

APPF28/RES/02

## RESOLUTION ON STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONS FOR TRADE AND GROWTH

(Sponsored by Australia, Russian Federation, Cambodia, Japan and Vietnam)

We the parliamentarians of the Asia Pacific Parliamentary Forum (APPF), gathering in Canberra, Australia, for the 28<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the APPF under the theme *Parliamentary Partnerships for 2020 and Beyond*:

**Recalling** the Resolution APPF27/RES/08 in Siem Reap on Building Strong Institutions to Promote Trade and Investment for Sustainable and Inclusive Growth as well as Resolution APPF26/RES/02 in Hanoi on Promoting Economic Growth and Free Trade;

**Noting** that the global trading environment is multi-faceted and complex, involving investment and capital flows, supply- and value-chains, movement of labour, connectivity and digitisation, e-commerce, as well as considerations related to women's economic empowerment, labour standards, opportunities for youth, skills-development, diversity and inclusivity, environmental protection, food security, and sustainable development;

**Recognising** that trade and investment are important drivers of sustainable and inclusive growth, in providing access to digital and other emerging technologies, linking domestic firms including micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) to global value chains, and enhancing productivity and innovation;

**Recognising** also that ongoing protectionism and trade tensions are having a significant effect on global economic growth, that the rules governing trade are under challenge, and that these tensions run the risk of undermining the world trading order;

**Acknowledging** that trade and investment is underpinned by the rules-based multilateral trading system as embodied in the World Trade Organization (WTO), and that cooperation between Member Countries is needed to reform the WTO to ensure it maintains the confidence of its members and can respond to changes in the global trading environment;

**Emphasising** that early-2020 is a critical time to demonstrate progress on WTO reform as we lead up to the 12<sup>th</sup> WTO Ministerial Conference in June 2020 in Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan;

**Reaffirming** the critical role of strong institutions in supporting rules-based trade and investment, long-term economic and productivity growth, and recognising the vital role of parliamentarians in adopting effective laws and policies;

**Acknowledging** the outcome of the 27<sup>th</sup> Summit of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Leaders Meeting on 16-17 November 2019 in Santiago, Chile, themed *Connecting People, Building the Future*;

**Recalling** the Bogor Declaration of 1994, which established a common goal of free trade and investment in the Asia-Pacific among APEC economies by 2020, and that APEC economies

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have committed to agreeing a new vision beyond 2020 that builds on the unfinished work of the Bogor Goals while maintaining a high ambition;

**Underscoring** that free trade agreements establish rules and standards by which market access for trade and investment can be more transparent and predictable;

**Recognising** the benefits of free trade and regional economic integration are not equally shared, and recalling the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member Countries in 2015;

**Acknowledging** the conclusions adopted at the 25<sup>th</sup> United Nations Conference on Climate Change (COP25) in Santiago, Chile in December 2019 and the 2015 Paris Agreement; recognising that the Asia-Pacific region contains many of the countries, cities and communities most vulnerable to climate change, notably rising sea levels and extreme weather conditions;

**Recognising** the key enabling role of trade and investment in supporting implementation of the Paris Agreement and economic growth, accelerating deployment of innovative and advanced technologies to reduce emissions, as well as the importance of fostering inclusive finance by aligning public and private financing to promote low emissions, climate resilience and sustainable development;

**Confirming** the role of parliaments of APPF Member Countries in creating an enabling environment to strengthen institutions that underpin trade and investment in the Asia-Pacific; and

**Affirming** that the APPF is a key platform for strengthening cooperation and understanding about regional economic and trade matters.

#### **RESOLVE TO:**

1. **Call on** APPF Member Countries to strengthen institutions to promote trade and investment, and unlock opportunities for further regional economic liberalisation to achieve sustainable and inclusive growth;
2. **Support** the redoubling of efforts to enhance economic prosperity in the region by embracing free and open trade and investment and facilitating the movement of goods, services and capital, as well as enhancing quality standards, rules and guidelines, including better compliance with, and reform of, WTO rules;
3. **Foster** public support for the goals of free and open trade and investment;
4. **Request** the Parliaments of APPF Member Countries to strive for transparent, predictable and non-discriminatory policies for business and investment in conformity with WTO agreements;
5. **Call on** APPF Member Countries to enhance reform and harmonisation of laws and regulatory frameworks, and enhance institutional capabilities, in order to unlock more opportunities for regional economic integration, especially promoting global value chains;
6. **Encourage** APPF Member Countries to strengthen their capacity to engage in trade negotiations and to support the rules-based multilateral trading system that is underpinned by the WTO including the use of WTO dispute settlement mechanisms to resolve disputes between member countries; and committing to the fight against any protectionist measures which might bring negative effects, including all unfair trade practices, including tariff and non-tariff practices;

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7. **Recognise** the importance of technical assistance and capacity building for smaller nations within the region to encourage their participation in and compliance with WTO processes;
  8. **Call on** APPF Member Countries to help increase momentum on WTO reform and negotiating efforts on plurilateral initiatives, so meaningful outcomes can be reached at the 12<sup>th</sup> WTO Ministerial Conference;
  9. **Call on** APPF Member Countries to recognise that:
    - a. Leaders of the 16 East Asia Summit countries participating in the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) have substantively concluded negotiations on a modern, comprehensive and high-quality free trade agreement that will contribute to a stable and prosperous Indo-Pacific;
    - b. The Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) has entered into force for seven of the 11 Asia-Pacific signatories, and that discussion on future CPTPP membership is open to consideration for economies within the region;
    - c. APEC Leaders reaffirmed in 2016 that both RCEP and TPP (now CPTPP) are “possible pathways” towards an eventual Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific.
  10. **Encourage** opportunities for interaction between Parliaments of the APPF Member Countries and between Parliaments and business communities through dialogues, conferences, seminars and other exchange channels to help to improve the functioning of the WTO so that it better reflects contemporary trading practices;
  11. **Call on** APPF Member Countries to resolve trade frictions by seeking mutually-beneficial solutions, and resisting all forms of protectionism that hinder global trade, investment and economic growth in accordance with WTO laws and agreements and the principles of fair trade;
  12. **Affirm** the cooperation among APPF Member Countries to develop various growth drivers such as infrastructure, energy, human resources, digital, telecommunications and financial services, and promoting science and technology to further enhance the knowledge-based economy;
  13. **Urge** APPF Member Countries to implement their Paris Agreement commitments to reduce emissions and pursue sustainable development while mitigating the impact of climate change and enhancing the preservation and protection of our natural and cultural assets; and
  14. **Support** the removal of barriers in different areas of trade and economic cooperation, ensuring sustainable economic growth, social progress and improvement of living conditions of citizens of the APPF member countries.