

Speech by Prof. Edward Chen, Chairman of HKCPEC
at The Gala Dinner of the 15th General Meeting of PECC

(1 September 2003)

His Majesty, the Sultan and the Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam, Pehin Lim Jock Seng, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am most honoured to speak at this Gala Dinner on behalf of the Hong Kong Committee for Pacific Economic Cooperation, the immediate past Chair of PECC. With me standing between the splendid banquet and all of you, I know I must keep my remarks brief, or I will become the most unpopular person in the next 3 days. First of all, I would like to take this opportunity to thank His Majesty for hosting the PECC 15th General Meeting in this beautiful country, and the PECC Chair for making this event possible and, I am sure, to be a great success.

2. As all of you may recall, just two months before our last General Meeting in 2001, the tragic 911 incident terrified the world all of a sudden, bringing us all the greatest fear and uncertainty like never before. Now a few months before our 15th General Meeting, ironically, history seems to have a tendency of repeating itself, though in a different context. A hitherto unknown disease, SARS, broke out in the Pacific region. Again, all of a sudden, we found ourselves thrown in at the deep end. The epidemic has taken thousands of lives and dealt a devastating blow in many and varied sectors all over the world. These incidents remind us that no economy could be

an island in this era of globalization. The National Committee which is going to take over from Brunei has an even more challenging job to do than organizing the PECC 16th General Meeting itself. The job is to prevent a disaster or tragedy from happening a few months before the General Meeting takes place.

3. Time and again, in the face of enormous challenge and adversity, PECC has played an important role in enhancing international cooperation and regional teamwork. Through partnership and co-operation among Member Committees, PECC can provide an excellent arena where we could deal with challenges constructively and collectively.

4. Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, we are ushering in an era where the world is so much unpredictable and uncertain. Globalization is a beauty but is also a transmission mechanism through which everything is permeable, be it money, people, virus or terrorism. The theme "Securing the Future" chosen by the Chair is therefore most appropriate and timely in this highly dynamic, conflicting and competitive world.

5. I would like to congratulate the Chair for all its effectiveness and efficiency in organizing this General Meeting and wish it all the success. I am most confident that we shall bring home insights and ideas of how "we can secure our future". May I now hand over to Pehin Lim Jock Seng, the PECC Chair. Thank you very much.