

APEC Structural Reform Ministerial Meeting Joint Statement 2021

We, the APEC Ministers responsible for structural reform, convened on 16 June 2021. The virtual meeting was hosted by New Zealand under the Chairmanship of the Honourable Dr David Clark, Minister of Commerce and Consumer Affairs, to discuss the progress of APEC's work on structural reform. We are grateful for the keynote addresses from Mr Mathias Cormann, Secretary General of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, and Dr Gita Gopinath, Chief Economist of the International Monetary Fund. We welcome the participation of the Chair of the APEC Finance Ministers' Process in 2021, the Honourable Grant Robertson, the APEC Business Advisory Council, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council and the Pacific Islands Forum.

2 We welcome the 2021 APEC priorities, recognising that there has never been a more important time for economies to join and work together to share, discuss, rebuild and recover our growth trajectory.

3 We highlight the prominence of structural reform policies in the APEC Putrajaya Vision 2040 of building an open, dynamic, resilient and peaceful Asia-Pacific community by 2040. Our work on structural reform supports APEC's mission of enhanced trade and economic integration by promoting structural policies to reduce behind-the-border barriers and promote strong, balanced, secure, sustainable and inclusive growth in the region.

A sustainable and resilient recovery from the impact of COVID-19

4 We express our deepest condolences over the tragic loss of lives and to all those who are suffering due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

5 Alongside a global health crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused an unprecedented economic shock. We have seen significant disruption to global supply chains, consumption and labour markets; intensified volatility of financial markets; deterioration of fiscal positions; widespread unemployment; increased inequality; and restriction on the movement of people. There has been an uneven impact on some sectors of our economies and across the APEC region. We acknowledge the disproportionate negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on vulnerable groups who are most at risk to health or economic shocks.

6 This is, therefore, a crucial time to harness structural reform to promote and shape our economic recovery and build resilience. Today, we pledge to work together on the new structural reform agenda that supports economic recovery from the pandemic and promotes growth-focused reforms designed to be inclusive, resilient, sustainable and innovation-friendly.

Refreshing the APEC Structural Reform Agenda

7 The last time we met, we endorsed the [Renewed APEC Agenda for Structural Reform \(RAASR\)](#) and instructed officials to implement it. We are pleased with the progress achieved under this instrument, as noted in the [RAASR Final Review Report](#). We recognise the work of APEC economies,

both collectively and individually, to take forward structural reforms consistent with the RAASR, which has stimulated balanced and sustainable growth and reduced inequality in the region.

8 There remains, however, unfinished business and we recognise the need to consistently review and adopt new structural reforms in our economies over time. We recognise that well-designed regulation can address the most pressing issues facing our economies today, specifically by facilitating economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic; reducing inequality through economic, social and financial inclusion; and responding to the threat of the impact of climate change. In 2021, we call for a more holistic approach to structural reform that allows us to harness the opportunities of the digital economy and helps our people adapt to change.

9 We, therefore, take this opportunity to refresh APEC's structural reform agenda by endorsing the Enhanced APEC Agenda for Structural Reform (EAASR), which will guide APEC's work for the next five years (Annex 1). The EAASR outlines four pillars of work, which will help us prioritise our work and will contribute to strong, sustainable and inclusive economic growth:

- i) Creating an enabling environment for open, transparent, and competitive markets;
- ii) Boosting business recovery and resilience against future shocks;
- iii) Ensuring that all groups in society have equal access to opportunities for more inclusive, sustainable growth, and greater well-being; and
- iv) Harnessing innovation, new technology, and skills development to boost productivity and digitalization.

10 The EAASR describes the approach we will take to define our collective and individual actions. It also includes monitoring and reporting to ensure that we deliver on our APEC commitments.

11 Acknowledging the critical interplay between macroeconomic and microeconomic policy settings, especially in the context of COVID-19 recovery, we encourage officials to develop areas for enhanced cross-fora collaboration and alignment between the Economic Committee and the Finance Ministers' Process that strengthens policy coordination.

12 We hereby task officials to develop and enact an EAASR Implementation Plan that identifies initiatives, indicators and timelines for review. We expect that the EAASR Implementation Plan will contribute to achieving the APEC Putrajaya Vision 2040.

Tools to advance structural reform and other business

13 We note the recommendations of ABAC who call for priority actions to be undertaken by APEC member economies on structural reform.

14 We encourage economies to continue their efforts to implement good regulatory practices to ensure effective, efficient and transparent regulatory processes. We urge economies to pursue international regulatory cooperation to help strengthen economies' competitiveness; reduce barriers to cross-border trade and investment; promote seamless connectivity and resilient supply

chains; support the growth of the digital economy; and address the challenges of a complex, interconnected and rapidly changing world. We remain committed to the implementation of the APEC Internet and Digital Economy Roadmap to accelerate digital innovation. We recognise the importance of pilot initiatives such as the APEC Online Dispute Resolution Collaborative Framework, which encourages the use of digital technology to resolve cross-border business-to-business disputes.

15 We welcome officials' exploration of initiatives that advance APEC's existing work on examining 'Beyond GDP' and contribute to a greater understanding of measuring economic progress, wellbeing and inclusive growth.

16 We value the contribution made by the APEC Ease of Doing Business (EoDB) Initiative to address impediments to trade and commerce by lowering registration and transaction costs in the APEC region. We welcome APEC's achievement of the Second APEC EoDB Action Plan's goal of 10 per cent improvement across the original five priority areas. We endorse the Third APEC EoDB Action Plan and will strive to continuously make progress to reach the APEC-wide target of 12 per cent improvement in the five updated priority areas by 2025 (Annex 2).

17 We place emphasis on inclusive and quality growth, and encourage structural reform initiatives that support MSMEs, women, and others with untapped economic potential. In this regard, we note recent initiatives in APEC to unlock the economic potential of Indigenous peoples.

18 Taking forward the La Serena Roadmap for Women and Inclusive Growth and its Implementation Plan, we call upon officials to focus structural reform measures on increasing women's participation, leadership and productivity in the economy by reducing barriers and enhancing protection in policies, laws, regulations and practices. These measures should be reflected in recovery efforts, including in sectors where women have been disproportionately impacted as a result of the pandemic.

19 We acknowledge the importance of economic policies, cooperation and growth that supports broader efforts to comprehensively address all environmental challenges, including climate change, extreme weather and natural disasters, for a sustainable planet. We encourage development of cross-fora initiatives in these areas, which reflect the gravity and urgency of these challenges and will contribute to implementation of the EAASR and the APEC Putrajaya Vision 2040.

20 We continue to recognise the importance of the Economic Committee's annual APEC Economic Policy Reports (AEPs), which increase our understanding of structural reform and inform economy-wide decision making. We task officials to address the findings from the recent AEPs in the development of the EAASR Implementation Plan. We look forward to the completion of the 2021 AEP on "Structural Reform and the Future of Work", which will explore how structural reforms can shape an agile, diverse and resilient workforce.

21 We welcome the topic of the 2022 AEP on "Structural reform and a green recovery from economic shocks" which will provide a platform for economies to share information and compare green policy approaches and responses to economic shocks. The findings will help to inform how we

can build towards a more sustainable and resilient future where risks are managed so that all can benefit from economic growth.

22 We thank New Zealand for hosting the 3rd APEC Structural Reform Ministerial Meeting. We look forward to the next Meeting and to reviewing and refreshing APEC's structural reform agenda.

23 We stand united in facing future challenges.

Haumi ē, Hui ē, Tāiki ē.

Join, Work, Grow. Together.

Attachments:

Annex 1: The Enhanced APEC Agenda for Structural Reform

Annex 2: Third APEC Ease of Doing Business Action Plan