



## **2017 APEC Women and the Economy Forum Statement 29 September 2017**

### **ENHANCING WOMEN'S ECONOMIC INCLUSION AND EMPOWERMENT IN THE CHANGING WORLD**

1. We APEC Ministers and Heads of Delegations met in Hue, Viet Nam from 26 to 29 September 2017 for the APEC Women and the Economy Forum (WEF) chaired by His Excellency Dao Ngoc Dungz, Minister of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs of Viet Nam. We were joined by senior officials, ABAC, private sector leaders, and representatives from international and non-governmental organizations.
2. We share the view that the Asia Pacific is at a crucial juncture of transformation amidst a fast changing global landscape. The Digital Age is having unprecedented impact on the nature of work in general and women's economic inclusion and empowerment in particular. Inclusive and sustainable growth around the world is the overarching vision of the 2030 development agenda. Gender equality and women's economic inclusion and empowerment are central to this vision.
3. We acknowledge the first APEC High-Level Policy Dialogue on Women and the Economy held in San Francisco in 2011 as a significant landmark, paving the way for the annual High-Level Policy Dialogue and concrete actions to promote women and the economy as an integral part of the APEC agenda. We recognize the benefits that have arisen from closer collaboration between APEC and ABAC, policy makers and women-focused business associations and networks.
4. Under the APEC 2017 theme 'Creating New Dynamism, Fostering a Shared Future' we focus our deliberations on '*Enhancing Women's Economic Inclusion and Empowerment in the Changing World*' with three priorities: i) Promoting gender equality for sustainable, innovative and inclusive economic growth; ii) Enhancing the competitiveness and innovation of women-owned MSMEs; and iii) Narrowing gender gaps in human resource development.
5. We applaud APEC Leaders' commitment to promote gender equality and women's economic empowerment across APEC by pursuing concrete policies and innovative measures

to further enhance women's access to capital and assets; access to markets; skills, capacity building, and health; women's leadership, voice and agency; innovation and technology. We commit to our collective actions following APEC Leaders' recognition of efforts to support women's empowerment and entrepreneurship across APEC: grow women-led micro and small and medium size enterprises (MSMEs); enhance women and girls' digital literacy; promote women's career development; increase and strengthen women's and girls' access to and participation in training and careers in higher-wage, high-growth fields such as science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics (STEAM). We also commit to further encourage gender diversity at management levels, including senior leadership and governance structures.

6. We reaffirm our support for the development of concrete and actionable measures to advance women's economic, financial and social inclusion across APEC fora. We endorse PPWE's Gender Inclusion Guidelines as a significant tool to implement gender-responsive policies and programs across APEC. We instruct the PPWE to work with and across APEC fora to enhance the knowledge of policy makers, decision makers and implementers at all levels charged with formulating gender-responsive laws, policies, programs and APEC projects.

7. We welcome the diverse activities currently being led by the APEC Policy Partnership on Women and the Economy (PPWE) to advance the economic inclusion of women (Annex A) and note the collaboration with other APEC fora in many of these important initiatives (Annex B). In addition, we note that the integration of gender into activities led by other APEC fora is gathering pace. We instruct PPWE to continue its focus of collaboration and support such activities, and to continue to engage across APEC fora to further strengthen this pipeline of initiatives.

8. We recognize the essential role and co-responsibility of men and boys in deepening the integration and economic empowerment of women in a changing world. We re-affirm that men and boys make a crucial contribution to gender equality and need to be engaged systematically as strategic partners and allies in achieving gender equality.

9. We reemphasize our call to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls. We recognize that these forms of violence are significant impediments to the achievement of women's economic empowerment and inclusive growth. We reiterate our call to better understand its economic impact through investments in data collection and long-term research in order to develop holistic and effective approaches to prevent and respond to all forms of gender-based violence against women. We also encourage economies to consider increased gender-responsive expenditure and provision of services that help prevent violence against women in the home, the workplace and public spaces. Social protection services increase women's economic participation, positively affect human, social and economic development and deflect loss of income and decreased productivity to economies in general and families in particular.

10. We recognize the challenge climate change poses to the achievement of sustainable development and that women and girls are often disproportionately affected by the impacts of climate change and other environmental issues. We encourage economies to respect, promote and consider gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls when taking action to address climate change.

11. We encourage economies to share research, raise the quality of sex-disaggregated data, indicators and best practices regarding women and the economy. We welcome the release of the 2017 version of the APEC Women and the Economy Dashboard and encourage economies to use the data outlined therein for evidence-based decision making.

### **Promoting gender equality for sustainable, innovative and inclusive economic growth**

12. We acknowledge the relevant outcomes from the 2017 World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), the G20 and 61<sup>st</sup> United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). We recognize that governments, the private sector and civil society must work collaboratively to create an enabling environment for women's full, equal and effective participation in, and benefit from, the changing world of work. This includes strengthening women's and girl's access to quality education, training, and skills development environments; implementing, as appropriate, laws and policies to promote decent work, including establishing safe and healthy workplaces; prohibiting gender-based discrimination; requiring equal pay for equal work or work of equal value; promoting the transition from the informal to formal economy; addressing the mobility of women workers; bridging the digital divide; strengthening women's collective voice and economic leadership in policy decision making; and encouraging investments in policy research, better data collection and impact evaluation for gender equality.

13. We remain concerned that substantial disparities still exist in employment and income opportunities between women and men. Women carry out a disproportionate share of unpaid care, household and agricultural work, while experiencing disadvantages including limited access to assets, markets, networks, ICTs, financial and productive resources. We encourage member economies to:

- Recognize, reduce, and redistribute the disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work by enacting legislation and undertaking reforms that realize the equal rights of all women and men with a view to addressing the issue of women's disproportionate burden of care work.
- Invest in gender-responsive public expenditure on women's workforce skills, quality health, education and productivity; establish 'caregiving' leave; and remove occupational-segregation.
- Enable full participation in business, entrepreneurship and global value chains; integrate women located in rural and remote areas, indigenous women and women's cooperatives by providing them with access to infrastructure, including public utilities, technology, transportation, water and sanitation.
- Strengthen public-private cooperation to improve, as appropriate, policies and programs that support and facilitate the economic inclusion of those most disadvantaged and vulnerable to poverty, including women in rural and remote areas, indigenous women, ethnic women, women with disabilities, women heads of households, survivors of violence against women, survivors of natural disasters and armed conflict, migrant workers and other vulnerable groups. We encourage participation and cooperation among all stakeholders to collect and process sex-disaggregated labor market information.
- Promote inclusive workplace, training and education environments that are responsive to the needs of women and girls.

### **Enhancing the competitiveness and innovation of women-owned MSMEs**

14. We welcome APEC economies' implementation of the actions in the Borocay Action Agenda focusing on women-led MSMEs: 1) fostering the use of sex-disaggregated data in measuring the economic and social impacts on MSMEs; 2) promoting an understanding of the divergent constraints faced by men and women-led MSMEs; and 3) encouraging exchange of best practices on women-friendly cross-border procedures with customs and other border authorities. We welcome the Agenda's common goal towards 2020 to identify indicators to track individual members and regional progress on MSMEs.

15. We recognize women's immense contribution to the achievement of sustainable, innovative and inclusive growth in the region and acknowledge the remarkable contribution of MSMEs to the GDP of every APEC economy. Business associations are the backbone and voice of the business community, supporting the improvement of the skill base and enabling environment of their constituents. Those that work on behalf of women entrepreneurs are well placed to impart valuable business knowledge to policy makers and help develop inclusive business programs and indicators. We call on the private sector to champion the inclusive business agenda and include women in the development of inclusive business models, whether as workers, suppliers, distributors, customers or consumers. We encourage both the public and private sectors to collaborate on gender-responsive policies and practices, services, training and market information that improve access for women-led enterprises to resources and opportunities.. We strongly encourage member economies to directly engage with business associations and other relevant organizations to help them develop business enabling environments that support women entrepreneurs and women-led cooperatives to start up and scale their operations, ensure their equal access to finance and markets; expand women-led MSMEs' global presence and their participation under equal conditions in global value chains; and empower women entrepreneurs through digitalization. We particularly encourage economies to promote and facilitate the association of women entrepreneurs and cooperatives in rural and highly vulnerable areas, share research, sex-disaggregated data, indicators and best practices in gender-inclusive development.

### **Narrowing gender gaps in human resource development**

16. As the increasingly connected economic environment continues to frame our work, we recognize the shift towards an increase in demand for technology-enabled skills. We recognize that a number of APEC economies have succeeded in developing women's skills and competencies, boosting their domestic economic growth and integration into the regional economy, including through the use of ICTs.

17. We acknowledge the opportunities and challenges for women and girls, in particular vulnerable groups, of the 4th Industrial Revolution: the convergence of smart phones, cloud computing, the Internet of Things (IoT), sophisticated artificial intelligence, smart cities, and advanced robotic technologies into interoperable global value chains. We welcome the recently endorsed Framework for Human Resources Development in the Digital Age to address capacity-building priorities in this area and where appropriate:

- We call for targeted technical training to improve women and girls' digital literacy to unlock job opportunities and entrepreneurship.
- We encourage economies to strengthen the ecosystem for women and girls regarding STEAM education and employment to bridge the digital divide; leverage women's and girls' talents; and take advantage of new opportunities presented by the Digital

Age, including online learning and the removal of the digital gender divide in accessing ICT.

18. We acknowledge that the information technology revolution has brought new forms of violence against women, including cyber-bullying, online harassment and cyber-stalking. Such violence has prevented women from participating in the economy as users, content creators, employees, entrepreneurs, innovators and leaders. We encourage economies to implement awareness raising programs, women-friendly web spaces, monitoring and enforcement mechanisms, and accessible public reporting mechanisms that recognize that cyber-acts can be a form of violence against women and girls.

19. We welcome the outcomes and recommendations of the Public-Private Dialogue on Women and the Economy (PPDWE). We support the ongoing reflection on a post-2020 APEC vision and welcome the deliberations at the PPDWE on building a vision on women's economic empowerment for the Asia Pacific as part of our contribution to this process.

### **Towards APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting 2017 in Da Nang, Viet Nam**

20. We seek APEC Leaders' consideration to include in their 2017 Declaration a statement on the importance of further advancing women's economic inclusion to tap into their full potential contribution to sustainable, innovative and inclusive growth. We agree to submit this 2017 APEC Women and the Economy Forum Statement to the APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting to be held in November in Da Nang, Viet Nam.

### **APEC Women and the Economy Forum 2018**

21. We look forward to our next APEC Women and the Economy Forum and relevant activities in Papua New Guinea in 2018.

## **Annex A: Current PPWE PROJECTS**

### **APEC BEST Award**

Launched in 2016, the APEC Business Efficiency and Success Target Awards (APEC BEST Awards) was the first annual contest for women-entrepreneurs across the APEC region. The APEC BEST Awards seek to raise women's awareness on benefits of self-employment and help women-entrepreneurs to internationalize their businesses, attract international partners and potential investors from the APEC economies. The contest also contributes to building networks among women entrepreneurs, consultants, mentors and investors across the APEC region. Spreading best practices of women-owned SMEs among APEC economies provides an opportunity to involve a larger number of women into entrepreneurship, create new jobs in different industries, and support economic growth and development by applying promising business models based on domestic success stories. The second APEC BEST Awards contest was held on 27 September 2017 in the margins of Women and the Economy Forum in Hue, Viet Nam.

### **Diversity Management for Women's Empowerment**

'Diversity Management for Women's Empowerment': In the APEC 2016 WEF Statement, all economies were encouraged to increase gender diversity on executive boards and in senior management of companies which positively affect corporate sustainability and growth. In order to deepen last year's achievement in WEF, this project aims to enhance women's empowerment through facilitation of mutual-understanding and awareness for diversity management by following two activities: to stock take actions relating to diversity management and women's empowerment, and to share them as good practices among APEC economies; to organize an APEC Top Management Forum on Diversity Management for Women's Empowerment in Tokyo for sharing good practices, discussing obstacles and identifying key challenges for facilitating diversity management and women's empowerment.

### **Promoting Women in Decision Making Positions in the Public and Private Sector**

One of the planned activities is the conduct of a workshop to exchange ideas and promote best practices on implementation of suitable policies to increase women's representation in leadership roles across both public and private sectors. The report of the Workshop will serve as reference to economies to identify the best policies to promote women in decision making positions in the public and private sectors.

### **Sex-Disaggregated Data Collection**

The Women and the Economy Dashboard is a set of 75 indicators on the status of women in APEC's member economies. The Dashboard is a tool to track, measure, and communicate progress in reducing barriers to women's economic participation across our five key pillars: (a) Access to capital and assets; (b) Access to markets; (c) Skills, capacity building, and health; (d) Leadership, voice, and agency; and (e) Innovation and technology. The APEC Policy Support Unit reported on the indicators under the Dashboard for the first time in September 2015, using highly credible international data sources such as the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Labor Organization, the World Economic Forum, and the World Health Organization. The Dashboard's indicators are assessed and reported on bi-annually.

### **Women's Economic Empowerment and ICT**

The 'Women's Economic Empowerment and ICT' project will be implemented to update

APEC women about the current trends and features of the 4th industrial revolution; to compile and share success stories of women entrepreneurs in the ICT and smart technology-based industry; and to prepare APEC women for business opportunities in the 4th Industrial Revolution.

### **Women's Access to Financial Services**

This self-funded project “Women's Access to Financial Services – Data in the APEC Region” proposes to conduct of a survey on the number of women having access to various financial services that support women's participation in starting up and expanding existing women's businesses. The project aims to encourage economies to set targets to work towards developing relevant policies of financial inclusion programs.

### **Women's Leadership**

Recognizing that increasing the participation of women in economic activities will serve as a catalyst to promote economic growth, Japan proposed the project ‘Individual Action Plan (IAP) for the Enhancement of the Ratio of Women's Representation in Leadership’. Every year since 2015 to 2020, APEC economies are asked to submit their action plans, which serve as mechanisms for measurable and aspirational voluntary goals to which economies could work toward by the end of 2020. In order to further promote women's representation in leadership and accelerate the voluntary goals and the momentum of the initiative of each economy, this project also explores and takes stock of good practices of the policies, as well as actions taken for promoting women's representation in leadership through the mid-term review study and public-private dialogue held as a side event during the WEF 2017.

### **Women's Entrepreneurship**

The Women's Entrepreneurship in APEC (WE-APEC) initiative, launched in 2014, examined each economy's efforts with respect to business networks, private-sector initiatives, and government services in support of women's entrepreneurship. Summaries of all 21 economies, including details about their respective networks, initiatives, and services, can be accessed and enhanced to strengthen eco-systems that support women's entrepreneurship. The WE-APEC online platform ([www.we-apec.com](http://www.we-apec.com)) is a dynamic directory of service providers for women-owned businesses across APEC and provides a way for governments, the private sector, business networks and entrepreneurs to connect. This initiative is very helpful for connecting business network, the private sector, and government services in the Asia – Pacific to support women entrepreneurs. To make it work better, capacity building activities will be implemented and the WE-APEC platform will be improved as well to include a mobile platform for better use with cell phones.

### **Women as Prime Movers of Inclusive Business**

The APEC Women as Prime Movers of Inclusive Business Project was approved in 2016 for implementation until the end of 2017 in collaboration with the IEG. This Project looks into the broader aspect of Inclusive Business (IB) both in theory and practice, and zooms into how women's economic empowerment serves as vital contribution in the development, scale-up, and replication of IB models in the Asia Pacific region. In support to this, a survey was conducted which aimed to draw out a balanced analysis that would reflect the majority of APEC member economies, and present conclusions and recommendations that would be supportive of APEC as a whole. However, due to the difficulty in gathering inputs for the research study, the 2017 APEC Seminar on Women as Prime Movers of Inclusive Business was held on 26 September 2017 in Hue, Viet Nam to further enhance the content and substance of the study, prior its finalization and publication for circulation to the APEC member economies.

## **Women in STEM**

Launched in 2016, the APEC Women in STEM initiative involves a range of activities, including an APEC-wide survey of initiatives aimed at strengthening the presence of women in STEM educational programs and careers. To help APEC economies tackle the issue of women in STEM, a framework was developed and endorsed with four key pillars: (1) enabling environment; (2) education; (3) employment; and (4) entrepreneurship. Steps in 2017 include: organizing a capacity building workshop on Women in STEM Framework; identifying private sector partners who can serve as co-champions of the APEC initiative; bringing PPSTI formally on board as a cross-fora partner; and developing an implementation work plan based on outcomes of the Workshop.



## **Annex B: Partnerships with Other APEC Fora**

The PPWE has partnered with other APEC Fora to incorporate gender equality and women's empowerment into their sector-specific public-private dialogues, ministerial meetings, and projects and programs to ensure that barriers to women's economic empowerment are addressed across sectors.

### **Economic Committee (EC)**

The project "Capacity Building for the Reduction of Educational Gender Gaps through Structural Reforms" was launched to enhance education with equal opportunities for women in APEC economies. With this purpose, the project focuses on improving the capacity of civil servants to adapt, design, implement and evaluate gender gap reduction policies. The project is directly related to the APEC New Strategy for Structural Reform (ANSSR), as well as the SME and Women Development pillar, which has driven the recent activities of the Economic Committee.

### **Emergency Preparedness Working Group (EPWG)**

Recognizing that the Asia-Pacific is the most natural disaster-affected region, the PPWE collaborated with the EPWG to identify and address the needs and concerns of women and girls in emergency preparedness and post-disaster recovery and resilience.

The outcome of the PPWE project "Good Practices of Women Entrepreneurship in Local Communities in the Process of Local Reconstruction" has been shared with the EPWG as a valuable reference for achieving inclusive and sustainable recovery in the post-disaster phase, which can also contribute to the enhanced linkage between the two working groups.

### **Human Resources Development Working Group (HRDWG)**

Cooperative efforts are being explored to improve labor market efficiency and the management of labor mobility, and deepen regional and economic integration and people-people connectivity. This work will contribute to ongoing efforts to fully integrate women in the economy.

### **HRDWG and Health Working Group (HWG)**

Full participation of women in the economy is essential to achieve inclusive economic growth; however, women's ability to access economic opportunities is sometimes hindered by health concerns. Thus, the PPWE is collaborating with the HRDWG and HWG on the "Healthy Women, Healthy Economies" initiative. A Policy Toolkit was developed to address health-related barriers specific to women so they can join, remain and rise in the work force. The Policy Toolkit includes policy recommendations and practices on: workplace health and safety; health access and awareness; gender-based violence, sexual and reproductive health; and work/life balance. The Policy Toolkit can serve as a guide to APEC economies in implementing actions on a voluntary basis and choosing actions appropriate for their economy. In 2016, APEC is working to equip governments and businesses with the tools needed to implement elements of the toolkit. A forum on the toolkit implementation will be held in August and will include a presentation of the business and economic cases on application of the toolkit.

### **HRDWG and Policy Partnership on Science, Technology and Innovation (PPSTI)**

Human resources development in the digital field is a universal matter and it is vital for economics' sustainable growth. However, gender gap trends persist as the workforce moves

toward new and emerging roles in STEM fields, which continue to outpace the gender gap, causing women to lose out on tomorrow's best job opportunities and prevent many economies from reaching their sustainable development. The underrepresentation of women in STEM is due to many factors, such as women are lacking female role models, and many environments are still discriminatory. Accordingly, the APEC Gendered Innovation for Technology and Science (GIFTS) is developed in collaboration with HRDWG and PPSTI, aiming to provide best practices as female role models and a workshop to establish a nurturing environment.

Fifteen best practices examples were surveyed. These will serve as a roadmap to set up outstanding female role models and a guide to learning about role models for STEM women in different career stages. These experiences will provide the impetus to transform women's participation in the future jobs and empower them to contribute to sustainable economic growth.

### **Transportation Working Group (TPTWG)**

Women are far less likely than men to work in the transportation sector, both in absolute numbers and as compared to their labor market participation within their respective Economies. In addition, women are more susceptible to economic marginalization if transportation networks, connecting them employment, health services, and educational opportunities, are unsafe for their use. The Transportation Working Group (TPTWG) is host to the Women in Transportation (WiT) Task Force which has developed a framework (WiT Framework) for benchmarking and tracking the participation and influence of women transportation workers, entrepreneurs, leaders, and travelers. The WiT Framework, which was endorsed by APEC Transportation Ministers in October 2015, identifies five key outcome "pillars" that Economies can use to help organize their own efforts to boost women's opportunities, with 18 specific outcomes listed to support policy engagement in this arena. The five pillars are: education; entry into the sector; retention; leadership; and access and use of transportation systems. By linking the goals of the pillars with concrete activities and metrics that will be carried out by volunteer economies in their own pilot projects, the WiT Framework provides a roadmap to success for policy makers and industry representatives working to facilitate change.

Currently four economies (Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, New Zealand and the United States) are leveraging the WiT Framework to structure a pilot project that will produce a policy response to a specific challenge or impediment embodied in one of these five pillars. It is anticipated that these pilot programs will serve as models of how data, global best practices on women's issues, and tailor-made policy solutions enacted by government through collaboration with industry can help improve women's opportunities in all facets of the transportation sector.