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Joint Ministerial Statement

APEC Ministerial Meeting on Women
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JOINT MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Preamble

1. We, the Ministers from Australia; Brunei Darussalam; Canada; Chile; the People's Republic of China; Hong Kong, China; Indonesia; Japan; the Republic of Korea; Malaysia; Mexico; New Zealand; Papua New Guinea; the Republic of the Philippines; Singapore; Chinese Taipei; Thailand; and the United States of America; members designate from Peru, Russia, and Vietnam; representatives of the APEC Secretariat; observers from the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council, South Pacific Forum, and ASEAN Secretariat responsible for women's concerns related to economics and trade of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) region met in Manila on 15-16 October 1998, to give practical effect to the commitments made by Leaders in 1996, to "put special emphasis on the full participation of women and youth" (Paragraph 18), and, in 1997, when Leaders directed APEC to "take specific steps to reinforce the important role of women in economic development" and hold a Ministerial Meeting on Women "to take stock of the progress to date in involving women in APEC's agenda and to determine next steps to integrate women into the mainstream of APEC activities" (Paragraph 20).
2. The theme of our meeting was "Women in Economic Development and Cooperation in APEC", with the sub-themes: "Women and Small and Medium Enterprises"; "Women and Industrial Science and Technology" and, "Women and Human Resources Development". Throughout our deliberations, we were cognizant of the role that women play in the achievement of the objectives of the Bogor Declaration, the Osaka Action Agenda and the Manila Action Plan. We noted the cross-cutting nature of the issues and the linkages that exist between the sub-themes.
3. In view of the economic and financial crisis in our region, we are concerned with its differential impacts on women and men. While the full social and economic consequences of the crisis have yet to be fully understood, we believe that a disproportionate share of the burden falls on female youth and women, particularly

where there have been decreases of expenditures on education, training, health care and social services as well as supply shortages of basic needs such as food and medicines, and a general reduction in employment. We stress that women have a crucial role in the successful planning, design and implementation of economic recovery programs, not only as beneficiaries but also as decision-makers. Additional investments in training, retraining and upskilling women workers can aid in the recovery process.

4. Recognizing that progress has been made on the advancement of women and the rapid pace of development in the APEC region, we emphasize the importance of preparing women to fully utilize their potential in order to meet the challenges to the region. We also wish to ensure that all APEC decision making levels take into account the concerns and perspectives of women in APEC in the different fora.
5. We commend APEC for the initiatives already taken to promote the full participation of women in its processes and activities. Throughout our discussions, we built upon the commitments made by Ministers of Finance, Human Resources Development, Small and Medium Enterprises, Science and Technology, Transportation, and, Environment and Sustainable Development, as well as the activities undertaken by APEC Committees and Working Groups. We also commend Officials for their work as they prepared for this APEC Ministerial Meeting on Women and the experts who prepared the technical papers that provided the basis for a constructive dialogue and led to the formulation of recommendations to APEC Leaders. We believe that the papers contain valuable information and analysis and could serve as useful references in APEC for follow-up work to this Ministerial Meeting.
6. We took note with appreciation of the contribution made by the Women Leaders' Network (WLN) from APEC economies, since 1996, on issues pertaining to women and APEC.

Women in Economic Development and Cooperation in APEC

7. Women are critical to the achievement of sustainable economic development in our region. At this time of economic and financial crisis, it is especially important that women continue to contribute to global growth and recovery. Women now constitute between 32 and 46 percent of the labour force in individual economies. Globally, the increase in women's overall share of the labour force has been particularly marked in export-oriented sectors, where women comprise as much as three-quarters of the workforce. Although women are known to be particularly active in the informal sector, their participation and contribution to the economy through this sector is undoubtedly greater than current estimates. Furthermore, women's unpaid work constitutes a major contribution to the economy.

8. In terms of the impact of women on trade and investment, women's participation in these areas as workers, entrepreneurs, and investors contributes to the achievement of sustained economic growth. However, as a result of gender biases in institutions, women workers and women in business are often less able to take advantage of the economic opportunities that may be created by trade and investment liberalization. With appropriate policies and programs in place, women's increasing labour force participation and the growth of women's businesses will significantly contribute to the capacity of APEC economies to engage in and benefit from global trade. Regarding the impact of trade on women, increased labour force participation has created in some cases, incentives for investments by public and private sectors in education and training for girls and women. These gains, however, must be balanced against the negative effects of poorly paid jobs, and poor and hazardous working conditions as well as their consequent strain on domestic economies' health and social expenditures.
9. As a result of our deliberations, we conclude that the specific realities faced by women must be recognized, understood and systematically taken into account in the formulation and implementation of policies, programs (including economic recovery programs), and projects. We urge APEC to address the paucity of data and research on the roles and contributions of women. Where trade and investment liberalization and globalization may create different effects and opportunities for women and men, we believe that gender impact analysis will lead to an improved understanding of their relative merits, and thus, should be undertaken across all APEC sectors. We acknowledge that analysis of data is being undertaken in various APEC sectors. In this respect, we support further efforts to identify gaps in such data collection and where necessary, suggest improvements.
10. In the context of the current economic and financial crisis affecting many economies in the region, we conclude that greater effort is needed to enhance the contribution of women to their economies and to explicitly integrate women's participation and concerns in economic recovery programs. Measures are also needed to minimize the disproportionate burden of the crisis on women.
11. We are pleased that several of the APEC Working Groups have begun to address gender issues as part of their activities. However, we note that the efforts vary in emphasis and scope from one Working Group to another, and believe that APEC would be greatly strengthened by a more concerted and coordinated approach to integrate women and gender into all its processes and activities, and engagement of broader sectors of society. We support the view expressed by Ministers at the 1996 Conference on Regional Science and Technology Cooperation, recognizing gender as a "cross-cutting concern with implications in other APEC fora".

12. We recognize that APEC activities related to trade and investment liberalization and facilitation (TILF) and economic and technical cooperation (ECOTECH) are closely inter-linked in areas such as education and training, labour force participation (in the formal and informal sectors), access to information and technology, and business and credit. We also recognize that these agendas have major implications for women.

Women and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)

13. It is well recognized that SMEs have been leading contributors to economic growth in most economies. The growth of micro, small and medium enterprises owned or operated by women has been a worldwide phenomenon over the past years. While in most economies, data on the full extent of women's participation in SMEs is not available, their contribution across APEC member economies is much larger than commonly perceived and continues to grow rapidly. In industrialized economies, over one-third of new businesses are set up by women and in some cases, women's businesses are creating employment faster than the domestic average. However, women-owned SMEs face gender-specific barriers that limit their capacity to maximize their contribution to the economic growth and social development of APEC economies.
14. In many APEC economies, women business-owners experience serious difficulty in accessing financial resources, including start-up or venture capital. Examples persist of gender bias in the legal structures and financial institutions of our economies which limit women's choices to enter into and develop successful businesses. Financial institutions need to remove gender-stereotype prejudices affecting business women and become gender sensitive in lending decisions. Institutional and structural changes in terms of policy reforms and legal framework need to be pursued to provide women equal access to financial resources. Access to financial packages and services targeted towards the large and growing sector of women-operated SMEs has to be available. Access to markets including tourism, information and technology, particularly media and communication technologies, are important factors in determining the success of businesses. On-line marketing and information services for women have to be established to enable them to search for niche markets and do business. The participation of women in domestic and global trade fairs/missions has to be encouraged to build networks for their businesses. Networking to link women entrepreneurs in the formal sector with those in the informal sector is important for business linkages, technology transfer and management upgrading via fostering sister relationship programs. There needs to be a focus on improving the management capacity and capability of women-owned SMEs. Women's training has to address the urgent need for specialized skills training and acquisition of education to meet the labor requirements of globalization. Given women's multiple burdens, assistance needs to be provided to women in SMEs to cope with multiple roles by facilitating family-friendly employment and providing basic support, such as parental leave.

15. We find that as a result of the lack of sex-disaggregated data on women's contributions to SMEs and to the economy, economies may be missing opportunities to enhance and promote the development of SMEs and economic growth. We note with concern that out of fifteen APEC SME projects since 1994, only two were gender-specific. We encourage APEC to build on the commitment made by APEC Ministers at their Meeting on SMEs in 1997, where they "agreed to promote gender sensitive policies and measures related to the development of SMEs to empower women in technical, managerial, and entrepreneurial fields," and to take the necessary measures to remove the barriers faced by women-owned SMEs so that they may develop, expand and thereby increase their contribution to the social and economic growth of the region.
16. We welcome the agreements reached by the 1998 APEC SME Ministers to include micro enterprises and women entrepreneurs as an integral part of the Integrated Plan of Action for SME Development. They also emphasized the importance of eliminating barriers to the full participation of women to individual APEC economies. In this context, they noted the establishment of the Confederation of Women's Business Councils in some APEC economies as a catalyst to facilitate and enhance business networking and partnership among some entrepreneurs. We welcome the reference by SME Ministers to recent statements of APEC Finance Ministers about the impact of the financial crisis. SME Ministers highlighted the need to develop immediate measures to support SMEs and strengthen social safety nets in affected economies. We further recognize the importance and benefits of E-commerce in SMEs and encourage other APEC fora to give special assistance to women in the use of E-commerce in business.

Women and Industrial Science and Technology (IST)

17. In the new global, knowledge-based economy, competitive advantage requires a highly skilled and diversified workforce that will increase productivity and fuel innovation. Economies need the talent of their entire population, male and female, to create a leading-edge workforce. This will be achieved through policies that place greater emphasis on science and technology education and training for skills upgrading and reskilling. It further implies the full utilization of women's talent and competence in these fields. We commend APEC Ministers at their Conference on Regional Science and Technology Cooperation, in 1996, for recognizing the "importance of removing barriers and promoting the full contribution of women to science and technology as essential elements in meeting APEC's goal of achieving sustainable and equitable development" as well as the need to strengthen "the exchange of scientific and technical men and women across the region".
18. As part of APEC's economic goals and activities, we must address the range of factors that discourage female youth and women from pursuing interests in and considering careers in science and technology. We note that in many economies fewer young

women than young men obtain formal education, and that of the number who do, an even smaller proportion obtain training in science and technology. Skills gaps, as well as skilled workforce shortages, are already creating major bottlenecks in global and regional economic production and scientific development. Yet, women remain an under-utilized intellectual resource in most parts of the world.

19. We note in particular, women's important role in local knowledge systems and indigenous science and technology. Whether in agriculture, textile, food processing, and many other technologies, women's deep involvement with traditional knowledge systems has been commonly recognized. We believe APEC must make greater efforts to understand and preserve these knowledge systems, including promoting mutually beneficial exchanges between practitioners of modern and traditional technology, and, to support the continuing development of traditional practices and knowledge of indigenous and rural women.
20. Given the importance of science and technology for future sustainable economic development, we are concerned that there is severe under-representation of women in science and technology. We are also concerned by the limited information available at domestic and global levels, on the participation rates of women and men in scientific and technological education and careers, and, on the possible differential impact of technological change on the lives of women and men. In this regard, impact studies particularly on information and communication technologies should be conducted. We commend the Industrial Science and Technology Working Group (ISTWG) for establishing an Ad Hoc Group on Gender and Science and Technology for a two-year period from 1997 to 1999, to document and share best gender practices, and to design a gender and science and technology web site for information dissemination. In view of the need to complete its work, which has been postponed due to the financial and economic crisis, it is recommended that extension of the mandate of the Ad Hoc Group be considered to allow it to complete its workplan, mindful of the current management review process. Furthermore, we suggest that special efforts to improve the recruitment and retention of women in science and technology, be included as part of the proposed APEC Agenda for Science and Technology Industry Cooperation in the 21st Century.

Women and Human Resources Development (HRD)

21. Investments in human resource development enhance economic development and the well-being of our populations. A sound educational base provides a foundation for employment security and lifelong learning. We agree that full participation by female youth and women at all levels of education and training is critical to developing a skilled workforce that can respond to economic change. We conclude that obstacles to women's full access to human resource development strategies that recognize the different realities of women and men must be examined and addressed.

22. We are pleased to note the increased labour force participation of women. But we are concerned with the trend of increased feminization of low-wage and low-skill employment, jobs frequently accompanied by unsafe and unhealthy conditions with little opportunity for skill development in most economies. Throughout our economies, we see evidence of barriers that prevent women from advancing in their careers. Earnings differentials, and education and occupational segregation between women and men remain persistent forms of economic inequality. In addition, we recognize the need to better understand how women may benefit from and may be disadvantaged by, globalization and changes in the organization of production. We also note that the performance of unwaged work falls disproportionately on women and believe that HRD strategies can ease work-family tensions in order to achieve full participation of women.
23. As we come together during this time of financial crisis, we stress the importance of recognizing investments in women's and female youth's education and training as sound investments in economic growth and the importance of understanding that as young women acquire more education, there is a corresponding improvement in the general welfare of future generations that is closely linked to economic growth. Therefore, these investments should not be subjected to austerity drives such as reduction of budget allocation.
24. We commend the considerable work of the Human Resources Development Working Group in integrating gender into its work, including through the HRD WG Statement of Medium Term Priorities that emphasizes that activities should be undertaken with due consideration of gender implications. The HRD WG agrees to integrate gender-based analysis into the Project Management Guide which could serve as a model for other APEC fora.

Common Themes

25. We note the inter-relationship of barriers to the realization of women's full economic contributions across the range of our discussions particularly the differential impact of the current economic and financial crisis on women. It is essential that we direct our efforts to:
- Expand economic opportunities in areas where women are traditionally under-represented;
 - Empower and increase capacity building of women to respond to economic opportunities and challenges;
 - Eliminate barriers to women's full participation in the economy;

- Recognize the economic contributions of women's unpaid work and that APEC economies address, where possible, the constraints created by these responsibilities;
 - Increase the availability and quality of sex-disaggregated data, research, and analytical information;
 - Ensure the integration of women in the planning, design and implementation of responses to the current economic and financial crisis.
26. We recognize the close linkages that exist between the issues and activities of other APEC fora and the issues affecting women in small and medium enterprises, science and technology, and human resources development. We urge the SOM in their coordinative function to encourage all APEC fora to take into account the range of our conclusions in their respective work.

Recommendations:

27. We are pleased to report that important steps have been taken in "integrating women into the mainstream of APEC processes and activities". We strongly urge APEC to build on these initial efforts and to this end, the following recommendations are submitted to Leaders and are addressed to APEC as a whole.

We seek the endorsement of APEC Leaders to:

- a) **Recognize gender as a cross-cutting theme in APEC.** The successful integration of women into the mainstream of APEC processes and activities under TILF and ECOTECH, requires a comprehensive, horizontal and gender-sensitive approach to all APEC planning and programming, as well as the implementation, by sector, of women-specific activities and projects. Moreover, greater emphasis should be placed on the sharing of experiences among APEC economies, and the engagement of broader sectors of society. The current SOM review of the APEC management process and subsequent implementation may provide a timely opportunity for the identification of the institutional measures to integrate gender as a cross-cutting theme in APEC.
- b) **Place a high priority on the collection of sex-disaggregated data.** The lack of sex-disaggregated data hides the actual, as well as the potential, contributions of half the population to our economies and may hinder effective policy development. We recommend that APEC identify the gaps in data collection methodologies and processing and take steps to address these gaps in the most cost-effective way.

Each member economy is encouraged to build its own sex-disaggregated database in a format comparable to internationally-recognized standards, where available.

- c) **Implement gender impact analysis of policy, program and project proposals as an integral component of APEC decisions, processes and activities, including planning, priority setting, resource allocation, design, implementation and evaluation.** We believe that APEC must examine its current practices in this regard, and develop methodologies and tools (or adapt those currently available in other fora), that will meet the needs of APEC and provide the best results.
- d) **Place a high priority on the development of further studies on the impact of the financial and economic crisis on women and the development of strategies to minimize any disproportionate effects on them; and to explicitly integrate the economic interests of women into regional and domestic strategies for economic recovery and future prosperity.**
- e) **Accelerate the progress of integrating women in the mainstream of APEC processes and activities.** We recommend the development of a "Framework for the Integration of Women in APEC". We believe that this Framework will maximize the effectiveness of APEC policies and activities, strengthen horizontal linkages across APEC, and promote a common understanding of how the goals of gender integration can be achieved.

The Framework would include: the development of guidelines for gender analysis; improvements to the collection and utilization of sex-disaggregated data; approaches to the involvement of women; and an implementation plan for the Framework, including options for a process to review the progress of integrating women in APEC in future years, taking note, among others, of the suggestions from the technical papers of this Ministerial Meeting.

The Framework would be developed within one year by an Ad Hoc Task Force on the Integration of Women in APEC under an existing APEC mechanism to be determined by SOM. This Task Force will be resourced by individual economies, would communicate electronically and by other means, and will be disbanded following the completion of the Framework.

- f) **Promote and encourage the involvement of women in all APEC fora.** We believe that APEC should review its approach to all APEC planning and programming, encouraging all APEC fora to increase the involvement of women, especially in decision-making. This should include APEC-related fora such as the APEC Business Advisory Council (ABAC). We also recommend greater application of gender perspective and expertise in APEC work.

g) Ensure the implementation of these recommendations and accountability for results. This Ministerial Meeting on Women has no precedent in APEC. We believe that the momentum gained at this Meeting in addressing the role and contribution of women in economic development and cooperation in APEC must be carried forward. However, the scope and complexity of the issues facing women and APEC economies on the eve of the 21st century will require a longer-term perspective, sustained commitment, better coordination, equitable access to resources and accountability for results. We therefore believe that, within an existing APEC mechanism, it is essential that a process to ensure the progress of integrating women in APEC be an inherent part of the Framework. And since APEC activities occur within the context of economic policies determined by officials of the various APEC economies, we encourage more women to participate in the decision-making structures of these economies.

28. In summary, we wish to emphasize to Leaders women's critical role in economic development and cooperation in APEC, and the importance of building on APEC's initial efforts to integrate women in the mainstream of its processes and activities. To accelerate progress toward this goal, we recommend the development, in consultation with other APEC fora, of a Framework for the Integration of Women in APEC, over the course of the next year, by an Ad Hoc Task Force on the Integration of Women in APEC under an existing APEC mechanism to be determined by SOM.

Closing Remarks

29. We were honored by the presence of His Excellency Joseph Ejercito Estrada, President of the Republic of the Philippines. We wish to express our most sincere appreciation to President Estrada and the Philippines for their warm hospitality, and thank all those involved in ensuring that this Meeting was a resounding success.