

VIRTUAL MRT (VMRT) STATEMENT

We, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Ministers Responsible for Trade (MRT) recall the APEC MRT Statement on COVID-19 issued on 5 May 2020, and reaffirm our commitment to effectively mitigate the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and promptly navigate the region towards a path of resilient, sustainable, inclusive and expedited economic recovery. We recognise the efforts being undertaken across the region for the wellbeing of our people and to optimise human potential towards a resilient future of economic prosperity.

We acknowledge the importance of a free, open, fair, non-discriminatory, transparent and predictable trade and investment environment to drive economic recovery at such a challenging time. We also note key APEC work programmes and initiatives that support the WTO's work. We affirm the importance of transparent and non-discriminatory, agreed upon rules in the WTO, which enhance market predictability and enable business confidence, as well as allowing trade to flow. Recognising the WTO's role in this regard, we agree that action is necessary to improve its functioning, and support the necessary reform of the WTO. We are committed to ensure that emergency measures designed to tackle COVID-19 are targeted, proportionate, transparent, temporary, do not create unnecessary barriers to trade or disruption to global supply chains, and are consistent with WTO rules.

We are pleased with the Declaration on Facilitating the Movement of Essential Goods which is a clear indication of the region's continued support for WTO work. While we acknowledge that Economies may need to implement emergency measures designed to address COVID-19 challenges, we reiterate our commitment to work to facilitate the flow of essential goods and services, enhance connectivity by strengthening supply chains resilience, and minimise disruptions to trade in medical goods, food and agriculture products, in order to fight the pandemic. We also recognise the need for discussions to reduce non-tariff barriers which restrict trade in essential goods. We reaffirm our commitment to share and explore ways to facilitate essential movement of people across borders, without undermining the efforts to prevent the spread of the virus. To this end, we are encouraged by the Proposal to Review Measures Facilitating Essential Movement of People across Borders.

We welcome the work being undertaken by all Economies to pivot APEC efforts towards operationalising the APEC MRT Statement on COVID-19, while maintaining the momentum on core work. We commend the ongoing efforts to establish a coordinated approach to collect and share best practises and information on policies and measures undertaken by APEC Economies in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We urge Senior Officials to prioritise the work in this area with a view to establish a digital platform for information exchange and we look forward to an early realisation of this platform.

We reiterate our concern about the impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable developing economies. We also recognise the critical need of those most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and to empower all sectors of the community, including MSMEs, to participate in economic recovery. We welcome the varied and continued efforts as well as the contribution of additional resources across APEC to combat the pandemic and support workers and sectors through the economic recovery process.

We note the recommendations in the APEC Business Advisory Council (ABAC) report on COVID-19 on how to mitigate the immediate impact of the pandemic, accelerate economic recovery and build resilience in the longer-term, including by pursuing an open market for goods, services and investment, supporting MSMEs, and leveraging on digital connectivity. We recognise ABAC'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 12th WTO Ministerial Conference.

We encourage Economies to collaborate and adopt digital solutions that will strengthen supply chain resilience as well as enable seamless cross-border business, including through e-commerce. In harnessing the opportunities of digital economy, we acknowledge the importance of cooperation on facilitating the flow of data and strengthening consumer and business trust in digital transactions.

We direct our Senior Officials to accelerate work towards delivering a concise, relevant, meaningful and achievable, Post-2020 Vision. We look forward to the launch of the Post-2020 Vision by the Leaders at the end of the year.