

## **Ministers Responsible for Trade Meeting Joint Statement 2019**

1. We, the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Ministers Responsible for Trade, met in Viña del Mar, Chile from 17-18 May 2019 to discuss key regional and global trade issues, and to advance our work for sustainable and inclusive economic growth and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific.
2. We appreciate the participation of the Director-General of the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Chair of the APEC Business Advisory Council (ABAC), the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (PECC), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS).
3. This year we celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the first meeting of Ministers Responsible for Trade. That first meeting arose from members' collective desire to enhance economic cooperation, leading to our agreement on the Bogor Goals for free and open trade and investment in the Asia-Pacific region, which continue to guide our work. Since then, we have focused on giving momentum to trade and investment liberalization.
4. In 2019, as we celebrate APEC's thirtieth anniversary, we take pride in what our economies have achieved together through non-binding, voluntary, collaborative and consensus-based cooperation. We reaffirm these principles, which continue to underpin our work, with a view to achieving a peaceful, dynamic and prosperous Asia-Pacific region, for the benefit of all. We welcome the APEC 2019 theme "Connecting People; Building the Future".

### **Priorities for 2019**

5. During our meeting, we discussed the following priorities identified by Chile for APEC in 2019, acknowledging the progress underway in each of these areas, and tasking officials to work towards robust outcomes, to ensure strong deliverables by Leaders' Week in November.

#### *Women, SMEs and Inclusive Growth*

6. Increasing participation in the economy by all is critical for economic growth and is at the core of APEC's work. We are committed to further advance economic, financial and social inclusion, including efforts to foster rural development and raise living standards. Our efforts will contribute to narrowing the gap in economic development, consistent with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
7. In 2019, women continue to face multiple barriers, such as discriminatory laws and norms, and insufficient access to formal labor markets, education, skills development, financing and digital technologies. This results in income gaps, constraints on mobility, and limited access to economic opportunities. Building

on the important work that has been achieved in APEC to date, we welcome the development of a roadmap for women and inclusive growth, which will catalyze efforts across APEC, to increase women's economic development and empowerment in all areas. We encourage officials to ensure that the roadmap is comprehensive and action-oriented, with ambitious and focused targets.

8. We strongly support the ongoing work across APEC towards the internationalization of Micro, Small and Medium Size Enterprises (MSMEs) and startups. This work should continue to focus on reducing barriers and trade costs through capacity building, supporting innovation, and improving access to new markets, information, digital tools and financing. We commit to redouble our efforts to ensure competitive services markets, given their importance for MSMEs.

#### *Digital Society*

9. New technologies can be engines of innovation and prosperity. It is critical that the APEC region embraces the opportunities and address the challenges of the digital economy. We need to work together to create an enabling and non-discriminatory environment that fosters innovation and allows businesses and entrepreneurs to thrive. To do so we encourage economies to identify and reduce unnecessary regulatory barriers, bridge gaps and improve access to the digital economy, including through capacity building. We note the importance of facilitating the free flow of information and data, while recognizing applicable domestic laws and regulations. We welcome our business community's call for APEC to take urgent action to fully harness the potential of the digital economy.

10. We call on officials to start working on a comprehensive work program for the implementation of all elements of the APEC Internet and Digital Economy Roadmap and look forward to the APEC Economic Policy Report 2019 "Structural Reform and Digital Economy", so that APEC can report on progress to Leaders by the end of the year.

#### *Integration 4.0*

11. The rapidly changing business climate, driven by the development and application of new technologies, has led to a fourth industrial revolution. In this context, we reaffirm the importance of predictable and transparent, non-discriminatory frameworks for trade and investment. We support the focus this year on trade facilitation, global value chains, as well as smart trade, borders and logistics. We encourage further efforts, especially to ensure that MSMEs benefit from these initiatives.

12. We encourage work under the APEC Connectivity Blueprint in order to enhance physical, institutional and people-to-people connectivity in the APEC region. We stress the importance of improving connectivity through quality

infrastructure development based upon relevant APEC work. We recognize the work to advance subregional, rural and remote areas connectivity.

13. It is important that we improve our understanding of global value chains, including through capacity building activities, allowing us to better design and implement policies that support an enabling environment for trade and investment, especially for MSMEs.

#### *Sustainable Growth*

14. We recognize that the viability of global trade depends on the protection of ecosystems and the sustainable development of natural resources supporting our economies and societies, and we are committed to strengthening our cooperation in this regard.

15. The Pacific Ocean unites us, and we note the increasingly adverse impact of marine debris, the unsustainable use of fisheries and aquaculture resources, and Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing on fish stocks, the marine environment, food security, and livelihoods. We encourage additional work to address these challenges and look forward to further discussion on these critical issues during Leader's week in November. We reiterate our support for the work underway in the WTO for comprehensive and effective disciplines that prohibit certain forms of fisheries subsidies, as agreed during MC11.

#### **Deepening APEC's Regional Economic Integration Agenda**

16. We are committed to attaining the Bogor Goals of achieving free and open trade and investment in the Asia-Pacific through collective and individual efforts. We welcome the progress that has been made and recognize that more work remains to be done. Accordingly, our Leaders have repeatedly urged us to take concrete actions in support of addressing unfinished business by the deadline of 2020.

17. We encourage initiatives that support a final push towards the Bogor Goals and urge officials to identify additional areas of work. In this regard, we welcome the special focus on services proposed this year and we reiterate our commitment to additional actions to increase our economies' competitiveness in the services sector by 2025.

18. We strongly urge economies to reduce tariffs under APEC's list of Environmental Goods as soon as possible. APEC economies that currently participate in the Information Technology Agreement expansion agree to work together to achieve broader participation.

19. We noted the important task ahead of defining an ambitious post-2020 vision, building on APEC's cornerstone of free and open trade and investment.

We take note and appreciate the work of the APEC Vision Group and look forward to the completion of its report in November 2019 as a significant contribution to this process.

20. In 2004 in Chile, ABAC proposed a study on the feasibility of a Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (FTAAP). Since then, the concept of FTAAP as a long-term contribution to APEC's regional integration agenda has been progressing through work programs within APEC and trade agreements among APEC economies. In this connection, we urge members to work constructively to pursue further work, including in all areas identified by economies, to advance the Lima Declaration. Recognizing APEC's role as an incubator of ideas, we highlight the importance of capacity building initiatives and information sharing mechanisms, which will also enhance APEC economies' ability to participate in high quality, comprehensive free trade agreements in the future.

### **Advancing APEC's support for the WTO**

21. During our meeting, we noted a report from the WTO Director-General Mr. Roberto Azevêdo on current developments in international trade and the WTO.

22. International trade is important for productivity, innovation, job creation, and development. APEC Economies recognize the contributions that the WTO has made to this end. We affirm the importance of transparent and non-discriminatory, agreed upon rules in the WTO, which can enhance market predictability, enable business confidence, and allow trade to flow. Recognizing the WTO's role in this regard, we agree that action is necessary to improve its functioning.

23. We task our officials to accelerate practical and concrete areas of work that can advance APEC's support for the WTO's work, including in areas such as capacity building initiatives for transparency and notifications, and the implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement. In this regard we acknowledge APEC's work on domestic regulation of services, investment facilitation and MSMEs. We acknowledge progress on negotiations in Geneva on electronic commerce and we encourage initiatives in APEC that can contribute to this work.

24. We recognize our business community's call for APEC to continue supporting the multilateral trading system. We encourage continued constructive engagement on WTO issues, including in the lead-up to the twelfth WTO Ministerial Conference in Nur-Sultan.

### **Final points**

25. Taking note of the recent terrorist attacks, including the use of the internet

for terrorist purposes, we recognize the need to take into account broader efforts by government, the private sector and other segments of society, to address terrorist content online.

26. We reaffirmed the importance of strengthening and revitalizing APEC's engagement with the private sector, including with ABAC. We encourage ABAC to engage with relevant stakeholders, including MSMEs, to ensure it can continue to represent the broader business community.

27. We took the opportunity to welcome the new Executive Director of the APEC Secretariat, Tan Sri Dr. Rebecca Fatima Sta Maria and we wish her success in her role.

28. We acknowledge the Chair H.E. Roberto Ampuero E., Minister of Foreign Affairs of Chile, and we thank the cities of Viña del Mar and Valparaíso for their hospitality.

**END**