clearance policy and regulatory settings that underpin the ABTC, with a view to improving information available to ABTC holders. A related survey examines economies' use of biometrics in their border and non-border environments. Thailand presented a report to the BMG on the surveys, which outlined the visa systems and use of biometrics by economies. This work informs the BMG's progress towards improving ABTC pre-clearance processing times, the development of ABTC online lodgement and the possibilities for the 'next generation' of the ABTC.

E) PROMOTING INNOVATIVE DEVELOPMENT, ECONOMIC REFORM, QUALITY GROWTH; CONTRIBUTIONS TO OTHER CROSS-CUTTING INITIATIVES

Digital Economy
IPR
Food Security,
Human Capital Development

The BMG will support innovative growth and human security by contributing to the APEC Consolidated Counter-Terrorism and Secure Trade Strategy, including through exploring the future strategic direction for the Regional Movement Alert System (RMAS). RMAS provides a real-time travel document validation service between economies who have agreed to use it.

By way of example, in the 2015 calendar year, Australia received 2.8 million Australian document validation requests from New Zealand, the Philippines and United States, with requests returning 1,400 instances of voided travel documents – which include lost and stolen passports. This means that for the economies that use it, 1,400 travellers were able to be further investigated prior to their travel to these economies – a powerful border security tool.

In 2016 the BMG will investigate the use of RMAS to carry validation requests for biometric data and also to carry validation requests against INTERPOL's Stolen and Lost Travel Documents database.

The RMAS Management Board also endorsed publication of the RMAS Communications Package, which provides guidance on the processes for RMAS implementation. The package will be made available to interested economies on the APEC.org website or by contacting Australia.

Also at SOM1 2016, Peru announced progress towards signing an MOU with Australia to implement RMAS.

The BMG committed strongly to pursuing implementation of an APEC-wide ABTC online lodgement system which will be underpinned by principles of harmonisation and inclusiveness including identifying common, mandatory data sets and a stocktake of different domestic requirements for ABTC applicants across economies.

Further to the expected finalisation of surveys into economies' ABTC pre-clearance policy and regulatory settings, and use of biometrics, the final report to the BMG will also inform planned improvement to online information, incorporating work undertaken by Canada to produce APEC-wide standardised FAQs about the ABTC. The surveys also identify a number of areas where economies can work toward greater consistency of policy around the ABTC, including length of stay, use of lanes, and visa ceasing mechanisms. The biometric information collected will inform future directions for the ABTC, to ensure that it remains a relevant, effective travel facilitation product but is dependent on all economies adopting e-passports and moving toward biometrics at the border.

3. ACTIVITIES WITH ABAC (INCLUDING RESPONSES TO ABAC'S 2015 RECOMMENDATIONS) AND/OR OTHER EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

The APEC Business Advisory Council (ABAC) expressed its support for all economies to adopt online lodgement to simplify the ABTC application process. ABAC also advised of its interest in the work of the Online Lodgement Working Group, as well as the outcomes of the Visa Regulatory and Biometrics Survey, specifically regarding their relationship to the future of the ABTC and online lodgement. ABAC also advised of its interest in the progress of ABTC transitional economies to complete their domestic processes towards full membership status.

In 2016, the BMG is committed to the recommendations suggested by ABAC to APEC Leaders in 2015.

4. EXPECTED OUTCOMES/DELIVERABLES FOR 2016

- Continued improvements to ABTC growth and client service outcomes are expected, with the number of ABTC cardholders having increased by 11% from 1 January 2015 to 31 December 2015.
- Review of progress against End-to-End Review of the ABTC and prioritisation of remaining recommendations for implementation in a strategic plan.
- Continued efforts to enhance the ABTC Scheme by progressing implementation of business process, technology and organizational recommendation from the End-to-End Review of the ABTC Scheme, specifically:
 - implementing a shared online lodgement platform,
 - consolidating the implementation of the extension of validity and;

- improving the pre-clearance process.
- Implementation of an APEC-wide online lodgement system will be a particular priority as identified by ABAC, the End-to-End Review, the ABTC Technical Workshop, the six members of the Online Lodgement Working Group and the BMG itself.
- Continue to support people-to-people connectivity, enhanced traveler facilitation and border integrity in the APEC region through improving consistency of the ABTC travel experience.
- Continued improvement in ABTC program management through member collaboration on an ABTC Best Practice Guide that will deliver better client service and promote better mobility by APEC business community in the region.
- Development of the future strategic direction for RMAS, including investigation of RMAS' ability to carry validation requests for biometric data and also to carry validation requests against INTERPOL's Stolen and Lost Travel Documents database.
- Work with other economies to commence, further or conclude RMAS implementation, thereby contributing to connectivity, regional border security, and counter-terrorism measures.
- Continued collaboration on projects identified in the APEC TFI Steering Council and relevant APEC groups to enable more efficient, more secure travel, including work related to Advance Passenger Information (API)/Passenger Name Records (PNR).

5. DECISION POINTS NEEDED FROM CTI

CTI to note that no report was made by transitional members on any further progress beyond transitional membership.