



Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation

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## **PECC Statement to Ministers Responsible for Trade**



**Meeting of APEC Ministers Responsible for Trade  
Puerto Vallarta, Mexico  
29-30 May 2002**

## PECC Statement to Ministers Responsible Trade Puerto Vallarta, May 30 2002

PECC applauds Ministers Responsible for Trade for the Resolve they have shown in addressing the Doha Development Agenda and the Implementation of APEC's own Shanghai Accord, as these are processes that will crucially influence momentum towards the realization of APEC's goals in the immediate future.

We believe it is also important to highlight a third issue which Ministers have not addressed, namely the proliferation of proposals for preferential trading arrangements in the region and the consequences this may have for APEC.

### **The Doha Development Agenda**

APEC has a huge stake in the Doha Development Agenda. At the scheduled conclusion of the negotiations, APEC will be only five years away from the 2010 target date for developed economies to achieve the Bogor goals.

Success in the "development round" will instil much needed confidence among developed and developing economy APEC members that both are serious about the Bogor goals. Success will show APEC members from developing economies that the developed economies are committed to their APEC goals. Just as importantly, a successful round will lay the foundation for developing economies to move forward more vigorously on their 2020 commitments.

APEC contributions in WTO capacity-building will reinforce both this sense of confidence and the potential for real success.

### *Market Access: An Imperative for APEC*

Market access is an area where the Doha Development Agenda must deliver major improvements if APEC's developed member economies are to remain on course for the 2010 target date, especially in sensitive areas such as agriculture and textiles and clothing where the remaining distance to be traveled to reach the Bogor targets is greatest.

Substantial commitments by APEC developed member economies in particular are important both for the eventual attainment of the 2010 targets and for the success of the Doha Development Agenda itself. It is clear that the willingness of developing economies to support the decisions that will be sought at next year's WTO ministerial will depend heavily on their perception of the performance of developed economies in the area of market access as well as in dealing constructively with implementation issues.

As a contribution to the effort that is required the PECC Trade Forum is developing its own analysis market access in the negotiations.

## The “Singapore Issues”: Building on APEC’s Achievement

APEC has worked long and hard to make progress on each of the four “Singapore issues”. Its “principles approach” investment, competition and regulatory reform, government procurement and trade facilitation has uniquely drawn together developed and developing economies. APEC can use its comparative advantage by working within WTO to build upon the consensus within APEC on each of these issues and bring greater coherence to what may otherwise become an unsatisfactory compromise between competing positions.

When APEC developed its principles on investment and competition and regulatory reform it drew heavily on the work of PECC Competition Principles still provide considerable insights into how APEC can build on its own initiatives. To assist in this process, PECC plans to develop concrete proposals for linking the APEC and PECC approaches to the WTO agenda.

### **The Shanghai Accord**

#### *Trade Facilitation: A Clear APEC Comparative Advantage*

Trade Facilitation is another area where APEC has a clear comparative advantage. The emphasis on cooperation and technical assistance rather than negotiation means that this is an area especially suited to APEC’s approach and capabilities. Importantly, APEC can focus on business concerns in a way that WTO is unable to do.

#### *Benefits of an Industry-Based Approach*

Engagement with the business sector will be critical to the success of APEC achieving its 5 % reduction in transactions costs for international business. Transactions costs differ greatly between industry sectors. PECC believes that if APEC is to make a substantial difference over the medium and longer term it is vital to understand particular industry problems and to develop specific policy responses. PECC therefore sees considerable merit in the development of business transaction cost measures based on specific industry sectors, and using these multiple measures as baselines against which the 5 % target may be assessed.

There already exists a body of work undertaken in APEC on transactions costs in the automobiles, chemicals, transportation, fisheries and telecommunications sectors. PECC is now developing proposals for industry-based measurement and monitoring of progress towards the Shanghai Accord and believes it would be practical to build on the existing work.

## **The Spread of Regional Trading Arrangements (RTAs) and the Future of APEC**

### *Threat to the Trans-Pacific Character of Asia-Pacific Integration*

APEC's vision is based on the concept of the Asia-Pacific as an economically-integrated region embracing both sides of the Pacific. While some trans-Pacific RTA proposals continue to be pursued, generally RTA initiatives are increasingly proceeding along separate tracks in East Asia and the Americas. The possible establishment of the Free Trade Area of the Americas and emergence of an East Asian trade bloc has the worrying potential to divide the Asia-Pacific region into two competing mega-blocs. Such a threat to the trans-Pacific dimension of APEC would challenge the very concept of APEC itself. There will be an air of unreality about APEC deliberations if this issue is not squarely addressed.

More dialogue between analysts and policy makers on both sides of the Pacific aimed at safeguarding APEC's trans-Pacific character is urgently needed. PECC will use its networks to foster this dialogue.

### *Keeping an Eye on the Main Prize: The Benefits of Region-Wide Integration*

Individual economies naturally reserve the right to pursue their own interests with RTA initiatives in the way they deem most appropriate. However, APEC economies will derive greater benefits if APEC's objectives are pursued and achieved on a region-wide basis. This is the APEC vision. There is a risk that the larger benefits may be compromised by individual initiatives. They may also increase business costs arising from the development of a "spaghetti bowl" of overlapping agreements with inconsistent provisions.

It is important therefore that analysis of individual initiatives should be undertaken from the perspective of other APEC member and of region as a whole as well as from the perspective of the members of the proposed arrangement. This will assist in identifying both potential threats to region-wide cooperation and ways in which those threats may be avoided.

The PECC Trade Forum has been applying its own analytical capacity in this area, and will continue to do so.

### *A Proposal: Principles for APEC-Consistent RTAs*

At Shanghai last October, APEC leaders stated that "regional and bilateral trade agreements...should be in line with APEC architecture and supportive of APEC's goals and principles". PECC believes there is a considerable amount of work still to be done to identify the characteristics of RTAs that will satisfy this requirement. The PECC Trade Forum has therefore started work on the development of a set of Principles for APEC-Consistent RTAs.