

Ministerial WEF statement 2021

1. We, APEC Ministers and Heads of Delegations, met virtually for the 2021 Women and the Economy Forum (WEF) on 24 September 2021, chaired by the Minister for Women for New Zealand, Hon Jan Tinetti. We welcomed the participation of the APEC Business Advisory Council (ABAC), the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Secretariat and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat.
2. We met as the APEC region continues to respond to, and recover from, the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has disproportionately impacted women and girls in our region and around the world, including through increases in: health and safety risks; work burdens, including care work; gender-based violence and disparity; and economic insecurity.
3. We are concerned that the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are exacerbating existing gender inequalities that require urgent attention, and creating new issues and challenges for women and girls. We emphasise the share of unpaid and underpaid care and domestic work undertaken by women and girls, which has increased significantly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, and is creating significant barriers in accessing education and participating in the formal economy.
4. We stress that the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic risk having a significantly negative effect on gender equality and women's economic empowerment (GE & WEE) across the APEC region and that women of diverse backgrounds continue to face multiple barriers to economic empowerment.
5. At this critical juncture, we recognise the importance of inclusive, equitable, and sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic that takes into consideration the needs and interests of all. We note the substantial benefits that families, communities, and economies stand to gain from GE & WEE, including greater productivity, prosperity and innovation, and improved quality of life.
6. In particular, we seek to advance the APEC Putrajaya Vision 2040 and APEC Leaders' commitment to an open, dynamic, resilient and peaceful Asia-Pacific community for the prosperity of all.

La Serena Roadmap for Women and Inclusive Growth

7. We face a crucial opportunity to advance meaningful development for women and girls, and in turn families, communities and economies, across the APEC region. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is now urgent that we seek to realise the untapped economic potential of improved participation by women and girls and enable women's leadership in the recovery. Gender-responsive approaches - in accordance with applicable domestic laws and policies – can contribute to inclusive, sustainable and equitable economic growth and long-term development.

8. We commit to the full and accelerated implementation of the La Serena Roadmap for Women and Inclusive Growth (2019 – 2030) (the Roadmap), reaffirming the Roadmap's Action Areas: empowering women through access to capital and markets; strengthening women's labour force participation; improving access of women to leadership positions in all levels of decision making; supporting women's education, training and skills development, and access in a changing world of work; and advancing women's economic empowerment through data collection and analysis. The Roadmap remains well placed to guide our efforts and its implementation stands to contribute significantly to the APEC region's economic recovery through the empowerment of women and girls, consistent with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

9. We acknowledge the La Serena Implementation Plan Report, which details the actions underway across APEC fora to achieve the Roadmap's objectives. We are particularly encouraged by the activities that seek to promote women's access to capital, markets and labour force participation. We emphasise the need to increase and strengthen the degree to which the full range of objectives under the Roadmap are progressed under the APEC work programme, including to support women's education, training and skills development, and access to leadership positions.

10. We emphasise the benefit of effective partnerships and cooperation across the APEC region, including between the public and private sectors. We encourage collaboration across APEC fora, ABAC, other regional fora and key stakeholders to promote measures to advance our shared goals towards GE & WEE.

11. We commit to continuous monitoring and reporting of progress, gaps, challenges and opportunities related to the Roadmap's implementation, in collaboration with other APEC fora.

Measures to advance gender equality and women's economic empowerment

12. We commit to supporting inclusive, sustainable, practical and measurable actions to promote GE & WEE across the APEC region. To achieve this, we emphasise the need to collect, analyse, disseminate, and use sex-disaggregated data to identify existing barriers and inform effective responses. We aim to collaborate and share knowledge and best practices to raise the quality, accessibility and dissemination of such data.

13. We believe structural reforms, in accordance with applicable domestic laws and policies, are critical to advancing our goals and commit to creating an enabling environment to promote women's participation in the formal economy. This includes action to:

- address gender pay gaps and occupational segregation
- promote work-life balance and equal sharing of unpaid domestic work and care responsibilities
- promote access to non-discriminatory, high-quality and sustainable employment, including in higher-wage and high-growth occupations
- address gender-based violence in all its forms in the workplace
- ensure access to health information and services, including sexual and reproductive health services
- address informality and promote the transition of women from the informal to the formal economy
- support women's entrepreneurship and women-led MSMEs, including through tackling discriminatory legal and regulatory barriers, to enable better access to employment, business ownership, markets, and credit
- promote secure access to affordable and safe transportation and mobility options.

14. We commit to enabling women's representation, participation and leadership in trade across the APEC region as a driver of inclusive and sustainable economic growth and recovery, GE & WEE. We take note of the calls by the APEC economies who endorsed the Buenos Aires Joint Declaration on Trade and Women's Economic Empowerment for an ambitious outcome at the twelfth WTO Ministerial Conference.

15. We recognise that unpaid and underpaid care and domestic work supports other forms of productivity and is essential to our economies. We commit to exploring strategies to promote shared responsibility for this work and to address the share undertaken by women and girls, including through: expanded affordable and accessible child and elder care facilities; access to social protection systems; and sharing best practices in technological and digital solutions, which can improve the ability to manage paid and unpaid work.

16. We commit to supporting women's and girls' education, training and skills development – including in business, entrepreneurship and emerging sectors - to allow women to more fully engage in the future workforce. This includes promoting equal access to digital skill training - particularly in information and communications technology – STEM, access to finance and financial literacy, financial tools, and other business-enabling technologies. By promoting equal opportunities to safely and meaningfully access and use digital tools, as well as to lead and design technology and innovation, women and girls can play a leading role in the accelerated digitalisation of our economies. We recognise that it is essential to counter gender stereotypes and discrimination in education, training and skills development.

17. We commit to eliminating all forms of gender-based violence and discrimination against women and girls in all spaces – including in the workplace and online – which is recognised as a significant impediment to the advancement of gender equality, women's economic empowerment, and the region's economic growth.

18. We reinforce our commitment to promote GE & WEE for an inclusive recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. We look forward to the APEC Women and the Economy Forum and related activities hosted by Thailand in 2022.

Haumi ē, Hui ē, Tāiki ē

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