

APEC Ministers Responsible for Trade Meeting Joint Statement 2021

1 We, the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Ministers Responsible for Trade (MRT), met virtually from
2 4-5 June 2021. Our meeting was chaired by Hon Damien O'Connor, New Zealand's Minister for Trade and
3 Export Growth. We welcomed the participation of the Director-General of the World Trade Organization
4 (WTO), the Chair of the APEC Business Advisory Council (ABAC), the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council
5 (PECC), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) Secretariat.

6 We, the APEC Ministers Responsible for Trade, are united behind the essential role of trade in tackling the
7 impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and in enabling a strong economic recovery for all our people. In these
8 times of uncertainty, we are seized of the importance of implementing our Putrajaya Vision 2040, and we
9 agree that bold action is necessary in the following three areas:

10 *1. Trade as a tool to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic*

11 Defeating COVID-19 is the top priority for every economy. Recognising the role of extensive COVID-19
12 immunisation as a global public good, we urgently need to accelerate the production and distribution of safe,
13 effective, quality-assured, and affordable COVID-19 vaccines. As ministers, we are focused on trade and
14 investment's role in ensuring widespread and equitable access to such vaccines and related goods. APEC is
15 playing a key role in this effort, consistent with the Putrajaya Vision 2040. In July 2020 we announced a
16 Declaration on Facilitating the Movement of Essential Goods, which was a strong demonstration of our
17 willingness and ability to work together to facilitate trade. However, there is more work to do.

18 Today, we are pleased to announce a standalone statement on COVID-19 Vaccine Supply Chains (Annex 1),
19 which outlines our approach to ensuring the trading environment supports the safe and efficient distribution
20 of COVID-19 vaccines and related goods. We welcome the Best Practice Guidelines for APEC Customs
21 Administrations as an operational and practical contribution to help facilitate the distribution of COVID-19
22 vaccines and related goods. To continue APEC's strong work in responding to the challenges of COVID-19,
23 APEC economies will also agree to consider how to facilitate trade in medical supplies such as those included
24 in the World Customs Organization (WCO) COVID-19 list,¹ and report to us before our APEC Ministerial
25 Meeting in November.

26 It is vital that services trade continues to flow during the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, we highlight the
27 integral role freight and logistics suppliers can play in the production, distribution, and sale of vaccines and
28 medical supplies. We are pleased to announce the statement on Services to Support the Movement of
29 Essential Goods (Annex 2). We task officials to update us on the progress of this work annually, as part of the
30 review on the 2020 Declaration on Facilitating the Movement of Essential Goods. We also recognise the
31 importance of providing predictability for service suppliers beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of the
32 work underway to review APEC's role in growing services competitiveness across the region, we agree to
33 prioritise work to identify and subsequently consider removing unnecessary barriers to trade in services,
34 particularly those services that expedite and facilitate the flow of essential goods.

35 Noting the detrimental impact of border and travel restrictions on our people and our economies, we must
36 pave the way for the safe resumption of cross-border travel, without undermining efforts to prevent the
37 spread of COVID-19. We task officials to share information on cross-border travel measures, including through
38 established APEC digital platforms, and to identify initiatives and protocols related to establishing safe passage
39 within the region, in line with ongoing multilateral discussions. We direct officials to discuss how APEC can
40 better support air crews, facilitate business mobility across the region, and advance discussions on digital

¹ [World Customs Organization: HS classification reference for Covid-19 medical supplies](#)

41 solutions to facilitate safe travel in the region, and report on progress before our APEC Ministerial Meeting in
42 November.

43 We welcome the varied and continuous efforts as well as the contribution of additional resources across APEC
44 to combat the pandemic, and note the newly established relevant ASF sub-fund in this regard.

45 *2. Rules-based multilateral trading system*

46 Recalling the role of the rules-based multilateral trading system in catalysing our region's extraordinary growth,
47 we are determined to cooperate to ensure the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC12) is successful and
48 delivers tangible results for all. We will cooperate to further enhance the role of the WTO in establishing rules
49 that support a free, fair, predictable, non-discriminatory, transparent, and open trade and investment
50 environment.

51 The WTO must demonstrate that global trade rules can help address the human catastrophe of the COVID-19
52 pandemic and facilitate the recovery. APEC economies will work proactively and urgently in Geneva to support
53 text-based discussions, including for a temporary waiver of certain intellectual property protections on COVID-
54 19 vaccines, as soon as possible and no later than MC12. As we seek to facilitate the recovery from the COVID-
55 19 pandemic, we support efforts to deliver pragmatic and effective solutions on trade and health that
56 reinforce APEC's work on essential goods, minimise disruption to, and enhance the resilience of supply chains,
57 and demonstrate the positive role that trade can play in responding to global health emergencies. As APEC
58 economies, we will play our part by ensuring that emergency measures designed to tackle COVID-19 are
59 targeted, proportionate, transparent, temporary, and consistent with WTO rules and will support efforts to
60 unwind remaining trade restrictive measures when appropriate.

61 We continue to support ongoing necessary reform work to improve the WTO's functioning. To that end, we
62 recognise the importance of making progress on enhancing transparency. We engaged in frank and
63 constructive discussions, and are committed to continuing these discussions regarding improved functioning
64 of the WTO's negotiating and dispute settlement functions. We urge WTO members to seek a shared
65 understanding of the types of reform needed by MC12.

66 One of the most important contributions that the WTO will make this year to strengthen its credibility as a
67 forum for negotiating new rules and to safeguard our natural resources, is the successful conclusion of the
68 decades-long fisheries subsidies negotiations. As a group, APEC economies support the WTO Director-
69 General's calls for the WTO fisheries subsidies negotiations to achieve a comprehensive and meaningful
70 agreement with effective disciplines on harmful fisheries subsidies by 31 July 2021.

71 We must support the WTO and its membership to modernise trade rules for the twenty-first century. We
72 recognise the positive role that existing plurilateral negotiations and discussions are playing in progressing
73 outcomes. APEC member participants in the Joint Statement Initiatives (JSI) on e-commerce; domestic
74 regulation in services; micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs); and investment facilitation for
75 development call for substantial progress in the relevant initiatives. We take note of the calls by the APEC
76 economies who endorsed the Joint Declaration on Trade and Women's Economic Empowerment for an
77 ambitious outcome at MC12.

78 APEC has been at the vanguard of ensuring that trade and environmental policies are mutually supportive,
79 and we are determined this should continue. We agree on the importance of promoting economic policies
80 and growth that contribute to tackling climate change and other serious environmental challenges aligned
81 with global efforts, such as the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the goals
82 of the Paris Agreement. In this context, we recognise member economies' energy transitions to a low
83 emissions future will reflect the different circumstances in each economy. We are committed to advancing

84 trade and environment issues at the WTO. We reaffirm the importance of trade measures taken to combat
85 climate change being non-discriminatory and consistent with WTO rules.

86 We recognise that since APEC Economic Leaders endorsed the APEC List of Environmental Goods in 2012, new
87 environmentally friendly goods, technologies and innovations have emerged that are not covered by the
88 original list. We are ready to take concrete steps that build on this legacy, to further APEC's contribution to
89 addressing the most serious environmental challenges. We instruct officials to review the implementation of
90 the original list in contributing to green growth, addressing climate change and securing sustainable economic
91 development objectives, and to update the list in terms of Harmonised System (HS) tariff classifications for
92 reference purposes by the APEC Ministerial Meeting in November. At that time, we will consider instructing
93 officials on further potential work to update the list. We also support APEC efforts to discuss the impact of
94 non-tariff measures on trade in environmental goods.

95 We reaffirm APEC Economic Leaders' commitments to work on environmental services and welcome recent
96 APEC reports on the ways in which APEC economies could support increased trade in environmental services.
97 We task officials to advance work on enhancing trade in environmental services, including by identifying
98 environmentally related services across service sectors, and to report on progress at our APEC Ministerial
99 Meeting in November. To ensure that services can contribute to long-term sustainability, we agree that
100 economies will then take forward discussions on how to increase trade in environmental and environmentally
101 related services, including by supporting liberalisation, facilitation, and cooperation. We instruct officials to
102 report on the outcomes of these discussions at the 2022 MRT.

103 We recognise the importance of the global agricultural and food systems, underpinned by WTO rules, bringing
104 food, fibre, and other critical products to people all over the world, supporting global food security and
105 sustainable economic development. While the agriculture sector has been resilient and international markets
106 have remained relatively stable during the pandemic, it remains one of the most protected sectors in global
107 trade. We agree on the need for a meaningful outcome on agriculture at MC12, reflecting our collective
108 interests and sensitivities, with a view towards achieving substantial progressive reductions in support and
109 protection as envisaged in the continuation of the reform process provided in Article 20 of the Agreement on
110 Agriculture and existing mandates.

111 Market-distorting subsidies undermine a level-playing field. We are also increasingly concerned about those
112 subsidies that have a negative environmental impact. We recall APEC's 2015 commitment to rationalise and
113 phase out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies that encourage wasteful consumption, while recognising the
114 importance of providing those in need with essential energy services. We task our officials to explore options,
115 for those members that are in a position to do so, to undertake a potential voluntary standstill on inefficient
116 fossil fuel subsidies for progress to be reported to ministers in November. We support capacity-building
117 initiatives to advance progress towards the commitment, including further voluntary peer reviews.

118 APEC's work needs to deliver for all members of society, including women, MSMEs, and others with untapped
119 economic potential. In this regard, we note recent initiatives in APEC to unlock the economic potential of
120 Indigenous peoples. It is our responsibility to ensure our economic policies and trade and investment
121 environment also promote equality of opportunity and advance economic inclusion. APEC should move at a
122 faster pace to support businesses of all types, particularly MSMEs and start-ups, to access domestic and
123 international markets. Our economic and technical cooperation and capacity building can reduce
124 administrative barriers; promote education, training and skills development; enhance access to technology,
125 finance and cross-border payment mechanisms; and ensure access to market and regulatory information.

126 APEC is also making useful contributions towards identifying policies and implementing structural reforms in
127 support of inclusive and sustainable transitions to the future of work. To this end, we strongly support the
128 ongoing work to implement the La Serena Roadmap for Women and Inclusive Growth across APEC's work

129 agenda, which supports the economic empowerment of women. We encourage work that empowers women
130 and others with untapped economic potential to access capital and markets, including through trade.

131 *3. Shaping our future prosperity*

132 It is critical that the economic settings in each of our economies enable trade and investment to become
133 driving forces for our long-term economic prosperity, as we respond to the economic crisis. We welcome
134 APEC's efforts to refresh its structural reform agenda, which will outline pillars of work including creating an
135 enabling environment for open, transparent, and competitive markets and boosting business recovery and
136 resilience against future shocks to promote strong, balanced, inclusive, innovative, and sustainable growth.

137 The pandemic has accelerated the process of digitalisation, with the adoption of digital solutions no longer
138 optional but necessary. We instruct officials to respond to ABAC's urgent call to accelerate progress on the
139 APEC Internet and Digital Economy Roadmap work programme. We must create an enabling, inclusive and
140 non-discriminatory digital economy that fosters the application of new technologies, allows businesses and
141 entrepreneurs to thrive, facilitates the flow of data, strengthens consumer and business trust, and allows
142 goods and services to move seamlessly across borders. At the same time, it is important to bridge the digital
143 divide by facilitating access to information and communication technologies and the skills everyone needs to
144 thrive in the digital economy where no one is left behind. Our work on the digital economy is critical for our
145 future economic prosperity and is reflected in the APEC connectivity agenda and initiatives to build and
146 safeguard an open, healthy, competitive, seamless and comprehensively connected and integrated Asia-
147 Pacific region.

148 As a concrete step that can also make a significant contribution to our response to COVID-19, we will
149 accelerate implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, particularly those articles relating to:
150 the accelerated use of digitalisation for border processes; pre-arrival processing of electronic declarations;
151 electronic documents, electronic certification, electronic payments; expedited shipments; and border agency
152 cooperation. APEC is well-placed to support economies in these efforts. This will further enhance the efficiency
153 of supply chains. We agree to embed digital trade facilitation measures taken by APEC members during COVID-
154 19. We task officials to report on progress when we meet again at the APEC Ministerial Meeting in November.

155 We support ongoing efforts to conclude, ratify, implement and upgrade bilateral and regional trade
156 agreements that benefit and protect our people, enhance predictability and transparency for our businesses,
157 complement the multilateral trading system, and contribute to deeper economic integration in the region.
158 These undertakings are strengthened by APEC's extensive work to support high quality and comprehensive
159 trade and investment outcomes in the Asia-Pacific, particularly our ongoing implementation of the Lima
160 Declaration on the Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (FTAAP). We note ABAC's call to ensure FTAAP remains
161 the organising principle for regional economic integration. We also recognise the importance of regional, sub-
162 regional and remote area connectivity through quality infrastructure development and investment, based
163 upon relevant APEC work.

164 Last year APEC Economic Leaders proclaimed the Putrajaya Vision for an open, dynamic, resilient and peaceful
165 Asia-Pacific community by 2040, and we urge officials to finalise their design of a concrete implementation
166 plan across all elements of the vision by the time of the 2021 APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting.

167 We thank New Zealand for hosting the APEC MRT meeting and look forward to reviewing progress when we
168 meet again in November.

Haumi ē, Hui ē, Tāiki ē
Join, Work, Grow. Together

APEC MRT Statement on COVID-19 Vaccine Supply Chains

1 *We, the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Ministers Responsible for Trade;*

2 *Welcoming* progress implementing the 2020 APEC Declaration on Facilitating the Movement of Essential
3 *Goods, across export restrictions, non-tariff barriers, trade facilitation, and tariffs;*

4 *Recalling* APEC Economic Leaders' determination and commitment to ensure the smooth distribution of
5 *essential goods across borders;*

6 *Recognising* the importance of ensuring the safety, efficiency, and resilience of supply chains for COVID-19
7 *vaccines and related goods for the region's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic;*

8 *Acknowledging* the work by the World Health Organization (WHO), World Customs Organization (WCO) and
9 *other international organisations in facilitating COVID-19 vaccines and related goods;*

10 *Consistent* with World Trade Organization (WTO) rights and obligations, WCO standards and the
11 *International Health Regulations;*

12 *Commit* to accelerating implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement and take further action in
13 *the following areas:*

- 14 1 We agree to use the WCO-WHO list of COVID-19 vaccines and related goods¹ as a reference for
15 facilitating trade. APEC economies will expedite the flow and transit of all COVID-19 vaccines and
16 related goods through their air, sea and land ports. We will expedite their release upon arrival,
17 including by providing for advance electronic submission and processing of information to enable
18 immediate release upon arrival.
- 19 2 We will advance the implementation of the Best Practice Guidelines for APEC Customs
20 Administrations to Facilitate the Distribution of COVID-19 Vaccines and Related Goods. We agree to
21 embed the trade facilitation measures implemented during the pandemic, including digitising customs
22 procedures, expediting the flow of goods across borders, and boosting coordination between traders
23 and border agencies.
- 24 3 While WTO rules permit export restrictions or prohibitions in certain circumstances, we emphasise
25 economies who adopt such measures with respect to COVID-19 vaccines and related goods will
26 evaluate their ongoing necessity as COVID-19 conditions change, in order to ensure they remain
27 targeted, proportional, transparent, temporary, and do not create unnecessary barriers to trade. We
28 call on other WTO members to exercise equal restraint.
- 29 4 We will consider voluntary actions to reduce the cost of these products for our people, particularly by
30 encouraging each economy to review its own charges levied at the border on COVID-19 vaccines and
31 related goods.
- 32 5 We will take appropriate measures to prevent criminal exploitation of supply chains and to prevent
33 the entry and import of illegal, dangerous, sub-standard or counterfeit COVID-19 vaccines and related
34 goods. This could include further implementing the APEC Roadmap to Promote Global Medical
35 Product Quality and Supply Chain Security and related toolkit.

36 Review Mechanism

37 The APEC Secretariat will make a summary report on the actions implemented by economies under this
38 initiative by the APEC Ministerial Meeting in November 2021, and every twelve months thereafter until
39 COVID-19 is no longer determined to be a public health emergency of international concern.

40 Drawing on the reporting from the APEC Secretariat, APEC economies will review the progress of this
41 initiative and report to us when we meet again in November.

¹ World Customs Organization and World Health Organization List of HS Classification Reference for Vaccines and Related Supplies and Equipment

APEC MRT Statement on Services to Support the Movement of Essential Goods

1 In 2020, in response to COVID-19, APEC Ministers Responsible for Trade committed to work to facilitate the
2 movement of essential goods across borders and minimise disruptions to the global supply chains.

3 *Recognising* the importance of ensuring that trade continues to flow during the COVID-19 pandemic;

4 *Recognising* the vital role that services play in supporting the movement of essential goods as well as in the
5 distribution of vaccines;

6 *Committed* to working together to facilitate the supply of services to support the movement of essential
7 goods at this critical time;

8 *Committed* to a free, open, fair, non-discriminatory, transparent, inclusive and predictable trade and
9 investment environment,

10 *Reiterating* our commitment to respond effectively and transparently to the economic consequences of the
11 COVID-19 pandemic and to ensure that essential goods reach the destinations where they are needed during
12 the pandemic, we APEC Ministers Responsible for Trade, hereby declare:

13 Barriers to Trade in Services

14 APEC economies should prioritise identifying unnecessary barriers to trade in any relevant services that may
15 hinder expediting and facilitating the movement of essential goods, and should ensure consistency of any
16 such barriers with their World Trade Organization (WTO) and preferential trade agreement obligations and
17 commitments.

18 These efforts should be supported by a strong international set of disciplines. In this context, we note the
19 progress made in the WTO under the Joint Statement Initiative on Domestic Regulation in Services. APEC
20 member participants in this Initiative encourage conclusion of these negotiations as soon as possible.

21 Trade Facilitation

22 APEC economies will work to ensure the smooth and continued operation of the logistics networks that
23 serve as the backbone of global supply chains. Building on the APEC Declaration on Facilitating the
24 Movement of Essential Goods, we commit to enhancing coordination, efficiency and transparency around
25 transport and logistical services, including those required for the border clearance of essential goods.

26 Each APEC economy is encouraged to facilitate services that support the expediting and release of essential
27 goods upon arrival. This includes allowing services suppliers to digitally submit import documentation and
28 other required information, such as manifests, in order to begin processing prior to the arrival of goods.

29 Review Mechanism

30 APEC economies will update the progress of these initiatives as part of the review of the Declaration on
31 Facilitating the Movement of Essential Goods. The first such review will be conducted in 2022.