

## 2023 APEC Ministerial Meeting

### Joint Ministerial Statement

1. We, the APEC Ministers, met in San Francisco, California, on November 14-15, 2023, chaired by Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Ambassador Katherine Tai, United States Trade Representative. We welcomed the participation of the APEC Business Advisory Council (ABAC), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (PECC), as well as representatives of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the World Bank. We thank the City of San Francisco for its hospitality.
2. We reaffirm our commitment to the APEC Putrajaya Vision 2040 of an open, dynamic, resilient and peaceful Asia-Pacific community by 2040, for the prosperity of all our people and future generations, including through the implementation of the Aotearoa Plan of Action (APA) and the Bangkok Goals on Bio-Circular Green Economy. Under the APEC 2023 theme, “Creating a Resilient and Sustainable Future for All,” we advanced work this year through three policy priorities: “Interconnected, Innovative, and Inclusive.” We thank all those who contributed to APEC’s work this year across all its working groups.

#### *Advancing an Interconnected APEC Region*

3. We reiterate our commitment to working together to deliver a free, open, fair, non-discriminatory, transparent, inclusive, and predictable trade and investment environment. We recognize that trade and investment play an indispensable role in driving global economic growth and can contribute positively to uplifting livelihoods and increasing economic prosperity for all. We underscore the importance of our work in APEC to advance trade and investment to equitably benefit all our economies and people, including MSMEs, women, and those with untapped economic potential, including Indigenous Peoples as appropriate, persons with disabilities, and people from rural and remote areas. To that end, we welcome the work this year on ways to integrate inclusion and sustainability into trade policy, and we underscore the importance of economic and technical cooperation and capacity building. We note the ongoing work in APEC in support of renewing the terms of reference for the Asia-Pacific Model E-port Network, the APEC Alliance on Supply Chain Connectivity, the Regulatory Harmonization Steering Committee, the APEC Health Sciences Academy, and the APEC Harmonization Center and look forward to the endorsement of these terms of reference in early 2024, and continue related work.
4. Our region’s economic growth continues to be underpinned by the rules-based multilateral trading system, with the WTO at its core. To ensure that its vital role continues, we 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 substantial conclusion of the negotiations on the JSI on Investment Facilitation for Development, as well as efforts to implement the JSI on Services Domestic Regulation. We welcome the acceptance by 10 APEC economies of the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies, and we urge other economies to approach the Thirteenth WTO Ministerial Conference (MC13) as a milestone for acceptance and entry into force of that Agreement, and will strive to conclude the second wave of negotiations on further disciplines, consistent with the MC12 outcome document. As WTO Members work constructively to ensure positive outcomes at MC13, including on WTO reform, we will continue to lend our support through our leadership and our role as an incubator of ideas.
5. We will further advance economic integration in the region in a manner that is market driven, including through the work on APEC’s Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (FTAAP) agenda consistent with the Lima Declaration. 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 and we welcome the progress made on the FTAAP Agenda Work Plan this year. In support of that, we look forward to the Policy Support Unit’s (PSU) review of the work done by APEC in moving forward the FTAAP agenda and study on areas of convergence and divergence across all chapters of relevant trade agreements in the

region. Additionally, we thank ABAC and PECC for their advocacy and analysis to advance the FTAAP agenda.

6. We applaud APEC's work in fostering a trade and investment environment that enables our businesses to establish secure, resilient, effective, sustainable, and open supply chains and will continue efforts to address chokepoints identified in the APEC Supply Chain Connectivity Framework Action Plan (2022–2026). We will continue to work to ensure a level playing field to foster a favorable trade and investment environment and reaffirm our commitment to keep markets open and to address supply chain disruptions. We will further our work on port and border cooperation and single window interoperability, including by exploring the use of new technologies and innovative solutions, to improve and simplify port clearance and customs procedures. Furthermore, as a means to achieve sustainable and inclusive growth, building on our previous work, we are committed to promoting intellectual property rights through policies and programs that advance innovation and creativity.
7. We reiterate the importance of strengthening health systems for pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response (PPR), to ensure resilient, equitable, sustainable, and inclusive health systems, and for economic growth, as discussed at the 13th High-Level Meeting on Health and the Economy (HLMHE), in collaboration with the WHO. We also reiterate the commitment made during the HLMHE to achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC) including through enhancing primary health care to reinforce access to health services, and health investment and financing to help build a strong and resilient health system that is supported by a competent and skilled workforce. We affirm that innovative initiatives, including digital health, are critical to strengthening pandemic PPR and achieving UHC.
8. We welcome discussions at the 11th Transportation Ministerial Meeting on the critical role transportation plays in driving economic growth, and opportunity, catalyzing the transition to low and zero emissions transport, facilitating trade and investment, continuing our efforts to keep supply chains open, secure, and resilient, and improving connectivity across the Asia-Pacific region, as our economies continue towards a safe, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable recovery. We recognize the importance of the APEC Business Travel Card (ABTC) in facilitating seamless travel. We commend efforts to advance the facilitation of business travel to help companies in the region return to pre-pandemic operations and welcome progress towards a more inclusive ABTC and a more seamlessly and comprehensively connected and integrated Asia-Pacific. We remain committed to implementing the APEC Connectivity Blueprint (2015-2025) by strengthening physical, institutional and people-to-people connectivity. We will intensify efforts to promote regional, sub-regional and remote area connectivity. In this regard, we reaffirm the importance of quality infrastructure development and investment.

### ***Inspiring an Innovative and Sustainable APEC Region***

9. We welcome deliberations at the Senior Disaster Management Officials' Forum to advance climate resilience, risk reduction, and inclusiveness in emergency management to better prepare the Asia-Pacific for coming disasters, acknowledging a key role of communities in the process. We reaffirm the important role of the APEC Disaster Risk Reduction Framework and Action Plan in preparing APEC economies for an increasingly complex natural disaster landscape, and encourage the senior disaster management officials and the Emergency Preparedness Working Group to take action to improve capacity building to address challenges faced by APEC economies. To further APEC Leaders' commitment to transition to a climate-resilient global economy, we also note the Key Policy Recommendations of the 37<sup>th</sup> APEC Auto Dialogue. We look forward to continuing work on inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities.
10. We reaffirm our commitments to promote conservation, restoration, and the sustainable use and management of natural resources in agriculture, marine resources, fisheries, and forestry and strengthen efforts to combat illegal logging and associated trade, in support of climate resilience and biodiversity efforts, among others. We welcome the deliberations of the 8th APEC Food Security Ministerial Meeting and the Policy Partnership on Food Security's Principles for Achieving Food Security Through Sustainable Agri-food Systems in the APEC Region, recognizing there is no one-size-fits-all approach. We underscore the role APEC economies play in implementing the Food Security Roadmap Towards 2030 and efforts to address food insecurity. In this

regard, we recognize the need for a meaningful outcome on agriculture at the WTO during MC13. To this end, we emphasize the importance of working together to advance sustainable productivity growth; free, open, fair, non-discriminatory, transparent, inclusive and predictable trade and investment environment; preventing and reducing food loss and waste; and climate change mitigation and adaptation to achieve more sustainable, equitable, and resilient agri-food systems.

11. We recognize the essential role of fisheries and aquaculture in contributing to sustainable development, ensuring global food security and addressing climate change. We emphasize our steadfast commitment to promoting sustainable aquaculture and coastal resilience as well as sustainable management of fisheries, marine ecosystem resources, and associated goods and services. We also remain committed to the implementation of the APEC Roadmaps on Combatting Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing, Marine Debris, and Small-Scale Fisheries and Aquaculture, to ensure secure and sustainable fisheries and aquaculture contribute to global food security. We will carry out further robust and effective measures based on the principles of implementation of the PSMA to Prevent, Deter, and Eliminate IUU Fishing.
12. The digital economy facilitates sustainable, inclusive, and innovative growth, and we reaffirm our commitment to achieving an enabling, inclusive, open, fair, and non-discriminatory digital and innovation environment. We commend the APEC Digital Month held in Seattle and note initiatives to advance the digital economy, including through stakeholder engagement and discussions on artificial intelligence. We reaffirm our commitment to accelerating the implementation of the APEC Internet and Digital Economy Roadmap, and encourage economies to intensify efforts to accelerate digital transformation and interoperability, strengthen capacity building, promote digitalization of trade procedures through developing and implementing paperless trade facilitation measures, and enhance digital literacy and skills to build workforce capacity in the digital age. We look forward to promoting sustainable, clean, and low carbon growth across sectors including through digital technologies. In this regard, we note the Recommendations for Cloud Transformation in APEC, which will promote accelerated adoption of cloud computing technologies in the region. We will also continue our efforts in increasing MSMEs' participation in the global market to engage in cross-border e-commerce and digital trade. We stress the importance of bridging all forms of digital divides by strengthening digital infrastructure, improving digital connectivity, and facilitating access to information and communication technology goods and services. We will 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 and data privacy in the digital environment. We appreciate efforts of APEC economies to jointly identify areas of cooperation for Promoting Development of an Inclusive Digital Economy and encourage discussion and collaboration to advance the priority areas.
13. We welcome the deliberations at the 30th Finance Ministers' Meeting, with a particular focus on Modern Supply Side Economics, digital assets, sustainable finance, and the global and regional economic and financial outlook. We commit to the continued implementation of the Cebu Action Plan and welcome economies' progress to-date.
14. We welcome APEC's cross-fora cooperation on structural reform in the services sector and related work on services domestic regulation in pursuit of openness, balance, transparency, and inclusivity. We underscore the importance of the successful engagement of all APEC economies this year in developing the APEC Index on the Regulatory Environment of Services Trade and in implementing the APEC Services Competitiveness Roadmap (ASCR) to achieve its targets by 2025. We also welcome the completion of the Mutual Recognition Agreements Toolkit, as well as the completed review of the Reference List on Environmental and Environmentally Related Services and look forward to the next review of the List in 2025. APEC continues to play an important role in advancing work on the facilitation of trade in environmental goods and services. Furthermore, we acknowledge ongoing work to implement the APEC Work Plan on Environmental Goods and 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 recommendations. We welcome APEC's Non-Binding Guidelines on Logistics-related Services that Support the Movement of Essential Goods During Public Health Emergency (Annex). We note

the renewal of the APEC Cooperation Network on Green Supply Chain (GSCNET) terms of reference and encourage GSCNET participants to advance its agenda.

15. We welcome the Outcomes and Recommendations of the Enhanced APEC Agenda on Structural Reform (EAASR) Mid-Term Review and the EAASR Mid-Term Review Report, including its recommendations on improving the business regulatory environment, with a focus on the services sector, creating a thriving and conducive environment for innovation and transitioning to a green economy, including through members' APEC initiatives. We commit to continue implementing the EAASR and encourage economies to implement Individual Action Plans. We also encourage economies to implement recommendations of the 2023 APEC Economic Policy Report (AEPR) on Structural Reform and Enabling Environment for Inclusive, Resilient and Sustainable Business. We look forward to 2024's AEPR on Structural Reform and Financial Inclusion. We commit to closer coordination between the APEC Economic Committee, the Policy Partnership on Women and the Economy, and the Finance Ministers' Process. We also acknowledge the importance of Good Regulatory Practices (GRP) in supporting greater transparency and predictability in the regulatory environment and how the GRP Blueprint can advance APEC's work in this area.
16. Recognizing the serious threat posed by corruption, we also welcome the Framework for APEC Anti-Corruption Thematic Areas 2023-2026 to further advance APEC's anti-corruption and transparency agenda and further facilitate the implementation of the UN Convention against Corruption. We also reaffirm our commitment to deny safe haven to corruption offenders and their illicit assets, in accordance with domestic laws. We support the APEC Network of Anti-Corruption Authorities and Law Enforcement Agencies (ACT-NET) role in bringing together law enforcement authorities to improve cooperation in the fight against cross-border corruption and related money laundering, including with respect to asset recovery. We commit to further implement the Beijing Declaration on Fighting Corruption, the Santiago Commitment to Fight Corruption and Ensure Transparency, and the APEC Principles on the Prevention of Bribery and Enforcement of Anti-Bribery Law to build resilience within our economies. We encourage cross fora collaboration and are committed to learning from each other, taking practical action and a united approach, including through multi-stakeholder collaboration with other international organizations, the private sector and civil society, as appropriate.

### ***Fostering an Inclusive APEC Region***

17. We commit to fostering growth that brings palpable benefits and greater health and wellbeing to all, including women-owned, led, and managed MSMEs. MSMEs contribute significantly to our economies' GDP, providing an essential employment and economic growth foundation. We welcome deliberations at the 29th APEC Small and Medium Enterprises Ministerial Meeting and commit to collaborate to improve opportunities for MSMEs to compete, innovate, specialize and increase their regional and global markets participation and their global supply and value chain integration. We remain committed to increasing MSMEs' access to economic and technical cooperation, finance, capital, and recognize that MSMEs can benefit from collaboration with large enterprises to enhance their capacity to innovate and compete. We encourage the development of easy-to-use and cost-effective products and solutions that help MSMEs accelerate their digital transformation and transition from the informal to formal economy, and economies to improve data on MSMEs to inform their economic growth, empowerment and inclusion efforts, as per domestic circumstances.
18. We welcome the deliberations of the APEC Women and the Economy Forum (WEF) and High-Level Policy Dialogue on Women and the Economy (HLPDWE) culminating in a joint HLPDWE and SME ministerial meeting, which underscored the importance of gender mainstreaming through women's full, equal, and meaningful participation, leadership, and decision-making in all economic activities in line with the La Serena Roadmap for Women and Inclusive Growth (2019-2030). We commend economies for their work in developing best practices and recommendations to integrate women in climate change policy. We recognize the significance of the interconnection of gender equality and climate change and building a resilient Asia-Pacific community, advancing digital inclusion and innovation, increasing gender equality in global value chains, and adequately investing in care infrastructure to advance women's economic participation, leadership, and decision-making in the region. We commit to reducing barriers and promoting social,

economic, and financial inclusion of women and girls of diverse backgrounds and others with untapped economic potential, such as Indigenous Peoples as appropriate, persons with disabilities, and those from remote and rural communities. We acknowledge the importance of supporting women's participation and leadership in STEM fields for inclusive and sustainable economic growth through APEC Women in STEM Principles and Actions and commit to addressing primary barriers to entry to the workforce and education, retention, and promotion of women in the fields of STEM, including through targeted investments. We note the "2023 Women and the Economy Dashboard Report" and encourage incorporating disaggregated data for gender equality. We also note the importance of APEC initiatives and awards which recognize women for their contributions and showcase the progress of women's entrepreneurship and innovation in the region. We note Ministers' discussion of gender budgeting at the WEF. We recognize the importance of applying gender analyses to planning and domestic budgets, as appropriate, to help ensure a focus on gender equality across all economic sectors.

19. Our people must be ready for the future of work to fully reap the benefits of technological advancements. We recognize the need to promote inclusive and equitable access to quality education and vocational training, advance employment and decent work, enhance reskilling and upskilling efforts, and encourage lifelong learning opportunities to create a skilled, productive, and agile workforce. In this regard, we welcome the HRDWG Detroit Non-Binding Principles and Recommendations for Equality and Inclusion in Education, Training, and Employment. These Principles promote inclusive human resource development and economic and technical cooperation.
20. We look forward to the Energy Working Group's establishment of the Just Energy Transition Initiative, which will promote efforts to advance energy transitions within APEC economies that meaningfully engage stakeholders, and we welcome the Non-Binding Just Energy Transition Principles for APEC Cooperation, which can facilitate these efforts. Recalling our Leaders' Declaration in 2021 to further integrate action on climate change across relevant APEC workstreams, we will continue to collaborate and support sustainable energy transitions through various pathways that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, consistent with global net-zero greenhouse gas emissions / carbon neutrality by or around mid-century, while ensuring energy security, resilience, and access in the region, taking into account the latest scientific developments and different domestic circumstances. We recall our commitment to rationalize and phase out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies that encourage wasteful consumption while recognizing the importance of providing those in need with essential energy services. We welcome the intention to identify best practices for developing and implementing hydrogen produced from zero and low emission technologies in the Asia-Pacific region in a coherent manner as an area of future work.

### ***Advancing APEC as an Institution***

21. In line with the Putrajaya Vision 2040, to maintain APEC's unique position as the premier forum for regional economic cooperation as well as a modern, efficient and effective incubator of ideas, we will further improve APEC as an institution. In this regard, we emphasize the importance of cross-fora collaboration and increased multistakeholder engagement. We will continue efforts to improve APEC governance and organizational structure, including at the sub-forum level, and strongly support capacity-building efforts and economic and technical cooperation among APEC economies for the benefit of all members.
22. We note the importance of the PSU continuing to provide evidence-based research and analysis to support APEC's work. We thank ABAC for its collaboration and recommendations and call on economies to further deepen engagement with ABAC and the business community and underscore the importance of ensuring its smooth work in the future in an inclusive manner. We thank ABAC for organizing the first Sustainable Future Forum, focused on ways public-private partnerships can help tackle economic challenges. We note the contributions of PECC, ASEAN, the Pacific Islands Forum, and the APEC Study Centers Consortium. We congratulate the first winners of the APEC Bio-Circular-Green Award, which recognizes achievements in advancing sustainable and inclusive growth in the region. We encourage broadened engagement with economic stakeholders, such as NGOs, civil society, and the youth.

23. We welcome and note the 2023 APEC Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) Chair's Report and note the work undertaken by the SOM Steering Committee on Economic and Technical Cooperation. We endorse the Committee on Trade and Investment Annual Report to Ministers. We acknowledge the evaluation of the implementation of the APA and recognize progress economies have made to further the APA. We also note the ABAC Chair's report. We approve the 2024 APEC Secretariat Account Budget and corresponding level of Members' Contributions for 2024. We also thank members for their contributions.
24. We are grateful to the United States for its strong commitment to APEC and thank the United States for hosting APEC in 2023. We welcome preparations for APEC 2024, hosted by Peru, and reiterate our welcome to the Republic of Korea as host of APEC 2025. We attach great importance to APEC's continued cooperation in the spirit of multilateralism on the basis of consensus with all members participating on an equal footing in all its events including Leaders' Week, in accordance with the Guidelines for Hosting APEC Meetings and relevant APEC conventions.

## **Annex**

- Non-Binding Guidelines on Logistics-related Services that Support the Movement of Essential Goods During a Public Health Emergency