



Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation

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WLN Report

Agenda Item: 8.2



9th Meeting of Ministers Responsible
for Small and Medium Size
Enterprises

Acapulco, Guerrero
24-25 August 2002

APEC WOMEN LEADERS NETWORK MEETING 2002
Acapulco, Mexico
August 20-22, 2002

STATEMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

We, the Women Leaders Network from the APEC Economies came together for the seventh time in Acapulco, Mexico from August 20th to 22nd, 2002, to reaffirm our commitment and our efforts to contribute to the economic development, cooperation and prosperity of the APEC region, and to strategize to meet challenges in the new century.

The theme of this meeting was "Sustainable Economic Development with a Gender Perspective". Under this theme we discussed the following:

1. Implications of globalization and trade liberalization for women
2. Microenterprises and SMEs
3. Responsible corporate governance and socially responsible business practices.

We recognize that globalization has both the potential to open new opportunities or close existing ones. We also recognize that the social and economic impacts of trade and investment liberalization can reflect and exacerbate the existing gender inequalities. Our discussion included consideration of labor market implications of globalization, the skills needed by women in the New Economy, and further trade liberalization brought by the WTO New Round and the proliferation of FTAs and its implication on women.

We commend the APEC Chair's initiative in focusing APEC's attention on microenterprises, since this is such an important sector for women in all APEC economies. This initiative supports the spirit of the *Framework for the Integration of Women in APEC*, which emphasizes the participation of women in the economy. We encourage APEC to continue its focus on the Microenterprise sector beyond 2002.

We congratulate AGGI on its considerable achievements in advancing gender integration in APEC. We support the creation of the Gender Focal Point Network to sustain the momentum of AGGI's initiatives. We look forward to being a key part of this Network and to an enhanced role in integrating gender issues throughout APEC.

IMPLICATIONS OF GLOBALIZATION AND TRADE LIBERALIZATION FOR WOMEN

1. WLN recommends that APEC undertake initiatives and projects to evaluate and respond to the implications of globalization and trade liberalization on women's education, employment, wages and the recognition and acceptance of professional credentials across the APEC region.

2. WLN recommends that APEC recognize the importance of e-business for women and publish best practice examples of e-business, and put in place strategies and programs to significantly increase women's access to ICT-based education and training, making best use of flexible and innovative methods of teaching and learning.
3. WLN recommends that APEC support the inclusion of a gender perspective in the WTO New Round and Regional Trading Arrangements in the APEC region particularly in such areas as agriculture and the service industry, that have especially pronounced gender implications.
4. WLN recommends that APEC establish a mechanism to enable the protection of intellectual property rights, including the protection of indigenous knowledge within and across economies.

MICROENTERPRISES AND SMEs

• Microenterprises

According to the World Bank, 90 percent of the population in developing economies has no access to formal financial services. In order to achieve a more inclusive world economy we believe that all women in the APEC region should have access to formal financial services.

We support the institutional placement of the Microenterprise issue in the Small and Medium Enterprises Working Group (SMEWG) and affirm the recent enhancement of the Integrated Action Plan for SME Development (SPAN) to incorporate Microenterprise development issues.

1. WLN calls on APEC Leaders to support global goals to substantially increase the number of women who have access to micro-finance and business development services.
2. WLN recommends that APEC economies create an enabling environment for the microenterprise sector and for the development of commercially viable microfinance institutions, through public-private partnerships.
3. In recognition of the unique challenges faced by the Micro sector and its immense importance for employment and income creation in APEC economies, WLN recommends a permanent sub-group be created in the SMEWG to address Microfinance and Microenterprise issues.
4. WLN recommends that the SMEWG undertake a study, in cooperation with WLN, of the challenges that Microenterprises face in growing their businesses and the challenges Microfinance organizations face in transitioning to commercially viable institutions.

• SMEs

We commend the SMEWG on the recent enhancement of the SPAN to highlight the important contribution women-owned SMEs make to economic activity and on the launch of the APEC SME Portal Hub which we understand has at least one link related to women per economy.

WLN has held its annual meetings in conjunction with the SME Ministers in 1997, 1998, 2000, 2001 and 2002. In each of these years WLN has been invited to present recommendations to the SME Ministers. WLN by its nature, is a network representing women leaders in business, academe, NGOs and government and as such has access to networks of women SMEs across the region.

1. WLN recommends that a closer working relationship be established between WLN and the SMEWG to enable WLN to function as the major channel of APEC's outreach to women SMEs in the region, and encourage them to take advantage of APEC resources.
2. WLN recommends that SMEWG mount a series of workshops throughout the APEC region in conjunction with WLN to build capacity of women owned SMEs, through increasing knowledge of the SME Portal Hub and other APEC SMEWG programs. These workshops should also serve as networking events to facilitate trade and alliances and information sharing across the APEC region.
3. WLN recommends that SME Ministers support the adoption of government-backed guarantees for loans by SMEs.

RESPONSIBLE CORPORATE GOVERNANCE AND SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS PRACTICES

We commend the initiatives of APEC in promoting responsible corporate governance and socially responsible business practices.

We recognize that responsible corporate governance and socially responsible business practices will contribute to the growth of micro-enterprises into small and medium enterprises, and eventually into multi-economy corporations.

1. WLN recommends that APEC develop and adopt guidelines for responsible corporate governance which will encompass the principles of fairness, transparency, accountability and responsibility in corporate governance and socially responsible business practices.
2. WLN recommends that APEC focus on the implementation of transparency in government procurement to improve access to government contracts for women owned SMEs.

We thank the National Institute for Women in Mexico for the success of the Seventh Annual WLN meeting.

We support and welcome the Kingdom of Thailand as Chair of the Eighth WLN Meeting in 2003.