

2023 APEC Ministers Responsible for Trade Statement of the Chair

All APEC ministers responsible for trade agreed to paragraphs 1 – 3 and 5 – 13.

1. We, the Asia–Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Ministers Responsible for Trade (MRT), met in Detroit, Michigan, the United States of America from 25–26 May 2023, chaired by Ambassador Katherine Tai. We welcomed participation in the meeting of the Director–General of the World Trade Organization (WTO), the APEC Business Advisory Council (ABAC), the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (PECC), and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). We express our collective appreciation to the City of Detroit for the warm welcome extended for this meeting.
2. We reiterate our strong commitment towards the achievement of the APEC Putrajaya Vision 2040, including through the implementation of the Aotearoa Plan of Action, to realise an open, dynamic, resilient and peaceful Asia–Pacific community by 2040, for the prosperity of all our people and future generations. We reaffirm our determination to deliver a free, open, fair, non–discriminatory, transparent, inclusive and predictable trade and investment environment. We also reaffirm the importance of and commit to upholding and further strengthening the rules–based multilateral trading system, with the WTO at its core. We will continue to work to ensure a level playing field to foster a favourable trade and investment environment and reaffirm our commitment to keep markets open and to address supply chain disruptions.
3. Taking inspiration from the APEC 2023 theme of “Creating a Resilient and Sustainable Future for All,” and the policy priorities of building a more interconnected, innovative, and inclusive APEC region, we discussed the critical role APEC plays in advancing sustainable and inclusive trade and investment in the Asia–Pacific region. In doing so, we reaffirmed our Leaders’ 2022 commitment in the Bangkok Goals on Bio–Circular–Green Economy, particularly on the importance of advancing sustainable and inclusive trade and investment. We encourage all economies to take actions in support of the full implementation of the Bangkok Goals.
4. As our Leaders highlighted last November, we have witnessed the war in Ukraine further adversely impact the global economy. There was a discussion on the issue. We reiterated our positions as expressed in other fora, including the UN Security Council and the UN General Assembly, which, in Resolution No. ES–11/1 dated 2 March 2022, as adopted by majority vote (141 votes for, 5 against, 35 abstentions, 12 absent) deplores in the strongest terms the aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine and demands its complete and unconditional withdrawal from the territory of Ukraine. Most members strongly condemned the war in Ukraine and stressed it is causing immense human suffering and exacerbating existing

fragilities in the global economy – constraining growth, increasing inflation, disrupting supply chains, heightening energy and food insecurity, and elevating financial stability risks. There were other views and different assessments of the situation and sanctions. Recognizing that APEC is not the forum to resolve security issues, we acknowledge that security issues can have significant consequences for the global economy.^[1]

5. The rules-based multilateral trading system continues to catalyse our region's extraordinary growth. In that regard, we will continue to support necessary reform to improve all of the WTO's functions, so that Members can better achieve the WTO's foundational objectives and address existing and emerging global trade challenges. We reiterate our commitment to the reform pathway that was agreed at the Twelfth WTO Ministerial Conference (MC12), such as the commitment to conduct discussions with the view to having a fully and well-functioning dispute settlement system accessible to all WTO members by 2024. Respective APEC member participants welcome the substantial progress made on the Joint Statement Initiative (JSI) on E-Commerce and the JSI on Investment Facilitation for Development as well as efforts to implement the JSI on Services Domestic Regulation. We also reaffirm our commitment to promoting sustainable agricultural production and food systems and to facilitating trade to minimize disruptions and address food insecurity and climate challenges facing economies around the world. We look forward to the timely and effective implementation of MC12 outcomes. As WTO Members work toward positive outcomes at the Thirteenth WTO Ministerial Conference, we will continue to lend our support through our leadership and our role as an incubator of ideas.
6. We remain actively engaged in overcoming shared challenges related to the environment, including climate change, food security, supply chain disruptions, and impacts of the global pandemic, and recognise the positive role that trade can play in building greater resilience to confront these and future challenges. We encourage the promotion of trade and investment in products that lead to positive environmental outcomes, such as those which are energy- and resource-efficient and reduce waste and greenhouse gas emissions, including through circular economy approaches. We instruct officials to begin work to develop a Framework of Discussions for Producing an APEC Reference List of Environmental Goods in support of developing a new, voluntary, non-binding APEC Reference List of Environmental Goods in accordance with the agreed recommendations. We welcome continued implementation of the APEC Work Plan on Environmental Goods and cooperation in the area of environmental goods. As a means to achieve sustainable and inclusive growth, building on our previous work, we are also committed to promoting intellectual property rights through policies and programs that advance innovation and creativity. We recalled our commitment to rationalise and phase out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies that encourage wasteful consumption, while providing those in need with essential

energy services.

7. We are committed to ensuring the benefits of trade and investment extend to all our people, including through the full and accelerated implementation of the La Serena Roadmap on Women and Inclusive Growth. Understanding the significant benefits trade and investment can offer to communities within the APEC region, we are committed to promoting trade policies and supporting technical cooperation and capacity building that value inclusivity, foster the transition to the formal economy, and remove barriers to trade, to enhance participation in local, regional, and global economies including for MSMEs, women, and other groups with untapped economic potential including Indigenous Peoples as appropriate, persons with disabilities and people from rural and remote areas. We further acknowledge the importance of stakeholder engagement when developing trade policies, including trade agreements. Only by recognising the unique needs and interests of all stakeholders can we ensure that trade equitably benefits all of our people and economies and that the policies we are advancing are inclusive. We welcome the work done thus far in APEC and task officials to build off this and our discussion in Detroit with an aim to identify practical ways to integrate inclusion and sustainability into trade policy by the end of this host year.
8. We underscore our commitment to advance 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. To this end, we will enhance our capacity building and technical cooperation efforts in support of economies' readiness to participate in high quality and comprehensive regional undertakings. In support of the FTAAP agenda Work Plan, we ask the PSU to prepare a review of the work done by APEC in moving forward the FTAAP agenda and to prepare a study on areas of convergence and divergence across all chapters of relevant trade agreements in the region, consistent with Leaders' and Ministers' instructions including the Aotearoa Plan of Action. We thank ABAC and PECC for their advocacy and analysis to advance the FTAAP agenda.
9. Digital technology and innovation have a greater role to play in advancing inclusive and sustainable growth. We reaffirm our call to accelerate the implementation of the APEC Internet and Digital Economy Roadmap, which prioritizes actions that support inclusive, sustainable and innovative economic growth, including the facilitation of e-commerce and advancing cooperation on digital trade. We welcome the 'Principles for the Interoperability of Electronic Invoicing Systems in the APEC Region' (Annex 1), which promote interoperable approaches and the use of digital technologies to facilitate trade and investment. We will accelerate digital transformation and cooperate on facilitating the flow of data and strengthening business and consumer trust in digital transactions, including through cooperation on regulatory approaches regarding the

internet and digital economy as well as consumer protection in the digital environment. We also stress the importance of bridging all forms of digital divides by strengthening digital infrastructure and facilitating access to information and communication technology goods and services, and ensuring that no one is left behind by equipping all people with the necessary skills needed to thrive in the digital economy.

10. We acknowledge the benefits of Good Regulatory Practices (GRP) in supporting greater transparency and predictability in the regulatory environment. Efforts to make public consultations more inclusive, use technology to facilitate access to regulatory information, improve internal coordination and planning, and other actions lead to a more connected, sustainable, innovative, and dynamic region. In this regard, we welcome work by economies towards finalisation of the GRP Blueprint and look forward to a successful 16th Conference on Good Regulatory Practices. We also recognise the valuable role regulatory cooperation can play in facilitating trade, promoting greater regulatory compatibility among APEC economies and in meeting shared challenges.
11. We underscore the critical role trade plays in building a resilient and interconnected region that advances inclusive economic prosperity. We will further implement the APEC Connectivity Blueprint (2015–2025). We will strengthen physical, institutional and people-to-people connectivity as well as take advantage of digital connectivity, and will intensify efforts to promote regional, sub-regional and remote area connectivity through quality infrastructure development and investment. We continue to support progress on the Phase Three of the Supply Chain Connectivity Framework Action Plan (SCFAP III) to address chokepoints that hinder the ability of our businesses to establish secure, resilient, sustainable, and open supply chains. We commend the Committee on Trade and Investment's work with the APEC Policy Support Unit (PSU) to develop targeted and measurable benchmarks for the SCFAP III. We also reiterate our commitment to accelerate the implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, including provisions that support disaster response and recovery and that speed the flow of humanitarian relief shipments. We recognize APEC's efforts to adopt enabling technologies to facilitate efficient and seamless business travel in the region and welcome economies' uptake and acceptance of the virtual APEC Business Travel Card.
12. We reiterate the importance of implementing the APEC Services Competitiveness Roadmap (ASCR) to achieve its targets by 2025. To that end, we welcome the cross-fora cooperation among the Group on Services (GOS), the Economic Committee, and the Digital Economy Steering Group on structural reform in the services sector in favor of openness, balance, transparency, and inclusivity, as well as the related work in GOS on services domestic regulation. We also welcome the work on logistics services that support the movement of essential goods

and capacity building activities on mutual recognition of professional qualifications, licensing, and accreditation for facilitating trade in professional services. We welcome the APEC Non-binding Guidelines on Services that Support the Clean-up of Marine Debris set out in Annex 2 to engage services in addressing the problem of marine debris, as referenced in the APEC Roadmap on Marine Debris. We welcome intensifying efforts this year on the APEC Index on the Regulatory Environment of Services Trade.

13. We thank the United States for hosting the APEC MRT meeting and look forward to advancing this conversation in November.

^[1] Paragraph 4 of this document, taken from the APEC Bangkok Leaders' Declaration from November 19, 2022, was agreed to by all member economies except the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation.

Annex 1: Principles for the Interoperability of Electronic Invoicing Systems in the APEC Region

In the spirit of the APEC Putrajaya Vision 2040 and Aotearoa Plan of Action, in particular, the objectives of promoting seamless connectivity and strengthening consumer and business trust in digital transactions;

Acknowledging the economic importance and regional development benefits of promoting the global adoption of interoperable electronic invoicing systems;

Recognising the benefits of electronic invoicing in increasing the efficiency, accuracy and reliability of cross-border trade transactions;

Mindful that across the APEC region, electronic invoicing systems have been developed in a wide range of different approaches, formats and regulatory environments;

Striving for systems used for electronic invoicing within one jurisdiction to be interoperable with the systems used in another jurisdiction;

APEC economies are encouraged to:

- accord electronic invoices the same legal effect as paper invoices issued for the sale of goods or services;

- base measures related to electronic invoicing on applicable international, open standards, guidelines or recommendations;
- implement policies, infrastructure and processes that facilitate the development and use of electronic invoicing that allow buyers and sellers to exchange documents in a secure manner;
- promote the use of common, open standards and protocols, including data language and syntax, to enable interoperability among different electronic invoicing systems and related documents;
- build confidence in, and understanding of, each other's electronic invoicing policies, infrastructure and processes through the sharing of best practices; and
- support initiatives which facilitate, and build capacity for, the development and adoption of interoperable electronic invoicing systems.

Annex 2: APEC Non-Binding Guidelines on Services that Support the Clean-up of Marine Debris

Consistent with the commitments set out in the APEC Putrajaya Vision 2040, the Aotearoa Plan of Action and the Bangkok Goals on Bio-Circular-Green (BCG) Economy to support efforts to address global environmental challenges;

Mindful of the goal set out in the APEC Roadmap on Marine Debris, taking into account member economies' respective internal circumstances, to increase access to financing and to facilitate private-sector engagement to promote investment, trade and market creation in industries and activities that enable marine debris management and prevention; and to promote sustainable waste management, and reduction and prevention of leakage of waste from land- and sea-based sources.

Noting relevant APEC work on environmental services, including the APEC Environmental Services Action Plan Final Review and the APEC Reference List of Environmental and Environmentally Related Services;

Also noting APEC's work on services trade, including through the APEC Services Competitiveness Roadmap and its Mid-Term Review, to ensure an open and predictable environment for access to services markets by addressing restrictions on trade and investment in services;

Without prejudice to APEC economies' positions in the WTO, the UNEP Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) on plastic pollution, or in other forums;

APEC economies are encouraged to implement the following non-binding guidelines:

1.Reduce barriers to marine debris clean-up services⁽¹⁾ and providers

1.1 APEC economies will endeavor to promote trade and reduce barriers to marine debris clean-up services, in accordance with individual economies' domestic laws and regulations, to advance the following objectives:

- i. To facilitate trade and investment in marine debris clean-up services and to support the transition to a circular economy
- ii. To support the development of a market for marine debris clean-up services
- iii. To strengthen regional coordination and collaboration, on marine debris clean-up services
- iv. To support and complement initiatives to address marine debris in other forums, including in the WTO Informal Dialogue on Plastic Pollution and Environmentally Sustainable Plastics Trade and the UNEP negotiations on an international, legally-binding instrument on plastic pollution.

2. Good regulatory practice

2.1 APEC economies will endeavor to implement domestic regulation of marine-debris clean-up services that is consistent with the APEC Non-Binding Principles for Domestic Regulation of the Services Sector, including in relation to transparency, administrative efficiency, consultation with stakeholders, and coordination between multiple authorities in each economy.

2.2 The APEC Group on Services will continue working to strengthen collaboration with relevant APEC fora on marine debris clean-up services. In taking forward work in line with these non-binding guidelines, the GOS will consult with the relevant APEC fora, including the Chemical Dialogue, the Oceans and Fisheries Working Group, the Life Science Innovation Forum, the Human Resource Development Working Group, the Sub-Committee on Standards and Conformance and the Market Access Group, as appropriate.

3. Market development

3.1 APEC economies will work together to facilitate the transition to a circular economy and the development of a market for marine debris clean-up services, including by reviewing unnecessarily restrictive regulations and by considering collaboration on activities such as developing best practice

guidelines.

3.2 APEC economies will work to bolster private sector engagement on marine debris clean-up services, including through potential public-private partnerships, innovative funding mechanisms and engagement with private investors and NGOs to help scale up actions.

3.3 APEC economies will look to strengthen supply chains relating to marine debris clean-up services and explore the potential role for relevant mechanisms, including plastics credits.

4. People movement and skills

4.1 APEC economies are encouraged to work to facilitate the mobility of marine debris clean-up services providers and researchers.

5. Access to port facilities and maritime issues

5.1 APEC economies will consider how to facilitate access to ports for marine debris clean-up services providers' vessels, including through non-discrimination in access to, and payment for, port services and by reviewing requirements to have a local office, following relevant domestic regulations and international commitments.

5.2 APEC economies will examine barriers to chartering vessels by marine debris clean-up service providers.

5.3 APEC economies will work to make rules applicable to research vessels more consistent across the region.

6. Supporting environmentally-sound management of marine debris

6.1 APEC economies are encouraged to review measures relating to the management of plastic litter and abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear collected by marine debris clean-up services providers for proper waste handling including collection, sorting, recycling or disposal, with a view to reducing or eliminating unwarranted restrictions.

6.2 APEC economies will consider how to improve access to local solid waste management facilities, including recycling facilities, for marine debris clean-up services providers, including for marine debris collected outside their territories (in accordance with the Basel Convention), as well as how to strengthen end markets for plastic waste and scrap, while promoting proper waste management methods.

6.3 APEC members will look at ways to assist economies, including small island economies, that are unable to achieve economies of scale in their solid waste management systems.

7. Temporary entry of specialized equipment being used for marine debris clean-up services

7.1 APEC economies will consider facilitating the temporary entry of specialized equipment being used by services providers to clean up marine debris and for associated research activities.

7.2 APEC economies will consider opportunities for cooperation on equipment used by marine debris clean-up services through the Environmental Goods Work Plan and in ongoing discussions on developing recommendations for potentially producing a voluntary, non-binding reference list of new and emerging environmental goods and technologies relevant to addressing marine debris pollution.

8. Innovation and research

8.1 APEC economies are encouraged to support innovation, research and development to enhance marine debris clean-up services, as well as to consider collaborating on guidelines, best practices and internationally-recognized standards, where appropriate.

8.2 APEC economies will work together to understand better the costs and benefits of transitioning to a circular economy approach to plastics waste management, and to exchange views on best practices in line with the *Bangkok Goals on Bio-Circular-Green (BCG) Economy*, adopted by APEC Leaders in 2022.

8.3 APEC economies will encourage collaboration across sectors, industry and academia to develop services approaches to cleaning up marine debris and to promote the reduction and prevention of marine pollution.

8.4 APEC economies will consider working to promote an enabling environment for new and emerging technologies used by marine debris clean-up services and associated research activities.

9. Inclusive trade and growth

9.1 APEC economies will reflect inclusive and equitable development approaches in formulating policies that affect marine debris clean-up services.

9.2 APEC economies will seek to promote cooperation and coordination across economic, environmental, social and other policies related to marine debris clean-up services and will consult, as appropriate, with relevant stakeholders, including micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, women, coastal communities and Indigenous Peoples.

10. Capacity building

10.1 APEC economies will look to support marine debris clean-up services through capacity building initiatives, increased understanding of best practices, voluntary technology transfer and facilitated access on mutually-agreed terms where appropriate, and skills development, based on the respective needs of APEC economies.

11. International cooperation

11.1 APEC economies will collaborate with international organizations to address marine-debris, with a view to developing complementary approaches.

11.2 APEC economies will support cooperation and dialogue on financial, scientific, technological and other issues to promote coordinated efforts on marine debris clean-up.

11.3 APEC economies will consider using regional and other agreements to which they are parties to facilitate trade and investment in marine debris clean-up services.

11.4 APEC economies that have not already taken commitments under the GATS on remediation and/or collection services could consider doing so.

11.5 APEC economies that have taken commitments under the WTO Joint Statement Initiative on Services Domestic Regulation will work to promote the implementation of those disciplines to facilitate trade in services in the APEC region, including marine debris clean-up services.

^[1] These non-binding guidelines relate to services that support the clean-up of marine debris from beaches, rivers, coastal areas and the open ocean. UNEP defines marine debris as any persistent manufactured or processed solid material discarded, disposed of or abandoned in the marine and coastal environment.