

2020 APEC WOMEN AND THE ECONOMY FORUM STATEMENT:
Advancing Women's Economic Empowerment to Strengthen Post-Pandemic Recovery and Resilience
30 SEPTEMBER 2020

1. We, APEC Ministers and Heads of Delegations, met virtually for the 2020 APEC Women and the Economy Forum (WEF) chaired by the Minister of Women, Family and Community Development of Malaysia, on 30 September 2020. We convened at an unprecedented time, during the COVID-19 pandemic which has adversely affected the well-being and livelihoods of all people across the Asia-Pacific region, and we recognise its disproportionate economic and social impacts on women and girls. The global challenges exacerbated by the pandemic require collective, coordinated and inclusive responses, and we are committed to strengthening APEC cooperation to mitigate their impacts. We acknowledge the call from APEC Ministers Responsible for Trade to urgently navigate the region towards a path of resilient, sustainable, inclusive and expedited economic recovery.
2. The pandemic has aggravated pre-existing economic and social inequalities, and heightened the prevalence and severity of issues confronting women and girls from diverse backgrounds. Extensive business closures, particularly among micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in which women represent the majority of workers and entrepreneurs; disproportionate job losses, including among women working in the informal economy; unequal access to technology; an increase in poverty, including in remote and rural areas; an imbalance of unpaid care and domestic work; and rising gender-based violence; are among the particular challenges encountered.
3. Against this backdrop, we commit to placing women and girls at the centre of economic recovery efforts; creating opportunities that can further unlock their potential; removing barriers to better drive towards a swift, inclusive and sustainable recovery, in line with the APEC 2020 theme of *Optimising Human Potential Towards a Resilient Future of Shared Prosperity: Pivot. Prioritise. Progress.*
4. We reaffirm our commitment to further regional cooperation, capacity building and the sharing of best practices to advance women's economic empowerment. We welcome progress on an Implementation Plan for the La Serena Roadmap for Women and Inclusive Growth which provides direction for APEC's work toward the achievement of the Roadmap's targets by 2030. We encourage close collaboration among all APEC fora, the APEC Business Advisory Council (ABAC) and other relevant stakeholders to sustain momentum and support its initiatives in our collective pursuit of the full and meaningful inclusion of women across APEC economies.
5. We encourage all economies to adopt gender responsive approaches and implement policies that target women's economic empowerment as part of their recovery efforts, which include: addressing legal, regulatory and structural barriers that impede women's economic participation, including those that limit women's equal access to jobs, industries, working conditions, pay and credit; improving training for reskilling and upskilling; and supporting women to hold leadership and decision making positions, including in the development and implementation of response and recovery measures. We also urge economies to recognise and address unequal responsibilities of unpaid care and domestic work, enhance support for affordable and accessible child and elder care, and improve efforts to address gender-based violence. Economies should also strive to address COVID-19 and future health challenges, and

ensure safety precautions, as well as protections for frontline health and other essential workers.

6. We acknowledge the pressing need to bridge the digital divide for women participating in the digital economy, particularly in light of the pandemic. In keeping with the APEC 2020 priority of *Inclusive Economic Participation through Digital Economy and Technology*, we strongly urge economies to support women's economic participation through advancing appropriate digital infrastructure, connectivity, and skills training, while promoting women and girls in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), including by reducing biases as well as discrimination against them.
7. Recognising the critical role that data play in measuring gaps and women's economic empowerment, we commit to intensifying efforts to collect, analyse, disseminate, and use sex-disaggregated data as a core foundation of evidence-based policies and their implementation. We welcome the regular reporting on the *APEC Women and the Economy Dashboard* as an important tool to inform policy-making and capacity building across the region.
8. We encourage strengthening APEC's engagement with the private sector to accelerate women's economic participation and leadership, and the fostering of synergies between the public and private sectors. We welcome the recommendations of ABAC and the outcomes of the Public-Private Dialogue on Women and the Economy, held at the Second Meeting of the PPWE.
9. We look forward to the APEC Women and the Economy Forum and related activities to be hosted by New Zealand in 2021.