



**Asia-Pacific
Economic Cooperation**

2022/SOM1/CTI/030

Agenda Item: XI

Business Mobility Group Convenor's Report

Purpose: Information
Submitted by: BMG Convenor



**First Committee on Trade and Investment
Meeting
18-22 February 2022**

BUSINESS MOBILITY GROUP (BMG) CONVENOR'S SUMMARY REPORT TO CTI1 2022

1. How the forum's work contribute to CTI's objectives, including taking forward the [Aotearoa Plan of Action](#), as we pursue the [Putrajaya Vision 2040](#):

Please provide a brief list of the forum's work under each sub-heading.

a. Support for the Multilateral Trading System

- *"...Growth of international trade flows in the region become more stable and predictable including with increased coverage of WTO rules, through APEC members' effective and transparent implementation of existing and future commitments..."*

APEC Business Travel Card (ABTC) facilitates short-term business travel within the APEC region by streamlining the entry process into APEC economies. It helps facilitate business to business interaction to boost economic growth in the region. This program directly related to the outcomes in the Putrajaya Vision 2040 in that *"We will promote seamless connectivity, resilient supply chains and responsible business conduct."* This also lend itself to the objectives in the Aotearoa Plan of Action to:

- Improve digital connectivity in the region;
- Promote and cooperate on measures that facilitate the safe cross-border movement of people, particularly in the context of changing pandemic related health and travel measures, so as to strengthen tourism, aviation and similarly affected sectors;
- Strengthen multi-stakeholder cooperation to promote responsible business conduct, particularly with the private sector; and
- Promote capacity building to improve physical, institutional and people-to-people connectivity.

b. Regional Economic Integration

- *"...APEC's trade and investment environment is free, open, fair, non-discriminatory, transparent and predictable..."*
- *"...further advance the Bogor Goals and economic integration in the region in a manner that is market-driven, including through the work on the Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (FTAAP) agenda which contributes to high standard and comprehensive regional undertakings..."*

The BMG will continue to enhance and facilitate the legitimate movement of all business travelers and senior government officials, including exploring ways to modernise the ABTC Scheme through initiatives aimed at digitising and enhancing the efficiency and integrity of the Scheme. This focus directly aligns with 'Innovation and Digitalisation' within the Putrajaya Vision 2040 and the objective in the Aotearoa Plan of Action "To empower all our people and businesses to participate and grow in an interconnected global economy, we will foster an enabling environment that is, among others, market-driven and supported by digital economy and innovation."

c. Trade Facilitation and Connectivity

- *“...promote seamless connectivity, resilient supply chains and responsible business conduct, APEC economies will improve physical, institutional and people-to-people connectivity...”*

APEC Economic Leaders recognized the increasing need for more efficient flows of goods, services, capital and people. BMG has been tasked to further the work on travel facilitation which includes enhancing the APEC Business Travel Card scheme and focusing on accelerating our region’s physical, institutional, and people-to-people connectivity through a long-term commitment.

d. Innovation and Digitalisation

- *“...To empower all our people and businesses to participate and grow in an interconnected global economy, we will foster an enabling environment that is, among others, market-driven and supported by digital economy and innovation.”*
- *“...strengthen digital infrastructure, accelerate digital transformation, narrow the digital divide, as well as cooperate on facilitating the flow of data and strengthening consumer and business trust in digital transactions.”*

On 1 March 2021 the BMG rolled out the virtual ABTC to Australia, since that date the virtual ABTC has been rolled out to a further 9 economies- Brunei Darussalam, Chile, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, The Philippines and Thailand. At BMG1 2022, a number of other economies announced progress towards transition to implementing the virtual platform over the coming year.

e. Sustainable and Inclusive Growth

- *“Advancing inclusive policies, including under the economic drivers of trade & investment, and innovation and digitalisation, to promote sustainable economic growth opportunities and improve quality of life...”*
- *“...develop, encourage and exchange best practice policies, and promote capacity building programmes, that address all environmental challenges - including climate change - and support sustainable growth, such as through trade, including APEC’s work on facilitation of trade in environmental goods and services”*

The BMG Convenor will take part in the upcoming Safe Passage Taskforce scheduled for 21 February 2022. The Convenor will then be working the BMG member economies intersessionally to ensure that the BMG is working together to progress sustainability and growth through the ABTC program and other projects from the BMG.

The BMG will look into considerations on the changes and challenges with the resumption of international travel Post-COVID-19 and how the ABTC Scheme can facilitate and support COVID-recovery with the resumption of business mobility.

2. Forum Main Objectives/Deliverables expected for 2022

Please provide a brief list of the forum’s 2022 objectives and expected outcomes/deliverables.

- Standardization through the revision and delivery of the Best Practice User Guide.
- Progress the governance discussions in relation to the United States proposal for changes to the ToR through adding a Co-Convenor.
- Further progression on Thailand's proposal for a more inclusive APEC Business Travel Card (ABTC).

3. Planned private sector engagement in 2022

Please provide a list of planned private sector engagement in 2022

The BMG Convenor will continue to invite the APEC Business Advisory Council (ABAC) to attend BMG meeting throughout 2022. The BMG was also provided a presentation by IATA during SOM 1.

4. Planned cross-foa collaboration in 2022

Please provide a list of planned cross-foa collaboration in 2022

The BMG is participating in the APEC Safe Passage Taskforce meeting during SOM1 and hope that the BMG will be able to support the initiatives from this Taskforce.

5. Main outcomes from most recent plenary meeting

Please provide in list format

Day 1

- Intersessionally, Japan, New Zealand and Thailand have agreed to support Australia with the review of the ABTC System User Guide, after this initial review is complete the guide will then be circulated to all BMG member economies.
- The BMG have decided at this stage not to continue to have the Passport Checking Service as a standing Agenda Item. They will re-instate if there is a need in the future.
- The Convenor will be circulating the Economy Entry Information and the Economy Contact Information to be updated a re-loaded on the APEC.org website

Day 2

- The BMG Convenor's office will be exploring a new to display the current work that is happening within the BMG. The current Work Program Tracker will be moved into a Work Plan that directly links with the Putrajaya Vision 2040 and the Aotearoa Plan of Action. This will be circulated intersessionally with the BMG for comment.
- The United States will be re-circulating their proposal on the update to the ToR that as number of economies that expressed the need for more clarification on the role of the co-Convenor. The various views from the BMG will need to be taken into consideration and perhaps undertake further consultation.
- Thailand will be seeking member support to from a small group to look refine the text in their proposal on a more 'Inclusive APEC Business Travel Card (ABTC)'. While economies had no objection to the proposal the BMG thinks that the wording of definitions could be expanded.

6. Was quorum reached at the most recent plenary meeting?

Please advise how many economies participated in the most recent plenary meeting.

The quorum reached at the most recent plenary meeting. The 1st BMG Meeting was attended by 20 economies 18-19 February 2022.

7. What is your Forum doing to maintain/increase its relevance to APEC member economies and increase participation from its members?

Please provide a brief list of planned efforts to increase participation from members

- The BMG will consider reinvigorating its agenda to improve business mobility in the region more broadly than ABTC Scheme for SOM3.
- The BMG Convenor and the APEC Secretariat stressed the expectation that the BMG has to report on progress to the CTI by the end of the year on the:
 - 1) Aotearoa Plan of Action
 - 2) MRT and AMM statement 2021, particularly on safe passage; and
 - 3) Projects and initiatives that support APEC priorities, including the La Serena Roadmap
- The Convenor has requested that economies should think of ideas to support these items and suggest projects, research or perhaps capacity building or training on gender issues, creating a performance measurement framework, or on immigration mobility issues such as a joint statement or policy recommendations for passport arrival officers to facilitate business mobility. The Office of the Convenor will be working with economies on these initiatives.

8. Decision points needed from CTI

- Seek the CTI's endorsement of the Business Mobility Group (BMG) Convenor's Report.