

23rd MEETING OF APEC MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR TRADE: ACTIONS

Under APEC Viet Nam 2017 theme “Creating New Dynamism, Fostering a Shared Future” and four priorities: (i) Promoting sustainable, innovative and inclusive growth; (ii) Deepening regional economic integration; (iii) Strengthening micro, small and medium-sized enterprises’ competitiveness and innovation in the digital age; and (iv) Enhancing food security and sustainable agriculture in response to climate change, we, APEC Ministers Responsible for Trade gathered in Ha Noi on 20-21 May 2017 and identified the following actions:

Supporting the 11th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC11)

We encourage Senior Officials and the Committee on Trade and Investment to exchange views during meetings, on possible contributions towards a successful WTO MC11.

Enhancing trade and investment

FTAAP

We encourage economies to make further progress on the work plan on advancing the Lima Declaration on FTAAP and develop the multi-year work program to further enhance APEC economies’ ability to participate in high quality, comprehensive free trade agreement negotiations in the future.

Trade Facilitation

We encourage APEC economies to fully implement the WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation (TFA). We reaffirm our commitments to advance work program that reduce trade costs, including through the Supply Chain Connectivity Framework Action Plan Phase II and in collaboration with Customs administration and other relevant agencies responsible for facilitating and securing international supply chains. We encourage member economies to develop new capacity building projects relevant to the implementation of TFA and SCFAP II, including APEC Alliance on Supply Chain Connectivity (A2C2) and the APEC Cooperation Network on Green Supply Chain (GSCNET). We encourage efforts by economies to implement the Initiative on Single Window Systems’ (SWS) International Interoperability to foster the flow of goods, enhance supply chain security, reduce costs and provide quality and timely information on trade across borders.

We support APEC’s work to address non-tariff measures (NTMs), including those that act as barriers to trade, in order to reduce costs to businesses operating in the APEC region, and encourage further capacity building in this regard.

We look forward to the conclusion of the Global Data Standards (GDS) Study with a suite of pilot projects, and encourage officials to explore next steps for the wider use of interoperable GDS in the APEC region.

Standards and Conformance

We recognize that the ongoing work program to minimize differences in standards and conformance. We look forward to further progress in the development and promotion of standards and conformance to facilitate trade and support the digital economy, including those in ICT and

emerging technologies. We resolve to promote the use of international standards, conformity assessment procedures, accreditation and metrology in a transparent and non-discriminatory manner in order to drive innovation across all industries, especially among MSMEs.

Investment

We recognize investment as a key driver of growth, jobs and prosperity in the APEC region. We welcome the work of APEC on investment, including the Investment Facilitation Action Plan. We encourage economies to continue with capacity building and policy dialogues on investment, so that investment can contribute to the prosperity of economies in the APEC region.

Services

We underline that improving competitiveness in services sectors as well as growth in services trade are drivers of economic growth and job creation. We reaffirm our commitments as outlined in the APEC Services Competitiveness Roadmap. We welcome the progress made so far in implementing the Roadmap and encourage further actions to enhance the services competitiveness of the region. We also recognize that we need to address barriers that inhibit our business from competing or trading in services markets.

Industry Dialogues

We welcome contributions to APEC's work on trade facilitation by APEC Industry Dialogues, including those of the Automotive, Chemicals and the Life Sciences Innovation Forum. We recognize the importance of the Automotive Dialogue's activities in such areas as New Energy Vehicles (NEVs) and the Roadmap for Electric Vehicles. We welcome the efforts of the Chemical Dialogue to encourage the use of good regulatory practices, to address divergences in classification and labelling in industrial chemicals in order to facilitate trade. We look forward to further progress to advance APEC's goal of regional convergence on regulatory approval procedures for medical products under the Life Sciences Innovation Forum and welcome the upcoming High Level Regulators Dialogue. We welcome efforts to improve the investment environment for waste management infrastructure.

E-commerce, Internet Economy and Digital Trade

We take note of and encourage senior officials to finalize the APEC Cross-border E-commerce Facilitation Framework for endorsement by the Ministers in November. We recognize the importance of the APEC Cross Border Privacy Rules (CBPRs) System, a voluntary mechanism whose participants seek to expand the participation, and we support enhanced cooperation in this area, including through promoting capacity building. We also note the discussions to modernize the Electronic Commerce Steering Group (ECSG).

We will collaborate to unleash the potential of internet and digital economy. We recognize the importance of an enabling environment that promotes the internet and digital economy to support broad-based and, innovative growth in Asia-Pacific region. We note the progress to develop the APEC Roadmap on the Internet and Digital Economy and instruct our officials to conclude the Roadmap for submission to Ministers in November.

We note the progress and continued activities under the Next Steps to advance our work on digital trade in 2017, including through case studies and building blocks to facilitate digital trade in the region.

Supporting industry

We welcome the progress of the APEC Supporting Industry Initiative and instruct Senior Officials to finalize the Policy Guidelines on promoting supporting industry in APEC.

Environmental Goods and Services

We commend those economies that have reduced applied tariffs on the APEC Environmental Goods List to five percent or less and strongly urge remaining economies that have yet to fulfill this commitment to do so as soon as possible.

We welcome progress in implementing the Environment Services Action Plan (ESAP) and look forward to further concrete outcomes before Ministerial Meeting in November.

Connectivity Blueprint

We encourage members to advance the implementation of the APEC Connectivity Blueprint for 2015-2025 under physical, institutional and people-to-people connectivity pillars, moving towards a seamless and comprehensively connected and integrated Asia Pacific region by 2025. We encourage new initiatives that will promote further work on progressing the Connectivity Blueprint before the mid-term review of 2020.

We acknowledge the importance of adequate investment in quality infrastructure and welcome APEC's work to promote quality infrastructure, including the progress of APEC Peer Review and Capacity Building on Infrastructure Development and Investment and look forward to further deepening and accelerating the initiatives. Building on the outcomes of the 3rd Public-Private Dialogue on Advancing Trade Facilitation and Supply Chain Connectivity through Asia-Pacific Model E-Port Network (APMEN), we welcome more pilot projects and encourage economies to continue participating in APMEN.

Promoting sustainable, innovative and inclusive growth

Economic, financial and social inclusion

We are committed to ensuring that future economic growth is more inclusive by broadening access to opportunities created by growth and spreading the benefits of growth more widely. In the fast changing global landscape, fostering the effective economic, financial and social inclusion has become all the more relevant and urgent to strengthen the resilience of all APEC member economies. We therefore welcome Viet Nam's proposal on the Action Agenda on promoting economic, financial and social inclusion, including the possibility of submitting the Action Agenda to AMM for consideration.

We acknowledge the importance of remote areas development as a way to achieve sustainable and inclusive growth. We note APEC's works on promoting sustainable and inclusive growth and encourage further work to advance rural development and poverty alleviation.

Innovation and Structural reform

Innovation is a critical driver of new international trade and investment, and conversely, smart trade and investment policies are essential key enablers of innovation. In this regard, we note the outcomes of the APEC Symposium on Trade and Innovation, which provided a sound platform for dialogue with the private sector. We also recognize the importance of innovation for economic growth of APEC economies and commend efforts aimed to facilitate science and technology entrepreneurship, strengthen science and technology networks and promote technology policy dialogue and cooperation among APEC members.

We call on officials to accelerate work to deepen APEC's structural reform agenda to remove barriers to trade and investment, help advance economies' individual and joint efforts to promote competition, and take steps to improve the ease of doing business through good regulatory practices and sound economic legal infrastructure. In this regard, we welcome economies Individual Action Plans (IAPs) to implement the Renewed APEC Agenda for Structural Reform (RAASR 2016-2020). We encourage economies to take prompt initiative to share experiences and build capacity for implementing IAPs throughout 2017-2020.

Intellectual Property Rights

We agree to foster cooperation in the area of intellectual property rights (IPR) protection and enforcement, raise MSMEs awareness of IP commercialization and encourage the use of the IPR system as a means to stimulate economic and technological development to contribute to a healthy innovation ecosystem. We encourage economies to adopt IP policies and programs that cultivate, foster, support and advance innovation.

Women and the economy

We recognize women's contribution to economic growth and we reaffirm our commitments to take concrete steps to mainstream gender equality and further enhance women's economic empowerment as well as participation in trade. We encourage economies to identify and remove legal and discriminatory barriers to enable women entrepreneurs' ability to trade and, through capacity building, take advantage of trade.

Developing Human Resources in the Digital Age

Recognizing the importance of human resources development in the digital age and the fourth industrial revolution in creating new dynamism for sustainable, inclusive and innovative growth, we welcome the APEC framework on human resource development in the Digital Age adopted by the High Level Policy Dialogue on Human Resources Development in the Digital Age, which will be reported to AMM for consideration and potential submission to AELM.

We support efforts to implement the APEC Education Strategy to enhance competencies, accelerate innovation and increase employability in the APEC region. We reiterate our willingness to promote cooperation in cross-border education, including higher education, and academic mobility in the APEC region.

Strengthening MSMEs' Competitiveness and Innovation in the Digital Age

We welcome efforts to increase the participation of MSMEs in global trade and recognize the opportunities that e-commerce and digital economy presents for MSMEs. We therefore encourage further activities to implement the Boracay Action Agenda and globalize MSMEs through e-commerce and welcome progress under the "APEC MSME Marketplace" initiative. We welcome the outcome of the APEC App Challenge to help MSMEs export.

We welcome the progress in implementing the work streams under the APEC Strategic Blueprint for Promoting Global Value Chains Development and Cooperation. We recognize the importance of ensuring SMEs' participation in GVCs in both major industries and services. We note the establishment of the APEC Global Value Chain Partnership Platform. We welcome the activities made so far in implementing the Strategic Framework on Measurement of APEC Trade in Value-Added (TiVA), moving towards the eventual completion of the APEC TiVA Database by 2018.

We encourage economies to further share experiences and best practices in facilitating start-ups. We welcome the progress of the APEC Strategy for Green and Sustainable MSMEs and encourage public - private partnerships (PPP) as a means to realize the Strategy.

Enhancing Food Security

We recognize that promoting trade of food, agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture products plays a significant role in ensuring people's access to food. In this regard, we agree to strengthen cooperation to foster a transparent, predictable and business enabling environment for trade in agriculture, food and fisheries products between APEC economies. We encourage members to support trade of agrifood and fisheries by exchanging information on food supply and demand by using science-based regulations and WTO recognized international food related standards, and collaborating on methods for innovation and food inspection. We acknowledge the importance of advancing understanding on NTMs in the food sector.

Strengthening Economic and Technical Cooperation

We call for continued efforts to strengthen economic and technical cooperation (ECOTECH) with the ultimate goals of promoting trade, investment as well as sustainable and inclusive growth and bridging gaps among the member economies through capacity building activities to help them attain APEC commitments.

We appreciate voluntary and in-kind contributions made by all APEC's economies to the General Project Account and other sub-funds. We encourage more untied funding to capacity building to help economies meet their APEC commitments. In that light, we encourage further efforts to promote cross-fora collaboration in our pursuit for regional economic integration.

APEC towards 2020 and beyond

We instruct officials to accelerate work in areas where progress toward the Bogor Goals has been uneven, including with respect to removing barriers to trade. We welcome the outcome of the Multi-Stakeholder Dialogues on APEC Towards 2020 and beyond, and take note of the recommendations, including on the next steps./.