

## APEC 2023 Women and the Economy Chair's Statement

*All APEC ministers responsible for women and the economy agreed to all paragraphs except for paragraph 4.*

1. We, the Ministers of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) economies, met in Seattle, Washington, in the United States on August 20, 2023, for the APEC Women and the Economy Forum (WEF) chaired by Jennifer Klein, Assistant to the President and Director of the White House Gender Policy Council. We exchanged views on advancing women's economic participation in the region, including through supporting the care economy and structural reform, the interconnection of gender equality and climate change and building a resilient Asia-Pacific community, advancing digital inclusion and innovation, and furthering gender equality in global value chains. We also welcomed the attendance and participation of the APEC Business Advisory Council (ABAC), and representatives of the private sector and civil society organizations.
2. In support of the United States' host year priorities of interconnectedness, innovation, and inclusion, APEC Digital Month, and on the twelfth anniversary of the 2011 San Francisco Declaration at the High-Level Policy Dialogue on Women and the Economy, and recalling the APEC Putrajaya Vision 2040, the Aotearoa Plan of Action, the La Serena Roadmap for Women and Inclusive Growth, and the Bangkok Goals on Bio-Circular-Green Economy, we reaffirm our commitment to promote economic growth, including by fostering the full and equal participation and leadership of all women in the economy.
3. We reiterate our Leaders' commitment to continue efforts to use a gender mainstreaming approach in relevant APEC processes and accelerate the full implementation of the La Serena Roadmap for Women and Inclusive Growth (2019 – 2030). We will continue efforts to improve women's access to capital and assets, markets, skills and capacity building, leadership opportunities, voices and agency, and innovation and technology by, inter alia, developing policies to promote their transition from the informal to the formal economy, and we will support and enhance opportunities for networking, mentoring, and strengthening women's labor force participation. In addition, we will amplify our focus on building supportive care infrastructure and public services, and ensuring access to health information and services, including sexual and reproductive health and care services. We support the La Serena Roadmap for Women and Inclusive Growth's goal of catalyzing policy actions across APEC that will drive inclusive economic development, including education, and participation of women and girls of diverse backgrounds, which includes Indigenous women and girls as appropriate, women and girls in poverty, women and girls with disabilities, and those living in remote and rural areas in the Asia-Pacific region.
4. As our Leaders highlighted last November, we have also witnessed the war in Ukraine further adversely impact the global economy. There was a discussion on the issue. We reiterated our positions as expressed in other fora, including the UN Security Council and the UN General Assembly, which, in Resolution No. ES-11/1 dated 2 March 2022, as adopted by majority vote (141 votes for, 5 against, 35 abstentions, 12 absent) deplores in the strongest terms the aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine and demands its complete and unconditional withdrawal from

the territory of Ukraine. Most members strongly condemned the war in Ukraine and stressed it is causing immense human suffering and exacerbating existing fragilities in the global economy – constraining growth, increasing inflation, disrupting supply chains, heightening energy and food insecurity, and elevating financial stability risks. There were other views and different assessments of the situation and sanctions. Recognizing that APEC is not the forum to resolve security issues, we acknowledge that security issues can have significant consequences for the global economy.<sup>1</sup>

### **Building Care Infrastructure**

5. Access to all affordable and quality care – including paid parental leave, childcare, aged care, health care, disability care, and health care for members of the care workforce and givers/providers is important at all stages of life to the empowerment and full participation of women and girls of diverse backgrounds. Women and girls at all stages of life continue to undertake a disproportionate amount of paid and unpaid care work. We are committed to creating care policies and increasing investments in care infrastructure that recognize the value of care work and reduce and redistribute care work responsibilities including through inclusive, flexible, and safe work arrangements to support women’s economic participation and women and girls’ education. We are committed to inclusive policies and implementing programs that advance just, equitable, and decent work for the care workforce and care givers/providers across our economies, both formal and informal. This includes social and legal protections for care givers/providers, and flexible and safe work arrangements for all partners in the household. We also commit to ensuring that persons with disabilities on the receiving end of care are not negatively affected by challenges in the care economy. We commit to meaningfully engaging men and boys to take equal responsibility for unpaid care and domestic work and encourage and support work-life balance and co-responsibility. To make work safe and equitable, we will address gender-based violence (GBV) faced by women in the care workforce and care givers/providers, the majority of whom are women and often migrants, when providing care in their homes, the homes of others, or other places.

### **Closing the Gender Digital Divide**

6. Noting that the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated both the gender digital divide and the critical need for talent in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields, including women in the design and development of emerging and future technology, we recognize the challenges facing women and girls at all stages of life, especially those in remote and rural areas, from digital platforms and the digital economy due to barriers including affordability and access to technology. We also acknowledge and are concerned with abuse and harassment against women and girls at all stages of life, including online bullying, and technology facilitated abuse and harassment, which often force self-censorship and limit their full and meaningful participation in public life. The persistent gender digital divide and rise of gender-based violence, including online, against women and girls continues to widen economic and gender inequalities and limit inclusive sustainable economic growth. We support stronger policy reforms that are gender responsive and address the gender digital divide, and note public-private partnerships and collaborations as important avenues

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<sup>1</sup> Paragraph 4 of this document, taken from the APEC Bangkok Leaders’ Declaration from November 19, 2022, was agreed to by all member economies except the People’s Republic of China and the Russian Federation.

for removing the barriers to digital inclusion and to preventing and responding to gender-based violence against women and girls, including online, starting with access to technology and skills, including capacity building and vocational training activities, capital, and markets. We commit to developing tools that close the digital gender divide and promote the safe use of digital technologies while strengthening digital literacy and skills to fully access the digital economy. We also reaffirm our commitment to creating equitable opportunities and mentorship for all women and girls that lead to well-paying, quality jobs and leadership positions in STEM sectors.

7. Recognizing the importance of meaningfully engaging women and girls of diverse backgrounds in the context of accelerated innovation, technological change, and an increasingly digital economy due to the pandemic, we commit to addressing root causes of barriers to entry to the workforce and education, retention, and promotion of women in the fields of STEM. We commit to overcoming gender stereotypes and barriers in STEM education and increasing access to STEM education and mentorship.

### **Advancing Gender Equality in Efforts to Address Climate Change**

8. Building on the Bangkok Goals on Bio-Circular-Green (BCG) Economy, we acknowledge the impacts of climate change on our efforts to advance gender equality. We want to ensure all women and girls, including Indigenous women, as appropriate, those in small island economies, and those in vulnerable situations, are ensured consideration when we take action to address climate change, including for disaster risk reduction. We acknowledge that women and girls of diverse backgrounds are underrepresented globally in STEM fields, including those related to the sustainable green and blue economies. We encourage the PPWE to develop best practices and recommendations on integrating women in climate change policymaking. We commit to actively engaging all women and girls in all stages of their life in education and mentoring, engaging women in leadership training, reskilling, upskilling, and recruiting, and retaining them in sustainable green and blue economies. Further, we commit to empowering women and girls of diverse backgrounds in all stages of life in efforts to accelerate climate action, gain equal access to public and private research and development opportunities, enhance access to finance and technical assistance, pursue entrepreneurial opportunities, and enter and lead in the blue and green economies, which will contribute to the just energy transition.

### **Promoting Gender Equality in Global Value Chains**

9. We affirm our commitment to women's full economic empowerment through increasing access to capital and markets. Working together with Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) Ministers, we will promote public-private cooperation to help businesses owned, led, and managed by women to become more resilient and competitive through expanded access to global value chains. We will encourage women-owned, led, and managed companies of all sizes and their sourcing to participate in international markets and global value chains, and to create pathways to sustainable growth, while supporting gender-responsive policies for women-owned, led, and-managed MSMEs. We aim to recognize the importance of access to digital infrastructure and universal broadband, as well as digital literacy and skills training for women and education for girls, to accelerate the uptake of

digital tools and technologies to connect women-owned/led/managed businesses to international customers through cross-border e-commerce.

10. There was discussion about gender budgeting, and 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. We emphasize the importance of implementing structural reform, including adopting, strengthening, and enforcing laws and gender-responsive policies that improve gender equality and promote the economic empowerment and ability of women of diverse backgrounds in global and local markets, and eliminating discriminatory laws and policies that hinder women's employment and entrepreneurship. We reiterate our commitment to actively encourage initiatives and strategies to prevent and respond to gender-based violence and discrimination in the workplace, including through enacting or strengthening the implementation of laws, policies, and regulations. We promote the upcoming "2023 Women and the Economy Dashboard Report" and encourage commitments to incorporate disaggregated data for gender equality.
11. We are committed to cross-fora collaboration and to strengthening our public-private sector partnerships. We also recognize the contributions of, and encourage the engagement with, a broader range of stakeholders, including civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations, academia, and the private sector, to build on past work and support the economic empowerment of all.
12. We look forward to the next APEC Women and the Economy Forum and related activities in the APEC forum under Peru's 2024 host year.