

APEC & ABAC 2020 Policy Priorities – Women’s Economic Empowerment

December 2019

APEC POLICY PARTNERSHIP ON WOMEN AND THE ECONOMY

1. Empowering women through improving access to capital and markets
 - Promote and facilitate cooperation in the public and private sector to help ensure that women can access capital and assets, in both local and international markets.
 - Enhance women-owned and women-led MSMEs’ ability to participate in global value chains.
 - Provide capacity building activities and opportunities for networking, mentoring, and digital skills-building.
2. Strengthening women’s labor force participation
 - Take measures, such as structural reforms, that reduce barriers and enhance protections in policies, laws, regulations and practices.
 - Promote the recruitment, hiring, retention, and advancement of women in all sectors, especially in higher-wage, high-growth sectors.
 - Advance inclusive policies and flexible working conditions, opportunities, and choices that enable women to remain and keep advancing in the workforce, as well as support the objectives of work-life balance and co-responsibility for both women and men.
 - Promote the transition of women from the informal to the formal economy, and the development of strategies to recognize and measure unpaid work.
 - Support policies to close the gender pay gap and improve women’s access to non-discriminatory, high quality employment and decent work in both rural and urban areas.
 - Address health-related barriers specific to women in the workforce, business, and entrepreneurship, such as improving workplace protections, health and safety, as well as increasing health access and awareness.
 - Actively encourage initiatives and strategies to prevent and respond to gender-based violence and discrimination in the workplace.
3. Improving access of women to leadership positions in all levels of decision making
 - Increase women’s representation at all levels of leadership and decision-making in the private and public sectors by promoting role models, capacity building, and mentorship opportunities, among others.
 - Promote and enable an environment that actively supports gender equality and women’s empowerment and diversity as part of management strategies.
 - Collect, update and publish data on the ratio of women’s representation across multiple levels of leadership positions in the public and private sectors.
4. Support women’s education, training and skills development and access in a changing world of work
 - Counter gender stereotypes in education, training and skills development.

- Provide basic education as well as support for lifelong learning through education, training, upskilling and reskilling.
 - Address barriers to strengthen women and girls' access to and retention in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education and careers.
 - Promote women and girls' access to information and communication technologies, learning opportunities and digital skills building and training.
 - Strengthen the sharing and use of data and best practices, to bridge the digital gender divide.
 - Encourage initiatives and strategies to prevent violence, abuse and harassment against women and girls, including online bullying and technology-facilitated abuse and harassment.
5. Advancing women's economic empowerment through data collection and analysis
- Strengthen statistical capacity and cooperation between public and private sectors to better produce, collect, analyze and disseminate sex-disaggregated statistics.
 - Collect, update and publish sex-disaggregated data, as appropriate, to measure changes related to gender equality for all groups of women over time.
 - Promote the use of sex-disaggregated data in the development and enhancement of policies and programs.

ABAC

**The below priorities are as proposed and may change depending on input received prior to ABAC I in February 2020*

1. Leverage technology and the digital economy to further empower women.
2. Address barriers that prevent women-owned MSMEs from accessing finance to further aid women-owned firms, both economically and socially. Bundling of financial services with business skill trainings, mentorship, better access to market, networking and due diligence assistance will help women-owned MSMEs to better achieve their entrepreneurial goals.
3. Endorse a roadmap for action that would culminate in a Women's Economic Empowerment Trade Initiative for agreement by the time of the WTO Ministerial in Kazakhstan.

2020 NCAPEC POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MALAYSIA

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Malaysia has the opportunity to empower women during its host year. To advance work on this issue during Malaysia's host year, NCAPEC recommends officials work to:

- Garner APEC support for an effort to eliminate the discrimination between men and women with respect to the rights of ownership and entrepreneurship through a WTO trade initiative to be agreed on by the time of the WTO Ministerial in Kazakhstan.

- Address the challenges women entrepreneurs face in relation to access to finance (and financial upskilling), in tapping into networks and finding mentors, and in terms of business readiness, especially in relation to technological onboarding.
- Promote information about avenues of growth available to small and medium-sized businesses in the digital economy. Equip locally successful women entrepreneurs with the technical and financial skills necessary to expand into cross-border sales.
- Promote the continued development and utilization of the *APEC Women and the Economy Dashboard* – a collection of economic indicators that illustrates the value and impact of women’s engagement in APEC economies’ domestic and international economic activities.
- In line with ABAC recommendations on identifying and certifying women-owned businesses, encourage economies to diversify their supply-chains by developing capacity and skills-building activities. Specifically, support research which identifies innovative and proven interventions to help women advance economically, support investments that focus on developing women entrepreneurs, business leaders, and improve women’s access to technology.
- Encourage structural reform processes throughout the APEC economies to remove barriers to women’s access to labor markets, finance, and capital.
- Encourage APEC economies to promote increased opportunities for women and girls in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) education and inclusion in careers intensive in AI and other emerging technologies.
- Promote digital financial services, digital payments and digital financial education to bridge the gender gap in access to finance.