

# 1998 WOMEN LEADERS' NETWORK MEETING

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia,  
September 1-2,1998

## "Dynamic Partnerships and Co-operation. Towards Capacity Building for Sustainable Economic Growth"

### DECLARATION

1. We, the *Women Leaders' Network from APEC Economies*, met in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia to reaffirm our commitment to work together in partnership to meet current challenges, as well as challenges in the new millennium to contribute towards achieving sustainability in our regional economic recovery, prosperity and development.
2. We met during a period of financial and economic turmoil in the APEC region. We are seriously concerned by the disproportionate economic, financial and social impacts on women, and we believe that the full impact of the crisis on women and women's livelihoods has to be fully understood and addressed.
3. We welcome the Leaders' Declaration of 1997 when they agreed to "take specific steps to reinforce the important role of women in economic development"; and, to hold a Ministerial Meeting on Women "to take stock of the progress to date in involving women in APEC's agenda and to determine the next steps to integrate women into the mainstream of APEC activities".
4. We call upon APEC Leaders and Ministers to accelerate the implementation of our recommendations from the first WLN meeting in Manila in 1996, and the second WLN meeting in Ottawa-Hull, in 1997.
5. We encourage APEC to continue integrating gender throughout its work. We emphasize the importance of eliminating barriers to the full participation and contribution of women to our respective economies.
6. We have examined issues related to the current economic crisis and its impact on women and women's businesses. We also discussed micro-, small and medium enterprises, industrial science and technology, and human resources development. We are pleased to submit, in an annex to this Declaration, the key recommendations.

## ANNEX 1 - Workshop Recommendations

1998 Women Leaders' Network-Meeting  
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia 1-2 September 1998

### **WORKSHOP I:     *ENHANCING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN SMEs***

In support of the APEC SME Plan of Action and in recognition of the current economic crisis and its impact on sustainability of business throughout the APEC region, the Women Leaders' Network urges the APEC SME Ministers to recognise :-

- (a)     The economic importance of micro enterprises in all APEC economies;
- (b)     The significant contribution and role of women in micro enterprises and SMEs:
- (c)     The critical role that women in micro enterprises and SMEs will play in the recovery from the current economic crisis.

#### **Recommendation:**

The Workshop therefore recommends that in developing specific programmes in line with the SME Plan of Action, all barriers to women's equal access to :-

- \*       Credit and finance
- \*       Education, training and skills development
- \*       Information Technology
- \*       Markets

be eliminated.

## ANNEX 1 — Workshop Recommendations

1998 Women Leaders' Network-Meeting  
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia 1-2 September 1998

### **WORKSHOP III: WOMEN NETWORKING IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY INCLUDING INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

Recommendation #1: Recognizing that the full participation of women in science and technology (S&T) and information technologies (IT) enhances the breadth and depth of perspectives that should shape S&T for society; *the WLN recommends that APEC undertake activities to identify and systematically remove barriers to the full and equal participation of women in the education, careers, and decision-making of the S&T sector.*

Recommendation #2 : Recognizing that the use of information technology for electronic commerce plays a critical role in renewing prosperity for the APEC region as a whole, and for women entrepreneurs, at the micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises level in particular; *the WLN recommends that the APEC E-Commerce Task Force, in conjunction with the private sector, draft a "Best Practices/Lessons Learned" paper to identify practical, gender-aware solutions to address the institutional, regulatory, infrastructural, and access gaps impeding full and equal participation in electronic commerce.*

Recommendation #3: Recognizing that women's indigenous and local knowledge systems are often overlooked as powerful contributors to national innovation systems; *the WLN recommends that APEC promote complementary policies to support a balance between traditional systems and the formal high technology systems while providing women appropriate intellectual property protection.*

Recommendation #4: Recognizing that women, particularly rural women, play a crucial role in the conservation of biodiversity, the promotion of sustainable development, and that women are fundamental in ensuring food security; *the WLN recommends that APEC foster and support women's central role in implementing these global science objectives,*

Recommendation #5: Recognizing the crucial role that S&T tools will play in mitigating the impact of the current financial crisis, *the WLN recommends that APEC economies place high priority on targeting resources towards S&T capacity-building and the transfer of technology particularly to girls and women.*

Recommendation #6: Recognizing that in many APEC economies, businesswomen face significant challenges addressing the Year 2000 (Y2K.) software problem; *the WLN recommends the development of an ECOTECH Y2K technical assistance initiative.*

Annex 1 • Workshop Recommendations

1998 Women Leaders' Network-Meeting  
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia 1-2 September,  
1998-09-04

*WORKSHOP II: THE GENDER EQUATION IN HUMAN RESOURCE  
DEVELOPMENT*

Human Resource Development is fundamental to sustained economic growth. Women need immediate and effective access to basic education, information, Lifelong learning and training opportunities in non-traditional fields and growth-oriented occupations, Information about these opportunities, and how to participate in them, must reach women with the message that they are essential participants.

In recognition of these elements in sustained economic growth, the Women's Leaders Network calls upon APEC leaders and ministers, as appropriate, to take steps to,

Recommendation #1: ensure basic education for boys and girls and address drop out rates in terms of a gender perspective.

Recommendation #2: ensure access for retrenched workers from the formal sector to opportunities for training in specialized and high tech skills, to enable women to create employment opportunities, and to enter or re-enter the job market;

Recommendation #3 : promote partnerships among governments, NGOs, academia, and other sectors of civil society, including on a regional basis, to provide timely, effective and relevant training that responds to the needs of women in the formal and informal sectors;

Recommendation #4: incorporate concrete measures to include women in any training plans of APEC work programmes;

Recommendation #5: take into account the negative effects of the financial crisis on women by conducting a gender impact analysis of the financial crisis throughout the region;

Recommendation #6 : improve mechanisms to provide technical assistance and social safety net systems, including health services, complementing the work underway by international financial institutions, and do so in dialogue with women's organizations in order to ensure delivery to those in need.

## Annex 1. Workshop Recommendations

1998 Women Leaders' Network Meeting  
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia 1-2  
September 1998

### ***Workshop V: Addressing the Current Economic Crisis and its Impact on Women and Women's Businesses***

In recognition of the social implications of the current economic crisis and its gender-specific impact on women and women's businesses, the Workshop submits the following recommendations to APEC Ministers and Leaders:

***Recommendation #1:*** Establish and expand social safety nets for women, by taking actions such as:

- promoting access to credit and alternative methods of financing women's SMEs and micro enterprises in both the informal and formal sectors.
- Promoting women's knowledge and awareness of the economic crisis and the effects of trade liberalization and globalization on women.
- Initiating alternative strategies for improving women's livelihoods in the informal sector - a sector which should be reassessed as a potential energizing and growth sector, not as a sector of last resort.

***Recommendation #2:*** Develop a gender-responsive framework for stabilizing financial flows by reexamining existing international financial practices and policies, and assessing their impact on people in the region, especially women and other vulnerable groups.

***Recommendation #J:*** Ensure equitable and effective representation of women at all levels in all APEC processes and activities.

***Recommendation #4:*** Support efforts and policies to gather sex-disaggregated data and analyses of women in the economic crisis, particularly women at the grass roots level.

***Recommendation # 5:*** Support collective action to mitigate the impact of the economic crisis and to work collectively to seek speedy recovery measures.

## Annex 2.

1998 Women Leaders' Network Meeting  
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia 1 -2  
September 1998

### **Workshop IV: Formation of the Confederation of Women's Business Councils from APEC Economies.**

The workshop recalled the advice of WLN '98 keynote speaker, The Honorable Datuk Sen Rafidah Aziz, Malaysian International Trade and Industry Minister, to women entrepreneurs and women-owned businesses on the need to consolidate and strengthen their efforts through partnerships, common for a, collective action and self-generated initiatives. The proposed *Confederation of Women's Business Councils* from APEC economies would be one such initiative.

In order to expedite the formation of the Confederation, it was agreed that the structure and objectives of the Philippine Women's Business Council be studied, expanded and adopted to include economies from the Asia Pacific Region. It was also agreed that membership would be voluntary and that it would be open to all interested WLN focal points, peak bodies, women's voice in business and women's chamber of commerce. The grouping will be known as the Asia Pacific Confederation of Women's Business Councils.

The Confederation Council will be registered in Malaysia, and a Constitution will be formalized after further consultations among interested focal points.

To date ten economies have indicated interest in the proposed Confederation. They are: Australia, Chinese Taipei, China Hong Kong, Indonesia, Korea, Malaysia, Mexico, Peoples' Republic of China, Philippines and Thailand.

A pro-tern committee of officials and council members was elected by secret ballot. The results are as follows:

Chairman: Malaysia Deputy  
Chairman: Philippines Hon  
Secretary: Chinese Taipei Hon  
Treasurer: Thailand.

The following are the protem Council Members: Australia, Korea, Indonesia, People's Republic of China, Mexico, and China Hong Kong. At the closing ceremony of the 1998 WLN Meeting, the Honorable Dato Mustapha, the Malaysian Minister of Entrepreneur Development, witnessed the signing of the Confederation Register of Membership.