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Economic Cooperation

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Agenda item: 4.2

Outcomes of 11th Women Leaders' Network Meeting

Purpose: Information
Submitted by: WLN Chair



**13th Small and Medium Enterprises Ministerial
Meeting
Ha Noi, Viet Nam
28 – 29 September 2006**

Outcomes of 11th Women Leaders' Network Meeting
at the 13th meeting of APEC ministers
Responsible for SMEs
28 – 29th Sept. Hanoi Vietnam

Pham Hoai Giang, MDM

*Focal Point of 11th WLN Meeting, Vietnam. 2006.
Member of Presidium, Head of International Relations Department
Viet Nam Women's Union*

Distinguished APEC ministers
Distinguished delegates

It is a great honour for me to report to you all on behalf of the Chairwoman of the 11th Women Leaders' Network Meeting, at the invitation of the Chair of the 13th Meeting of APEC Ministers responsible for SMEs.

The Women Leaders Network, also referred to as WLN, is an informal network of women leaders from a cross section of sectors - private, public, academia and civil society. All members are experts in their chosen field and offer an abundance of wisdom, experience and knowledge. WLN strongly believes that the inclusion of a gender perspective in all APEC policies and practices will increase the chances of sustainable economic growth and poverty reduction in every economy and advance a stronger APEC community.

The year 2006 is the 11th consecutive meeting of WLN. During the past 10 years, WLN has focussed on many issues, but all have had to do with the economic contribution of women to the APEC region. This year also marks the 10th consecutive year WLN presents its recommendations to you, the APEC ministers. I thank you for the opportunity to report this year WLN's recommendation.

The 11th WLN Meeting took place in Hanoi from the 19th – 22nd Sept. with over 300 delegates from 18 APEC economies (about 170 foreigners and 150 Vietnamese). Unfortunately, economies of Mexico, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea were not present. In line with the overall theme of APEC Viet Nam, 2006, the theme of WLN Meeting 2006 was:

“Towards a Dynamic Community: Enhancing the Competitiveness of Women's Business for Sustainable Development and Prosperity” which coincides with the theme of the SME Working Group Meeting and SME Ministerial Meeting “Strengthening SME Competitiveness for Trade and Investment”. With this orientation, the WLN Meeting 2006 defined 2 sub-themes:

- 1. Women entrepreneurs and dynamic, effective and sustainable economic development; and*
- 2. WLN in the second decade ~ where do we go from here: capacity building, finance and business network development.*

The meeting was hosted by Vietnam Women's Union. We are very proud to report to you that the Meeting was said to be the most successful meeting so far because of several reasons and just to name a few:

The meeting was exposed to the highest leaders of the host economy. WLN delegates were very inspired by the sincere recognition by the leaders of Vietnam of the women's contribution to the sustainable development and prosperity of APEC and each economy. Delegates of WLN meeting 2006 were even happier at the commitment of the Vietnamese leaders who promised to bring further the WLN Meeting's Recommendation into not only the related Ministerial Meetings but also the Leaders' Meeting with their own support. WLN Meeting 2006 also marked a very special improvement in the partnership with other APEC fora. The Chair of 11th WLN Meeting formally presented a copy of the adopted Meeting's Statement and Recommendation to the Chair and Minister of the 13th SME MM at the Closing Session of the WLN Meeting.

The WLN Meeting 2006 addressed the need to strengthen WLN itself in the second decade of its existence. The Meeting has taken WLN to a higher level in term of its institutional capacity building and networking by making a commitment to undertake the following actions in the years to come, for example: To establish the WLN Secretariat in the Philippines immediately upon receipt of funding contribution from APEC economies to have better continuity of WLN; to monitor APEC's response to the WLN's recommendations and the implementation of the APEC Framework for the Integration of Women; to develop a holistic Strategic Framework for Women's Enterprise Development to build capacity and support the growth of women-owned and/or women-led enterprises, at all stages along the business continuum; to develop a research agenda related to women's entrepreneurship and related funding proposals for presentation to diverse APEC and other funding bodies...

Distinguished ministers and delegates,

To build on the successes of the past decade resulting from the ongoing positive collaboration between WLN and APEC, and to ensure the continued integration of a gender perspective within the APEC themes and objectives, the WLN proposed 11 recommendations to APEC Ministers and Leaders.

To APEC Ministers responsible for M/SME, we proposed 5 recommendations to promote: Women's Participation in the Digital Economy; a Favourable Legal Framework and Gender Analysis; and Micro and Small & Medium Enterprises (M/SME). I quote:

- 1) "Implement the recommendations of the APEC Forum on Digital Economy for Women 2006, including the establishment of an APEC Advisory Committee on Women's Participation in the Digital Economy.
- 2) Explicitly include urban and rural women in each economy's ICT master plan and develop a database and research on women's contribution to the digital economy across the APEC region. This can be made available in a single portal, so that economies can collaborate and share their research, knowledge, technology and experience.
- 3) Review existing investment, business and credit laws, regulations and practices to eliminate gender bias in their impact and enforcement, and strengthen their compliance by increasing M/SME awareness of such instruments. These instruments include e-business, e-payment, cross-border trading, intellectual property rights and access to debt and equity capital.
- 4) Encourage APEC economies to provide gender analysis training for their government trade officials and make gender analysis an ongoing part of trade policy development at both the economy and regional levels.

- 5) Identify, fund and implement gender-responsive programs and policy models that will assist women-owned and/or women-led M/SME to expand their businesses and to build international trade links and networks through increased participation in global supply/value chains”.

To APEC Leaders, we proposed 6 Recommendations in Human Security, Women Leaders Network and the Future; and reaffirming APEC support for the Gender Focal Points' Network. I quote:

- 6) “Promote the economic empowerment of women and safeguard APEC prosperity through encouraging APEC enterprises to adopt and implement the ILO Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS and the World of Work, and provide related capacity building programs.
- 7) Protect the rights of migrant workers, the majority of whom are women, and establish and implement effective legal protection for female and male migrant workers at both the economy and regional levels.
- 8) Acknowledge the important contribution of women to APEC and reaffirm APEC’s support for the role of WLN and the millions of women we represent in the region by according the WLN official observer status at relevant Ministerial Meetings and Working Groups (SME, Trade, ECSG, CTI, etc.), beginning with the APEC Ministerial Meeting on Trade in 2007.
- 9) Call for an annual WLN report to be formally presented to APEC Leaders.
- 10) Support and fund the development of a database to increase access to sectoral gender expertise and training to enable capacity building and enhance business networking.
- 11) With strong support for the GFPN recommendation to convene the Third Ministerial Meeting on Women, WLN requests APEC Leaders to convene this meeting in 2008, with participation from diverse sectors such as industry, trade, finance, HRD and ICT. Subsequent meetings for Ministers responsible for women should be held every three years”.

In WLN Meeting 2006, VWU handed over the WLN Chair to Australia, who plans to hold the next WLN Meeting in June 2007 in Queen’sland, Australia.

Highly appreciating the continued focus and support by APEC Leaders and Ministers for policies that recognize the contribution of women to APEC economies, WLN looks forward to the ongoing strengthening of its partnership and cooperation with APEC Leaders and Ministers and in particular to the inclusion of WLN ’s Recommendations 2006 into agenda of the coming APEC Ministerial and Leaders’ meetings.

My best wishes for your good health and success of the 13th SME MM.
I thank you for your attention./.