

# APEC

New Zealand 99.

99AVLNM/038

## Women in APEC

1999 Women Leaders' Network Meeting:  
Declaration and Recommendations:  
Final

APEC Women Leaders' Network Meeting  
Wellington, New Zealand  
20 - 23 June, 1999

# 1999 WOMEN LEADERS' NETWORK MEETING

Wellington, New Zealand

June 20-23, 1999

## 'Women in APEC: Our Contribution to Economic Prosperity'

### DECLARATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Recalling the APEC Vision for the Asia Pacific for achieving stability, security and prosperity for the peoples of the Region (Seattle, 1993), and expressing our concern at the differential impacts of the economic crisis on women and men,

#### **We, the Women Leaders' Network from APEC Economies,**

wish to emphasise the critical contribution of women to the achievement of sustainable economic development and social cohesion in our respective economies. We wish to further emphasise the linkages between social and economic policies and the pre-eminent requirement to ensure that the basic needs of peoples are met and cultural values are respected. The sustainability of natural resources as well as the cooperation within and between economies are essential for economic growth and stability for future generations.

Women in APEC represent an enormous untapped potential for improving the economic and social well-being of the APEC region in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Their diversity, cultures, experience and skills can offer new perspectives on advancing the critical policy agenda of APEC economies.

At our annual meeting, we addressed the following APEC 1999 themes:

- Expanding opportunities for business
- Strengthening the functioning of markets
- Broadening understanding and support for APEC.

We congratulate APEC Leaders for the important steps taken to date to integrate gender throughout the activities and processes of APEC, in particular, the convening of the APEC Ministerial Meeting on Women in 1998. We strongly support the agreed conclusions and recommendations outlined in the Joint Ministerial Statement from that meeting and we welcome the Leaders' directive to develop a Framework for the Integration of Women in APEC.

To maintain this momentum, **we request APEC Leaders to:**

- Adopt the Framework, which includes the following elements: gender analysis; collection and use of sex disaggregated data; involvement of women in APEC; and an implementation plan.
- Ensure the full implementation of the Framework that will lead to a stronger, more inclusive, responsive and effective APEC;
- Develop processes and mechanisms for co-ordinating and monitoring the integration of women, as a means of enhancing the management of APEC;
- Ensure that APEC economies address the differential impacts of trade policies on women and men and ensure that any measures taken as a result of this are an integral part to the WTO process.

The APEC Women Leaders Network has met annually since 1996. We wish to draw to the attention of Leaders a number of continuing themes that have been discussed at this meeting and brought forward from previous meetings. These are key to achieving APEC's vision for the people of the region.

These include the critical need for APEC and its member economies to address barriers to women accessing finance, information and technology and for women's full participation in businesses, workforce, education and leadership. We reiterate that APEC and its member economies would benefit from improved monitoring, and information systems that identify the possible differential impacts of policies on women and men and also on different groups and cultures within our societies. We also call upon APEC and member economies to recognise the contribution of the non-government sector in enhancing women's status in society and in providing support to women in times of economic change.

Our discussions at this 1999 meeting have been guided by the principles of active participation, partnership and respect for diversity.

In addition, for the first time, the **Indigenous Women in Exporting Business Seminar** brought together indigenous business women from several APEC economies to explore opportunities, share experiences in running export businesses, and discuss the uniqueness of their cultures which provides a value-added component to their businesses and economies. The Indigenous Women in Exporting Business (IWEB) seminar participants **recommend to APEC Ministers Responsible for Trade that APEC:**

- Note the success and value of the Indigenous Women in Exporting Business Seminar and the importance of its continuation.
- Recognise and acknowledge the significant and unique role and contribution of indigenous women in our individual economies and to the APEC region as a whole.
- Recognise the existence of indigenous knowledge systems in APEC economies and the importance of protecting indigenous cultures.

**The following recommendations from the WLN are addressed to APEC Leaders and Ministers:**

**Expanding Opportunities For Business**

*Increasing the participation of women in business and increasing access to exporting markets will act as a catalyst for economic growth. Making it easier to do business in the region is a key goal for APEC.*

**It is recommended that APEC Leaders and Ministers:**

Actively encourage and support women's participation in its decision making at all levels of APEC.

Address the barriers to women's access to finance, including micro-finance., as identified by Ministers at the 1998 Ministerial Meeting on Women.

Address the urgent need for women's training and upgrading of skills to meet the requirements of changing economies.

Recognise the contribution of women owned micro-enterprises and self employment to the growth of our economies and take measures to assist women in these enterprises to expand their businesses.

Take measures to ensure that women have access to comprehensive information and training that will help them to benefit from financial, educational, marketing and technological opportunities.

Develop gender aware policies to minimise the different negative impacts of economic, social and technological change on women and men.

Note that an estimated 80% of all women owned SMEs in the APEC region are in the service sector and ensure that training and support is provided to meet the needs of the service sector providers and address the unique obstacles faced by this sector.

Promote policies that recognise that access to electronic services, and the ability to use them, are necessary for full economic participation in society.

Promote the involvement of women as key participants in the design, choice, implementation and applications of technologies.

Involve non-government organisations, women's business organisations, employee and employer organisations and groups representing the informal sector in the development of policy.

Note that the Confederation of Women's Business Councils continues to be a voice for the growing force of women in business in APEC member economies.

### **Strengthening the Functioning of Markets**

*An improved competitive environment, deregulation, stronger institutional capacity, and human resource development are central to the growth of strong markets and women's participation in business within the APEC region and globally. Accelerating APEC's trade facilitation agenda is central to reducing costs on business. These costs fall disproportionately on small and medium sized businesses and can affect women owned businesses in particular.*

#### **It is recommended that APEC Leaders and Ministers:**

Ensure better understanding of the social impact of economic crises at both the macro and micro level and design appropriate policies to mitigate the impact on all sectors.

Recognise the critical importance of life long education and training, particularly in science and technology, to women's full participation in the economy so that our contribution to economic growth is maximised.

Recognise that micro, small and medium sized enterprises in developed and developing economies may face very different challenges, and that support provided must be relevant to each economy and enterprise.

Ensure there are sound fiscal, economic, and financial policies, along with effective regulatory and legislative frameworks that support women in business and in the wider community especially through times of crisis and change.

Take steps to protect women workers at risk of increased isolation, overwork and unsafe work practices and conditions; and reduce disparities between men's and women's incomes and job security.

Promote greater transparency in public and private governance and discourage discriminatory practices and reveal their occurrence.

Identify and adopt strategies to overcome gender-specific barriers to the use of electronic commerce.

Develop strategies which enable people to participate in the activities

which generate sustainable trade and stable communities by providing appropriate education and making technology information easily accessible.

### **Broadening Understanding and Support for APEC**

*There is growing recognition that more needs to be done by APEC to promote understanding of the APEC process to the wider community.*

#### **It is recommended that APEC Leaders and Ministers:**

Inform communities of the benefits of APEC objectives and policies that will improve conditions for sustained economic growth and sustainable development especially for economically and socially disadvantaged groups.

Involve communities, including women's organisations, in the development of responses to the economic crisis and recent economic structural changes, and inform citizens on the role that APEC can play in the recovery.

Promote a culture of stewardship towards local, national and global natural resources to enable communities to be perpetually sustained by their natural resources for future generations and recognise in this the unique role women play.

Establish structures and processes to provide a balance between government, business and the non-government sector that mirror and enhance the current consultative mechanisms for business.

#### **Conclusion**

The WLN 1999 reiterates its strong support for and commitment to the realisation of the vision of APEC for women in the region. WLN will continue to provide expertise and assess progress achieved in the integration of women in APEC. We urge the APEC SOM (Senior Officials Meeting) Ad Hoc Taskforce, currently developing the Framework for the Integration of Women in APEC, to take account of the above recommendations.