

# 2021 APEC Ministerial Meeting

Wellington, New Zealand | 09 November 2021



1. We, the APEC Ministers, met on 8-9 November 2021. Our meeting was chaired by the Hon Nanaia Mahuta, Minister of Foreign Affairs of New Zealand, and the Hon Damien O'Connor, Minister for Trade and Export Growth of New Zealand. We welcomed the participation of the APEC Business Advisory Council (ABAC), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (PECC), and the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF).
2. There has never been a more important time for APEC economies to join, work and grow together. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to have far-reaching impacts on the health, well-being and economic prosperity of our region and the world. In response, APEC has mobilised in an unprecedented way. We have shared experiences, taken forward cooperation initiatives, and made timely commitments, which together will ensure a resilient and sustainable long-term recovery. We are committed to realising the Putrajaya Vision of an open, dynamic, resilient and peaceful Asia-Pacific community by 2040, for the prosperity of all our people and future generations. To this end, we are looking forward to our Leaders announcing the implementation plan for the Putrajaya Vision 2040.

3. At our meeting, we discussed the work we are taking directly in response to the COVID-19 crisis and our work under priority areas for 2021.

## **COVID-19**

4. As we respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, we are committed to putting people's lives and livelihoods first. We emphasise the need to strengthen international cooperation on COVID-19, including on research and development. We will continue our work to accelerate equitable and timely access to safe, effective, quality-assured and affordable vaccines, diagnostics, therapeutics, and related goods and services. Recognising the role of extensive COVID-19 immunisation as a global public good, we will accelerate our efforts to expand vaccine manufacturing and supply, to support global vaccine sharing efforts, and to encourage the voluntary transfer of vaccine production technologies on mutually agreed terms.
5. Recalling the commitments made in the 2021 APEC Ministers Responsible for Trade (MRT) Joint Statement, including the Statement on COVID-19 Vaccine Supply Chains, we are pleased to note that since June:
  - APEC members have ramped up trade facilitation efforts to move COVID-19 vaccines and essential goods across borders, including to prevent the movement of counterfeit vaccines and related goods in cooperation with relevant international organisations.
  - We have refrained from imposing unnecessary export restrictions.
  - Some economies have continued to liberalise tariffs, or maintain zero to low tariffs, for vaccines and other medical supplies.
6. Using the World Customs Organization (WCO) COVID-19 list as a reference, we are facilitating trade in a broader list of medical supplies and will continue to:
  - Improve the transparency of border measures taken in response to the pandemic.
  - Exercise restraint in the use of unnecessary export restrictions and non-tariff barriers, and ensure any such measures are WTO consistent.
  - Voluntarily reduce the cost of COVID-19 vaccine and related essential COVID-19 medical goods.
  - Strengthen border agency cooperation and coordination.
  - Intensify work that minimises disruption to, and enhances the resilience of supply chains, and improves connectivity.

7. We reiterate the vital role that services play in supporting the movement of essential goods, as well as the distribution of vaccines, which will remain critical to our region's recovery. We welcome economies' ongoing work to implement the 2021 MRT Statement on Services to Support the Movement of Essential Goods.
8. We note that the substantial losses from unrealised economic activity in the APEC region, as a consequence of border and travel restrictions, have significantly impacted our people and our economies. We need to continue to pave the way for the resumption of cross-border travel, without undermining efforts to control the spread of COVID-19. We welcome work completed on the types of measures that would better enable air crew to move safely and seamlessly, and we direct officials to advance further work on processes to support the movement of both air and maritime crew. We will explore additional specific initiatives, solutions, and best practices to facilitate safe travel in the region, paving the way for a return to people moving across borders for business, tourism and education. We task our officials to ensure APEC-wide coordination on safe passage and work towards tangible outcomes in 2022.
9. We will continue to invest in sustainable, resilient, innovative, and equitable health systems as strategic assets in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, and preparing for future health crises, consistent with our goal to achieve universal health coverage. We welcome the varied and continuous efforts, as well as the contribution of additional resources across APEC to combat the pandemic.

## **Economic and Trade Policies that Strengthen Recovery**

### Macro-economic policies and structural reform

10. The pandemic has triggered unprecedented macroeconomic policy responses, which have underpinned a rebound of economic activity in the region this year. However, the recovery is far from complete, and is characterised by great divergences across and within economies, which remain exposed to downside risks. We need to sustain our economic recovery through continued policy support measures, while preserving financial stability and long-term fiscal sustainability. In this context, we support action that responds to the ongoing economic and social impacts of the pandemic,

including through the New Strategy for Implementation of the Cebu Action Plan.

11. The pandemic has highlighted the ongoing importance of structural reform in the APEC region. It is clear that our structural policy response needs to ensure a more inclusive and sustainable recovery, supporting innovation and making us more resilient to future economic shocks. To this end, we welcome the Enhanced APEC Agenda for Structural Reform (EAASR). Ensuring our macroeconomic and microeconomic policy responses are complementary will be key to the success of our long-term recovery. To achieve this we encourage greater collaboration between the APEC Economic Committee and APEC Finance Ministers' Process.
12. Services play an important role in determining the economic growth, productivity, and future prosperity of our region. We welcome the Summary Report of the APEC Services Competitiveness Roadmap Mid-Term Review (Annex 1), and note its assessment of the region's performance in services competitiveness. The mid-term review showed that while many of the initiatives that have been progressed since 2016 provide a solid foundation, we need to better target and continue to address those barriers that inhibit our service suppliers from competing or trading in services markets, and ensure that regulations promote fair competition and the adoption of new technologies. We endorse the recommendations of the summary report, which chart a path for our region to achieve the Roadmap's targets by 2025.

### Trade and Investment

13. We underline the vital role trade has played in mitigating the impacts of the pandemic. Trade should be a pillar for the development and future prosperity of all our people. We want to enable our people to share in the benefits of trade, including through advancing economic inclusion. We reaffirm the contribution that trade can make in addressing important global and regional issues.
14. To ensure that the Asia-Pacific remains the world's most dynamic and interconnected regional economy, we will continue to work together to ensure our trade and investment environment is free, open, fair, non-discriminatory, transparent and predictable. We reaffirm our commitment to keep markets open, and to address supply chain disruptions, thereby fostering mutually beneficial trade relations and reducing trade tensions. We will continue to

work to ensure a level playing field to foster a favourable trade and investment environment.

15. We will advance economic integration in the region in a manner that is market driven. We support ongoing efforts to conclude, ratify, implement and upgrade trade agreements in the region that benefit our people and our businesses. In this context, we will advance the APEC Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (FTAAP) agenda in line with implementing the Lima Declaration, to contribute to high quality and comprehensive regional undertakings. We also note that ABAC considers the realisation of FTAAP its preeminent economic priority.
16. We will continue to support our businesses to build and maintain open, secure, and resilient supply chains to facilitate seamless connectivity in the region. We recognise the importance of promoting regional, sub-regional and remote area connectivity through quality infrastructure development and investment, based upon relevant APEC work. We welcome the Final Review of the APEC Supply-Chain Connectivity Framework Action Plan 2017-2020. We are committed to implementing the APEC Connectivity Blueprint, including through enhancing connectivity cooperation in the digital era.

#### World Trade Organization

17. APEC takes pride in its long history of active support for the rules-based multilateral trading system (MTS), with the WTO at its core. The MTS has been a catalyst for our region's extraordinary growth and we will work together to improve it. We seek a responsive, relevant, and revitalised WTO. We must support the WTO and its membership to modernise trade rules for the twenty-first century. Together, we will engage constructively and cooperate to ensure the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC12) is a success and delivers concrete results.
18. As a priority for MC12, we see an opportunity for the WTO to demonstrate that the MTS can continue to help address the human catastrophe of the COVID-19 pandemic and facilitate recovery. We call for pragmatic and effective ministerial outcomes that makes it easier to respond swiftly and effectively to the COVID-19 pandemic and accelerate the recovery. Our priorities include supporting the facilitation of manufacturing, distribution, and supply chains of essential medical goods, including vaccines. We will work proactively and urgently in Geneva to support text-based discussions,

including on a temporary waiver of certain intellectual property protections on COVID-19 vaccines.

19. We reiterate our determination to negotiate effective disciplines on harmful fisheries subsidies in line with SDG 14.6, and call for agreement to a comprehensive and meaningful outcome by MC12 in a few weeks' time.
20. Despite its importance for ensuring global food security and sustainable economic development, agriculture is one of the most protected sectors in global trade. We recognise the need for a meaningful outcome on agriculture at MC12, reflecting our collective interests and sensitivities, with a view towards achieving substantial progressive reductions in support and protection, as envisaged in the continuation of the reform process provided in Article 20 of the WTO Agreement on Agriculture and existing mandates.
21. We recognise the positive role that existing plurilateral negotiations and discussions are playing in progressing outcomes. APEC member participants in the relevant Joint Statement Initiatives (JSIs) call for conclusion of negotiations on services domestic regulation by MC12; and substantial progress by MC12 in the JSIs on e-commerce; micro, small and medium-sized enterprises; and investment facilitation for development. We take note of the efforts by the APEC economies who endorsed the Joint Declaration on Trade and Women's Economic Empowerment to deliver an ambitious outcome at MC12 that supports the advancement of trade and gender equality.
22. We continued our frank and constructive discussions regarding improvement to the WTO's monitoring, negotiating and dispute settlement functions. We continue to support the ongoing and necessary reform work to improve the WTO's functioning, including the importance of making progress on enhancing transparency to support its monitoring and negotiating functions. We will work together at the WTO and with the wider WTO membership to advance the proper functioning of the WTO's negotiation and dispute settlement functions, which require addressing longstanding issues. We urge WTO members to seek a shared understanding of the types of reform needed.

## **Increasing Inclusion and Sustainability for Recovery**

### Inclusive Growth

23. Now more than ever, and as part of recovery from COVID-19, it is our responsibility to ensure our economic, financial and social policies, and our trade and investment environment, promote equality of opportunity, advance decent work and economic inclusion for all.
24. We will strive to ensure labour and social protection systems are responsive to both the effects of the pandemic and in the broader context of the changing nature of work and employment and evolution of labour markets globally. We will continue to strengthen information sharing to enhance re-skilling, up-skilling and flexible lifelong learning opportunities; create training opportunities for those entering the job market; encourage efforts that support the mobility of professional and academic qualifications; and increase other capacity building activities in this area.
25. As our economies adapt to the Fourth Industrial Revolution, we are cognisant of the challenges associated with the future of work. The pandemic has accelerated already rapid innovation and technological changes. We recognise the importance of structural reforms in enabling our economies to take forward policies to achieve economic inclusion and to adapt to the future of work. We welcome the 2021 APEC Economic Policy Report on “Structural Reform and the Future of Work” and encourage economies to implement its recommendations.
26. MSMEs play a significant role throughout our region, providing an essential foundation of employment and economic growth, and we remain committed to fostering greater participation of MSMEs in regional and global markets. To this end, we welcome the findings of the Final Review of the Boracay Action Agenda (BAA) to Globalize MSMEs Study Report. There is still work to be done, especially regarding MSME digitalisation and access to finance.
27. We highlight the serious threat posed by corruption, which undermines government accountability and public trust and impedes economic growth. In times of crisis, corruption can be more pervasive and undermine relief and recovery efforts. To combat corruption and strengthen APEC economies in the future, we encourage effective and timely communication and cooperation between authorities. We will work to facilitate the implementation of the UN Convention against Corruption and coordinate the implementation of APEC’s Beijing Declaration on Fighting Corruption and Santiago Commitment to Fight Corruption and Ensure Transparency. We reaffirm our commitment to deny safe haven to corruption offenders and their assets, in accordance with domestic laws, and to combat transnational corruption. We will promote transparency, accountability, integrity and a culture of rejection of corruption

across our region, as a basis for preventing corruption and ending impunity. We are committed to learning from each other, taking practical action and a united approach, including through collaboration with other international organisations, the private sector and civil society, as appropriate. We will continue to address corruption that prevents women's empowerment and reduces their opportunities for economic development.

28. The pandemic has disproportionately affected women and girls of diverse backgrounds in our region, and created new challenges and barriers to women's economic empowerment. Recovery from the pandemic creates opportunities to support women's leadership and empowerment. We reaffirm the commitments made at the APEC 2021 Women and the Economy Forum, including to the full and accelerated implementation of the La Serena Roadmap for Women and Inclusive Growth 2019 – 2030. We reaffirm the Roadmap's Action Areas, and acknowledge the La Serena Implementation Plan Report, which notes there are a significant number of activities under way across APEC fora. We are strongly encouraged by APEC activities that seek to promote women's full and equal access to capital and markets, skills and capacity building, leadership opportunities, voice and agency, innovative technology, and the labour force, as well as activities to advance women's economic empowerment through sex-disaggregated data collection and analysis.
29. APEC has also paid particular attention to the economic empowerment of other groups with untapped economic potential. This year this has included Indigenous Peoples and those in rural and remote areas, among others. This work also included promoting economic empowerment through dialogue among Indigenous Peoples themselves. APEC's work has demonstrated the susceptibility of these groups to worsened economic and social conditions during the pandemic. We underline the importance of collecting and analysing disaggregated data in informing policy responses; promoting opportunities for these groups through e-commerce; strengthening food security; and the role of traditional knowledge in sustaining economic resilience.

#### Sustainable recovery and climate change

30. We acknowledge the need for urgent and concrete action to address climate change. We recognise the economic advantages of transitioning to a climate resilient future global economy and appreciate net zero or carbon neutrality



commitments in this regard. Addressing climate change will require a multidisciplinary and cross-cutting approach involving relevant APEC committees and sub-fora.

31. APEC's contribution includes work on economic policies that contribute to reducing emissions, tackling climate change, and addressing environmental challenges. We welcome the topic of the 2022 APEC Economic Policy Report on "Structural Reform and a Green Recovery from Economic Shocks," which will provide a platform for economies to share information and compare responsive and green policy approaches and their contribution to inclusive and sustainable growth.
32. Trade policy is also an effective tool for pursuing sustainable economic development, and enhancing access to goods and services that support low-emission and climate-resilient economies. We welcome the update for reference purposes of the 2012 APEC List of Environmental Goods. We welcome the APEC review of implementation of the 2012 list, the growth in trade of these products, and the contribution it has made to green growth and sustainable economic development objectives. Noting that environmental goods and technologies have evolved and cover a wide range of sectors, we instruct officials to develop recommendations for potentially producing a voluntary, non-binding reference list with a view to providing guidance for further work, and to update the APEC List of Environmental Goods to HS2022 for reference purposes. We encourage further discussions on the impact of non-tariff measures on trade in environmental goods and services, and on other regulatory measures that underpin the development of more sustainable supply chains.
33. We reaffirm APEC Economic Leaders' commitments to work on environmental services and note that these services are now more important than ever to prevent, protect against and remedy environmental degradation. We welcome and endorse the Reference List of Environmental and Environmentally Related Services (Annex 2) as a contribution by our region to global discussions on environmental services. We reaffirm MRT's instruction for officials to take forward discussions on how to increase trade in environmental and environmentally related services, including by supporting liberalisation, facilitation, and cooperation.
34. We recall that in 2010 APEC Leaders committed to rationalise and phase out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies that encourage wasteful consumption, while recognising the importance of providing those in need with essential energy services. To reach this goal, we will continue our efforts in an accelerated

manner. In this regard, we decided at MRT 2021 to task officials to explore options, for those members in a position to do so, to pursue a voluntary standstill on inefficient fossil fuel subsidies for progress to be reported to Ministers in November. We welcome the options, as reported by officials, that member economies could take to pursue a voluntary standstill on inefficient fossil fuels subsidies. We call for member economies to take forward discussions in 2022 to facilitate future implementation. We encourage officials to identify additional capacity building activities in support of this work. We appreciate the efforts of APEC members that have already completed voluntary peer reviews and urge others to participate in this process.

35. We recognise the essential role that stable and diverse energy supplies play in achieving sustainable economic development. As we invest in renewable energy and other environmentally sound technologies as part of sustainable energy transitions that reduce our dependence on fossil fuels, we will continue to work together to support energy resilience, access and security in the region. We acknowledge the importance of stable energy markets and supporting the clean energy transition.

#### Sustainable Resource Management

36. The APEC region is increasingly impacted by environmental degradation, natural disasters, rising sea levels, and biodiversity loss. We are committed to promoting trade in legally harvested forest products and combating illegal logging and associated trade. We welcome the achievement of the APEC-wide aspirational goal of increasing the forest cover in the region by at least 20 million hectares. We appreciate the economic growth potential of circular, sustainable, and green economy approaches, and support investment, research, and strengthening economic and technical cooperation in this area.

37. The Pacific Ocean connects our peoples, enables our economic development, supports the biodiversity and health of our planet, and plays a crucial role in supporting global food security. We support the sustainable management and conservation of ocean and coastal resources. We are committed to the implementation of the APEC Roadmaps on Marine Debris and on Combatting Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing. Reaffirming their important role in combatting Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing, we will carry out robust and effective measures based on the principles of implementing the PSMA to Prevent, Deter, and Eliminate IUU Fishing.

38. The ongoing impact of COVID-19 is being felt throughout our region's food supply chains. We recognise there is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach to achieving well-functioning, sustainable food systems, which are critical to our people's health and well-being and the success of our economies. We support efforts to reduce food loss and waste, promote innovations in agricultural biotechnology, and identify other measures that support sustainability in food security. We welcome the Food Security Roadmap Towards 2030, which focuses on digitalisation and innovation, productivity, inclusivity and sustainability, and identifies actions and targets which APEC economies will pursue together to achieve our goal of sufficient, safe, nutritious, accessible and affordable food for all.

### **Pursuing Innovation and a Digitally-Enabled Recovery**

39. We recognise that science, technology and innovation are important for supporting the region's recovery from COVID-19, preparing economies for future changes and shocks, and creating quality employment. We need to seize the historic opportunities created by the technological revolution and industrial transformation, redouble efforts to boost productivity, and foster an open, fair, and inclusive environment for the development and application of science and technology.
40. It is important to bridge the digital divide to ensure that the benefits of digital transformation flow to all our people and businesses and that no one is left behind. We will invest in capacity building that fosters innovation and ensures that our people and businesses, especially start-ups and MSMEs, can access the digital tools and infrastructure they need to fully participate in an interconnected global economy. We also take note of work on smart cities. APEC should continue to share best practice for digital skills development and lifelong learning with a view to developing agile workforces that can adjust to disruptions, changing circumstances and the future of work.
41. We welcome progress made by APEC members to embed the paperless trading facilitation measures they adopted during COVID-19, including accepting electronic payments and electronic documentation as the legal equivalent of paper documents. To improve the resilience of supply chains to shocks and reduce costs for businesses and governments, we commit to continue this work towards the digitalisation of our border processes and single window interoperability, increase port cooperation, and accelerate the

full implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement. We welcome the Guidelines for Paperless Trade, which will help update and improve customs procedures and legislative frameworks, so that all traders can engage with APEC customs authorities electronically.

42. We recognize the importance of data in addressing the unprecedented health and economic challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. We also recognise the need for an accessible, open, interoperable, reliable and secure environment for the use of information and communication technologies, as an essential foundation for economic growth and prosperity. We will cooperate on facilitating the flow of data and strengthening consumer and business trust in digital transactions, with a view to mitigating the health and economic impacts of COVID-19.
43. We affirm our commitment to supporting each other to harness the opportunities of the digital economy and technologies for enhancing economic growth and public benefit, while ensuring appropriate privacy protections. We support efforts to share information, cooperate and identify synergies, as we develop policies, plans, and programmes that support new technologies and their ecosystems.
44. We reiterate our call to accelerate implementation of the APEC Internet and Digital Economy Roadmap, prioritising action in the areas of greatest impact on inclusive economic growth, including digitalised trade facilitation and promoting interoperability.

### **Strengthening APEC as an Institution**

45. We will embrace continuous improvement of APEC as an institution to ensure that its structure and governance are future-oriented and fit for the purpose of implementing the Putrajaya Vision 2040. We take note of progress made in 2021 towards streamlining APEC, and urge ongoing efforts to ensure that its committees and sub-fora are efficient, effective, relevant, responsive and accountable.
46. We reaffirm the importance of cooperation, capacity building, cross-fora collaboration, and engagement between APEC and regional and international organizations. We will strive to ensure that APEC's work continues to take into account a broad range of stakeholder views and perspectives.
47. We endorse the Senior Officials' Meeting Chair's Report of APEC's work for 2021. We endorse the Committee on Trade and Investment Annual Report to

Ministers and note the Senior Officials' report on Economic and Technical Cooperation. We also note the ABAC Chair's report. We welcome the APEC Secretariat Executive Director continuing in her role for another three years from 2022 to 2024. We approve the 2022 APEC budget and thank members for their contributions including to general and specialised sub funds.

48. We thank New Zealand for hosting APEC in 2021 and look forward to APEC 2022, which will be hosted by Thailand.

*Haumi ē, Hui ē, Tāiki ē.*

*Join, Work, Grow. Together.*

### **Annexes**

1. [Summary Report of the APEC Services Competitiveness Roadmap Mid-Term Review](#)
2. [Reference List of Environmental and Environmentally Related Services](#)