



2018 APEC WOMEN AND THE ECONOMY FORUM STATEMENT

07 September 2018

“Seizing Opportunities for Women and Girls to Advance in the Digital Age”

1. The Asia-Pacific Region is a vibrant region that continues to experience robust economic growth. APEC recognizes the importance of harnessing this growth in a period of rapid economic transformation and the emergence of the digital era to ensure that no one is left behind. APEC remains fully cognizant of the need to realize the full potential of women and girls to participate in, contribute to, and benefit from economic growth.
2. Under the overarching 2018 APEC theme of “Harnessing Inclusive Opportunities, Embracing the Digital Future”, we the APEC Ministers and Heads of Delegation gathered in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea from 5 - 7 September 2018 for the APEC Women and the Economy Forum (WEF) chaired by the Minister for Community Development, Youth and Religion for Papua New Guinea. We welcomed the participation of the APEC Business Advisory Council (ABAC), the private sector and official observers.
3. We met under the 2018 WEF theme of **“Seizing Opportunities for Women and Girls to Advance in the Digital Age”** which draws focus on the new digital frontier and the opportunities and challenges it presents for women and girls. We seek to explore practical and meaningful ways in which APEC can respond to these challenges, while realizing and harnessing the many associated opportunities. Our deliberations and efforts in 2018 were focused on four main priority areas: (1) Empowering Women to Participate in the Digital Economy; (2) Gender Inclusion and Empowerment: a catalyst for growth in all sectors; (3) Leadership; and (4) Forging Partnerships, Narrowing the Gap.
4. At a time when APEC seeks to review its outlook and explore ways to carry its work beyond 2020, we remind ourselves of the significant progress that our region has made in ensuring the greater integration and empowerment of women in the region since the first APEC High-Level Policy Dialogue held in San Francisco in 2011. We are reminded of APEC Leaders’

encouragement to economies and the private sector to implement initiatives that enhance women's economic empowerment, improve women's access to capital, assets and markets, increase women's high growth and high wage sectors, and promote women's leadership, entrepreneurs, skills and competencies.¹ We therefore seek to promote the inclusion and economic empowerment of women and girls through policies and measures across the five pillars.² We recognize that women, including indigenous women and women in remote and rural areas, make vital contributions to economic and social development and prosperity of the Asia-Pacific region, and commit to take concrete actions to further promote the full advancement of women as a means of realizing sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

5. We commend the extensive work that the Policy Partnership on Women and the Economy (PPWE) continues to pursue, and its unwavering efforts to mainstream women's economic empowerment perspectives into all of APEC's work streams. We encourage the PPWE to advance its work in view of emerging challenges and opportunities, and to collaborate and coordinate the appropriate responses by generating knowledge, learning and experiences on gender issues, unconscious bias, women's economic empowerment and the collection of relevant data.

Empowering Women to Participate in the Digital Economy

6. We reiterate that women are important contributors to economic growth, and we therefore continue to explore ways to unleash the potential of women in the economy. Building on efforts in APEC in various areas, we urge economies to work towards creating opportunities for women to participate in the global economy including through; fostering conducive environments for women to start and run businesses; promoting women-owned MSMEs and women entrepreneurship in the digital economy; improving access to quality employment; advancing skills and resources, such as digital literacy and identity protection so that women can safely benefit from digital access to the fullest extent; and developing policies to improve access to finance, markets, start-up capital, and capacity building.
7. We recognize the role that trade promotion organizations can play to equip women entrepreneurs with the skills to build their businesses' export capacity and strengthen MSMEs competitiveness and ability to participate in global markets and value chains.
8. We welcome the application of innovative and smart business models that meet the diverse needs of women to bridge the digital divide. As the region draws closer through greater connectivity, we commit to ensuring that women and girls are equipped with the skills required to respond to the shifting demands of the workforce.

¹ 2017 Annual Economic Leaders' Statement

² The five pillars are: access to capital and assets; access to markets; skills, capacity building, and health; leadership, voice and agency; and innovation and technology.

9. We recognize that the digital economy provides increased opportunities for women to participate in the global economy. To harness these opportunities, we must invest in the development of women and girls in the Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) fields.
10. With the many opportunities that information and communication technology (ICT) has on offer to improve the livelihood of women and girls, including the way they transact and interact, we encourage economies, and especially the private sector, to continue efforts to narrow the digital divide and to harness opportunities, and respond to challenges associated with digitization. We encourage the sharing of best practices and experiences of APEC women entrepreneurs in utilizing ICT to advance gender equality and support women's access to ICT and encourage women's income growth, including through e-commerce.
11. We note that the third APEC Business Efficiency and Success Target Award (APEC BEST Award) gives women entrepreneurs opportunities to present their projects and business models, share best practices and useful experiences, attract potential investors and partners, and increase their potential to enter new markets.
12. We share APEC's commitment to the digital economy, including through the APEC Internet and Digital Economy Roadmap. In particular, we seek to explore ways to encourage the participation of women and girls in the digital economy, regardless of socio-economic status. This can be realized through building and strengthening the appropriate infrastructure, ensuring full access for women and girls to this infrastructure, building skills and capacity for women and girls to take equal advantage of and benefit from these advancements. As the region draws closer through greater connectivity, we encourage women and girls' training in technology-enabled skills to be able to respond to shifting demands of the workforce.
13. We call for collective action to ensure that the digital economy is a useful tool for unleashing the economic potential of women and girls, and to take advantage of the opportunities that transformative technology provides. Efforts to achieve digital inclusion should consider the protection of women and girls from online harassment and predatory behavior.

Gender Inclusion and Empowerment: A Catalyst for Growth in Sectors

14. We recognize the importance of regulatory and structural reform to remove behind the border barriers affecting businesses across the region in order to enhance the functioning of markets and institutions that support their effective functioning; increase productivity; and support inclusive growth and women's economic empowerment, in line with broader APEC efforts on structural reform.
15. Economies are encouraged to address gender disparities hindering women from taking full advantage of economic opportunities in rural and urban settings or areas, and in resource sectors, including energy, fisheries, agriculture, tourism and mining.

16. We stress the importance of decent work, education and health as enablers in empowering women and girls. We encourage APEC and relevant stakeholders to promote, as applicable, laws and policies for decent work, creating conducive work environments for women, and social protection. We will work together to ensure full and non-discriminatory access for women and girls to quality education and skills development, and welcome the progress in the implementation of the APEC Education Strategy and Action Plan. We support improved women's economic participation through better health and nutrition. We are committed to promoting these efforts, emphasizing the impact of women's economic participation on poverty reduction.
17. We acknowledge that while it is important to encourage a holistic approach towards promoting gender inclusion and empowering women in the region, we also recognize that women may face sector-specific challenges that prevent their full and non-discriminatory participation in the workforce. To this end, we commend APEC's existing work and encourage efforts to promote sectoral approaches to exploring opportunities and addressing challenges faced by women working in STEAM, transportation and infrastructure, MSMEs, and health, and for advancing discussions in 2018 on tourism, agriculture and fisheries, mining and the extractives, and energy. We acknowledge the important contribution of women to achieving inclusive and sustainable growth, and encourage collaboration between government and the private sector to empower women to contribute in all sectors. We note the discussions at the APEC Women in Tourism Dialogue and the Women in Agriculture and Fisheries Dialogue in 2018. We recognize the benefits of promoting female participation in all industries given the economic and social benefits of greater diversity.
18. We recognize the importance of accessing capital and credit for women. We will work to promote access to financial products and services appropriate for unserved and underserved women to promote sustainable development and inclusive economic growth.
19. We reemphasize our call to eliminate all forms of violence and discrimination against women and girls and recognize that these forms of violence are significant impediments to the achievement of women's economic empowerment and economic growth, and that every effort to achieve digital inclusion should ensure that women and girls are free from violence to promote their safety in all private and public spaces.

Leadership

20. We are pleased at the increasing number of women in key leadership positions in government, business and at the community-levels. However, we recognize that more can be done to achieve gender parity. Therefore, we endeavor to empower women to take on more leadership roles for balanced decision making, and continue to inspire other women and girls to aspire to become leaders.

21. We recognize the importance of women's representation and voice for balanced decision-making at the highest levels of politics and government. Similarly, we encourage women's increased involvement in decision making as business leaders and entrepreneurs. Economies are encouraged to enhance the ratio of women's representation in leadership and enhance gender diversity management. We acknowledge the outcomes of the APEC Top Management Forum on Diversity Management for Women's Empowerment.
22. We recognize that the APEC narrative on leadership should extend beyond the idea of women as leaders. We should also focus on educating and encouraging men in leadership and decision making roles to aspire to achieving gender equality in all areas.

Forging partnerships, bridging the gap

23. We welcome the outcomes of the Symposium on Promoting Champions to Drive Gender Inclusion and Empower Women held on 5 September 2018. These outcomes emphasize the important roles that men and boys play in the full realization of women as equal contributors to economic growth and gender equality. We encourage efforts to ensure gender mainstreaming and ensuring that men and boys strategically engage in leadership, management and decision-making levels to drive efforts in the APEC region on gender equality and women's economic empowerment.
24. We are delighted with the increased engagement of the relevant APEC fora, and the integration of gender into their activities. We recognize the importance of engaging with relevant stakeholders.
25. We welcome the participation of the private sector through the Public Private Dialogue on Women and the Economy, and underscore the importance of ensuring private sector engagement and partnership, as appropriate. We agree that the PPWE should increase engagement with the private sector and the relevant APEC fora to strengthen efforts to promote gender inclusion at all levels and in all sectors. We recognize the immense potential that well-coordinated and consistent partnership with the private sector has to catapult progress towards the full realization of the potential of women in the economy. We encourage continued collaboration with ABAC, and welcome ABACs efforts to connect business women and promote women's entrepreneurship through digital solutions

Moving forward

26. We suggest continued exchanges and cooperation in the APEC region on women's economic empowerment, and the building of diversified platforms and networks of cooperation and practical cooperation in areas such as capacity building, information exchange, and best-practice sharing.
27. We welcome updates on the Women and the Economy Dashboard, and recognize the Dashboard as being an important source of data to allow for informed decision making in

APEC on women's economic empowerment. We acknowledge the Policy Support Unit, and specific support and resources for initiatives to promote women's economic empowerment.

28. We welcome the operation of the Women and the Economy Sub-Fund in 2018, and encourage contributions and applications to utilize the fund.
29. We commit to further promote women's full advancement as a means of achieving sustainable and inclusive economic growth and foster a conducive environment for women's economic empowerment.
30. We seek APEC Leaders' consideration to recommit to women's economic empowerment and gender equality in the APEC region amidst a rapidly changing economic landscape.

Women and the Economy Forum 2019

31. We look forward to progressing our efforts in 2019, and the WEF and related activities in Chile.