

Women's Commission

**The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
Women and the Economy Forum 2014**

Introduction

This paper reports on the participation of the Women's Commission at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Women and the Economy Forum 2014 held in Beijing, China from 21 to 23 May 2014.

Background

2. The APEC Women and the Economy Forum, i.e. the former APEC Women and the Economy Summit, aims at bringing together senior leaders in the public and private sectors for a dialogue on fostering women's economic empowerment and integrating gender consideration into APEC activities among the APEC economies. The Forum comprises (i) the Policy Partnership on Women and the Economy (PPWE); (ii) the High Level Policy Dialogue (HPLD); and (iii) the Public-Private Dialogue on Women and the Economy (PPDWE).

2014 APEC Women and the Economy Forum

3. The 2014 APEC Women and the Economy Forum (the Forum) was held in Beijing from 21 to 23 May 2014. The main theme of the Forum was "Harnessing the Power of Women for Asia-Pacific Prosperity". There were three subthemes to the Forum, namely "Women and Green Development", "Women and Regional Trade and Economic Cooperation" and "Policy Support and Women's Economic Empowerment".

4. The three-day Forum consisted of the following major components:

- (i) PPWE held on 21 May 2014 as a working level meeting to prepare for recommendations for HLPD and to device measures to ensure the recommendations are carried out effectively;
- (ii) HLPD held on 22 May 2014 at which high-ranking officials responsible for women's issues discussed and agreed on a set of policy recommendations to enhance economic participation of women;
- (iii) PPDWE held on 22 and 23 May 2014 attended by female leaders from public and private sectors, non-governmental organisations, academics and experts under the three subthemes (paragraph 3 above refers) at which attendees discussed relevant issues and;
- (iv) Seminar of Women in Business Community (the Seminar) held on 23 May 2014 at which women entrepreneurs from the private sector shared their trade projects and their experiences as women entrepreneurs.

5. A 9-person delegation of Hong Kong, China (delegation list at **Annex A**) was led by Miss Annie Tam, Permanent Secretary for Labour and Welfare (PSLW) to the Forum. As the head of delegation, PSLW delivered a speech on "Women and Our Economy: Past, Present and Future" at HLPD. The speech is at **Annex B** for Members' reference.

6. Mrs Stella LAU, Chairperson of the Women's Commission, attended the Forum as a member of the delegation and shared her experience at a plenary session on "Women and Green Development" on 22 May 2014. Another member of the delegation, Ms Pansy HO, gave a presentation at the Seminar. Ms Juan LEUNG, member of the Women's Commission, also attended the Forum as a member of the

delegation to cover the labour angle. Hong Kong, China also participated in the Photo Exhibition of the Forum at which photos featuring Hong Kong women's participation in economy were exhibited during the three-day Forum.

7. At the Closing Ceremony of the Forum held on 23 May 2014, the Statement of the 2014 APEC Women and the Economy Forum was endorsed. The Statement stresses the importance of taking concrete actions to promote women's economic participation and empowerment, eliminating gender discrimination as well as enhancing women's participation in decision-making by APEC Economies. The Statement, at Annex C, will be submitted by the Forum to the Informal APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting in November 2014 for information.

Networking with All-China Women's Federation

8. The opportunity was also taken by the Hong Kong delegation to renew and establish contact with All-China Women's Federation (ACWF). A courtesy meeting was arranged with Ms MENG Xiao-si, Vice-Chair of ACWF and ACWF's representatives to exchange updates on the work related to women's development in China and Hong Kong on 23 May 2014, followed by a luncheon hosted by PSLW.

Advice sought

9. Members are invited to note the contents of this paper.

Women's Commission Secretariat
July 2014

**2014 APEC Women and the Economy Form
Delegation List (Hong Kong, China)**

	Surname	First Name	Post title / Organisation
1	TAM	Kam-lan, Annie	Permanent Secretary for Labour and Welfare Labour and Welfare Bureau/ The Government of the HKSAR
2	LAU KUN	Lai-kuen, Stella	Chairperson of Women's Commission/ The Government of the HKSAR
3	HO	Chiu-king, Pansy	Managing Director of Shun Tak Holdings Limited
4	LEUNG	Chung-yan, Juan	Member of Women's Commission/ The Government of the HKSAR
5	CHAN	Yuen-shan, Clara	Vice Chairman and Chief Executive Office of Lee Kee Group Ltd.
6	CHAN	Sai-kit, Abbie	Vice Chairman & Managing Director of Squina International Group Ltd.
7	TANG	Ming-wai, Mandy	Deputy General Manager of HK & Macau of Belle International Holdings Limited
8	NGAN NG	Yu-ying, Katherine	Vice President of May Cheong Toy Products Fty Limited
9	NG	Kai-yin, Noel	Assistant Secretary for Labour and Welfare Labour and Welfare Bureau/ The Government of the HKSAR

**Speech for PSLW
at the High-Level Policy Dialogue on Women and the Economy
2014 APEC Women and the Economy Forum
Beijing, China
22 May 2014**

Women and Our Economy: Past, Present and Future

Madam Chair, Heads of Delegation, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my honour to attend this Forum. I am grateful for this opportunity to share with you the latest state of women development in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR).

2. In the space of a few decades, Hong Kong has transformed itself from a small fishing village into an industrial city, and then a renowned international business and financial centre.

3. We now have a population of over 7 million people with more than half of them being in the female gender. Women have all along been playing an important part in Hong Kong's economic transition. The roles of women in the economy have been evolving to keep pace with the development of our local economy against a rapidly changing international scene. In the next few minutes, I would give you an overview of our developments in the past years, take stock of the present position, and highlight our challenges in the years ahead.

The Past

4. First, let us look back to the 1950s – 60s when Hong Kong's economy experienced an unprecedented annual growth of 10%, at a time when what used to be a small fishing enclave undergoing significant industrialisation. Many of our young women then worked as factory workers or started their careers as office secretaries or air hostesses, etc.

For the majority of women, they contributed to the economic growth by taking good care of their families in support of their husbands.

5. In addition to playing the important role of homemakers, many of our women found various ways to earn extra income that help improve the well being of their family members. The pictures in our albums remind us of our hardworking housewives in those days carrying children on their backs while at the same time doing handicrafts such as making plastic flowers at home.

6. In the 1980's, Hong Kong's economy experienced another transformation. It turned itself into an economy based on tertiary industries, under the driving force of economic globalisation. The wholesale, retail and import/export trades, hotels sectors progressively replaced the manufacturing sector as the largest contributors to Hong Kong's GDP. Today, our economy derives its vibrancy largely from our being a knowledge-based business and financial centre.

7. Our Government implemented free primary education in 1971. It was followed by the introduction of nine-year free and compulsory education to Hong Kong residents in 1979. Men and women were entitled to the same opportunity for education. In 2008, our Government made further investments in educating our young people, men and women, by providing 12 years of free and compulsory education to all Hong Kong residents.

8. Our Government is also mindful of the importance of facilitating women in fully realising their due status, rights and opportunities in all aspects of life. In 1996, the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was extended to Hong Kong. As a testimony of our commitment, the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR Government) set up in 2001 the Women's Commission to advise the Government on women issues. We invite you to visit our website (www.women.gov.hk) to see the work done by the Commission. Mrs Stella Lau, the Chairlady of the Commission and Ms Juan Leung, one of our members on the Commission have joined me today in attending this Forum. We look forward to sharing with you the experience

we have in Hong Kong, as well as hearing from you ideas and best practices that would help us better promote women development.

The Present

9. To date, more than 76.5% of female aged 15 or above in Hong Kong have had attained secondary education or above. As a woman, I am proud to note that members of the female gender now account for more than half of our students enrollments in undergraduate programmes as well as over 60% of the students in taught postgraduate programmes.

10. Not only many women in Hong Kong freely choose to work. More of us are able to take up or move to higher positions. For example, among those senior management positions in private businesses, more than 30% are held by women. And there is also a very respectable number of women professionals around. For instance, more than 45% of the public accountants and solicitors in Hong Kong are women.

11. Among our 15 Ministers in the Administration, we have a female Chief Secretary for Administration at the top. Furthermore, half of our 18 permanent secretaries, including myself, and around one-third of all directorate officers in the Government are women. Beyond the Government, we have 11 (15.7%) female Legislators sitting on our Legislative Council and we also have 41 (26.5%) female judges and judicial officers.

12. The HKSAR Government remains committed to, and determined in, serving the needs of women in different aspects. To quote a few examples, our Employment Ordinance covers a wide range of employment protection and benefits for employees, men and women. There are some gender specific provisions including those on paid maternity leave. To further assist employees in striking a balance between work and family, the HKSAR Government is adopting a range of family-friendly employment practices and is encouraging corporations in the private sector to implement such practices.

13. At the same time, we have passed several pieces of

anti-discrimination legislation, including the Sex Discrimination Ordinance as well as the Family Status Discrimination Ordinance. To ensure compliance, we have also set up an Equal Opportunity Commission by statute.

14. In talking about women employment, I must hasten to add that we have in Hong Kong our fair share of successful businesswomen and women entrepreneurs who excel in their chosen fields. Women are known for our passion, communication skills and many other attributes that enable us to do well in businesses. To name just a few, five of the delegates in Hong Kong's delegation are eminently successful in their businesses in different sectors. They are Ms Clara Chan, Ms Abbie Chan, Ms Mandy Tang, Mrs Katherine Ngan and Ms Pansy Ho.

The Future

15. Like many other Asian-Pacific economies, Hong Kong is facing the challenges brought by an ageing population. Our Steering Committee on Population Policy, chaired by our Chief Secretary for Administration, is in the process of mapping out a population policy for Hong Kong. The Steering Committee is resolved to facilitating and empowering women in realising their dreams, including those who choose to work.

16. The Steering Committee promotes a range of measures to facilitate women's employment while seeking to maintain a balance between work and family life. Examples include enhanced childcare services, suitable retraining courses and the promotion of family-friendly measures in the workplace. We have also recently put before our legislature a bill that provides for statutory paternity leave. We believe fathers should have a bigger role to play in taking up family responsibilities. To give due credit to our male counterparts, more of them are willing to share out the family responsibilities nowadays.

Conclusion

17. The HKSAR Government cherishes its partnership with women's groups, non-governmental organisations, the private sector and

the whole community, men and women. Acting in concert, we stand ready to chart new courses to further promote the realisation of women's due status, rights and opportunities in all aspects of life.

18. On behalf of the HKSAR delegation, I must once again thank the organisers of this Forum for the excellent programme that they have lined up for participants from different parts of the world. I am sure that our friendship will extend and grow well beyond the network built by this Forum.

19. Thank you very much.

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STATEMENT
APEC WOMEN AND THE ECONOMY FORUM
23 MAY 2014, BEIJING CHINA

We, APEC ministers, heads of delegations, senior officials, representatives of non-governmental organizations and private sector leaders, met in Beijing, China, from 21 to 23 May 2014 for the APEC Women and the Economy Forum to discuss issues of women and green development, women and regional trade and economic cooperation and policy support for women's economic empowerment in APEC economies. We welcome the participation of representatives from the APEC Secretariat and the APEC Business Advisory Council (ABAC).

We reaffirm that promoting women's economic empowerment and greater inclusion of women in the economy are high on the agenda of APEC. A recent UN Women report states that *limits on women's participation in the workforce across the Asia-Pacific region cost the economy an estimated US \$89 billion every year*. Currently, in the 21 APEC economies, approximately 600 million women are in the labor force, with over 60 percent engaged in the formal sector, making great contributions to the sustained prosperity and development of the region.

APEC Leaders have recognized that the full potential of women to contribute to the regional economy remains untapped. In 2013, APEC Leaders again acknowledged the critical role of the inclusion of women in achieving economic prosperity. Leaders reaffirmed their commitment to take concrete actions to increase women's participation and empowerment in the economy and to promote efforts to integrate gender considerations across all APEC activities as a priority. In 2014, we commit to continuing our efforts to advance this agenda and deliver tangible results that increase women's economic participation called for by APEC Leaders.

To achieve this objective, we recognize that all APEC fora and economies would benefit from integrating gender responsive programs and policies into all economic, commercial, business, and development activities and by taking concrete actions and reforms to advance gender equality. We welcome actions taken thus far to advance gender integration and gender equality across APEC fora and economies. We welcome past and future member economy action plans to drive action and assist with best practice sharing in advancing women's economic participation and empowerment as critical components in achieving sustainable and inclusive economic growth in the region. We recognize that more should be done to support this knowledge exchange and realize progress in the region. We also welcome all relevant activities carried out or to be carried out by each economy's public and private sectors.

We welcome the identification of five key pillars impacting women's economic empowerment, that is, access to capital, access to markets, skills and capacity building, women's leadership, and innovation and technology, from the previous three years' Women and the Economy Forum and also efforts made by economies to implement actions that support the five pillars. We encourage APEC economies to make use of available resources to develop common data metrics in

accordance with the context of each economy, to measure the progress and effectiveness of implementing actions. We encourage economies to conduct assessment on women's economic participation and their contribution to the economy in order to formulate evidence-based policies and implementable and measurable action objectives, where relevant. We also encourage economies to identify their own priority area or areas from the above-mentioned five pillars to take actions and report their progress to subsequent High-Level Policy Dialogues on Women and the Economy and the SOM Steering Committee on Economic and Technical Cooperation (SCE), and share with other relevant APEC fora, ministers and leaders, where appropriate.

Women and Green Development

For the last several decades, with increasing globalization of the world economy, the Asia-Pacific region has experienced many challenges, such as population expansion, uneven development, depletion of natural resources and environmental degradation. The international financial crises, climate change and natural disasters stand out from these challenges. The traditional growth pattern in the region is unsustainable. Innovative development solutions and reforms, including mitigation and adaptation strategies are needed to address vulnerabilities. Women have a critical role as change agents and contributors to green development and resilience.

In 2010, APEC Leaders committed to achieve balanced, inclusive, sustainable, innovative, and secure growth. Moving toward a more sustainable and green growth model was identified as one of the five desired attributes for economic growth in the Asia-Pacific region. Green development is a strategic choice and will give impetus to the creation of a more sustainable and healthy future in the region. Women are an integral part and potential driving force for green development, and we can harness their talents, creativity and leadership through equal participation and increased opportunities to make unique contributions to green and sustainable growth and prosperity in the region.

We encourage all APEC economies to take the following measures:

- Recognize the importance of integrating a gender perspective into economic growth, gender equality and social justice in the realization of green transformation, and develop gender-sensitive policies, programs and messaging geared toward green development, taking into account the differences and specificity of women's needs in the processes of economic restructuring and urbanization to promote and facilitate women's full and equal participation in and benefit from green growth;
- Facilitate women's access to capital, access to markets, skills and capacity building and innovation and technology with a view towards promoting women's opportunities to turn green practices into profitable business opportunities and entry into the new market;
- Provide green education, mentoring, and training to women and girls, including online and mobile resources, to ensure women's enhanced knowledge, skills and capacity, which would not only contribute to enhancing women's opportunities to find decent work and full employment, but also open up new entrepreneurial opportunities for them;
- Promote gender equity in green development jobs by improving data collection and

dissemination on women's participation in STEM education and careers. Share best practices to create job-based skills training to enable women to contribute to resilience, sustainability, and green development innovations;

- Encourage and promote opportunities for women, especially indigenous women, in decision-making roles to enable their full participation in the discourse on economic development, social progress and environmental protection and management. This includes the design and implementation of adaptation and mitigation measures in response to climate change, the restoration and reconstruction from natural disasters, and the role of clean energy in economic growth and enhanced efficiency;
- Promote ways for women entrepreneurs and women-owned companies to participate in trade in environmental goods and services, and to take advantage of economies' implementation of their commitments to reduce their applied tariffs to 5% or less by the end of 2015 on the 54 products in the APEC List of Environmental Goods (EGs);
- Promote women as strategic partners in sustainable development and climate change in regional and global discussions, including the Twentieth Conference of the Parties (COP20) in Lima, Peru, in December 2014, and the global discussion on the Sustainable Development Goals. Strengthen synergies and incorporate relevant outcomes from those fora into our work in APEC.

Women and Regional Trade and Economic Cooperation

We remain committed to regional economic integration, including by advancing progress toward achieving the Bogor Goals and enhancing APEC's contribution toward eventual realization of Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (FTAAP), focusing efforts to eliminate barriers to international trade and investment, strengthen all-around, multi-level comprehensive connectivity, and to build a closer and new type of regional partnership for development. We acknowledge that women's trade and economic cooperation is an integral part of regional trade and economic cooperation and can make unique contributions to regional prosperity.

We recognize that although globalization as well as regional economic integration have increased economic opportunities for women, there are significant gender disparities. Women continue to be concentrated in sectors, industries, occupations, and jobs with lower average productivity. They take relatively poorly-paid jobs, are overrepresented in small businesses and in the informal economy, and their unpaid work rarely gets full recognition. Compared with their male counterparts, women still face more obstacles in accessing land, financial services, technology, information, other productive resources, and markets. Women are also underrepresented in public and private sector leadership positions and on boards.

We affirm that it is critical for women to have equal and full participation in and benefit from APEC's regional economic integration initiatives.

We encourage all APEC economies to take the following measures:

- Improve the employment conditions, access and quality of jobs including in the informal economy and promote family-friendly policies and workplace practices to ensure that both

women and men are able to maximize their productivity, and have access to social protection benefits;

- Support entrepreneurship and set specific programs to help women overcome business start-up obstacles and expand their businesses, including, inter alia, improving their access to credit and other means of production, providing training on business strategy, management, operation, marketing, etc. making information on trade policies, market opportunities and regulatory environments in APEC economies available to women, and offering relevant support services and facilities;
- Help to enhance capacities of women entrepreneurs to sell goods and services in new markets and expand sales in existing markets, including by encouraging them to export, participate in local and global supply chains and take advantage of government procurement programs, where feasible;
- Support the development of e-commerce, encourage and train women to make use of ICT for self-employment and to start and grow their businesses, and to engage in regional trade cooperation;
- Encourage women to set up and participate in various business networks to form new business partnerships with both men and women, including business mentor-protégé relationships. Support to launch an Asia-Pacific regional women's entrepreneurship network of networks to assist women entrepreneurs in all APEC economies in better connecting to each other, and expanding their channels and opportunities to engage in regional trade and economic cooperation.

Policy Support and Women's Economic Empowerment

Women's economic empowerment is a fundamental element of the inclusive growth that APEC strives to promote and is vital to the future prosperity and competitiveness of the Asia-Pacific region. In recent years, women's economic empowerment has gained prominence on APEC's agenda. APEC leaders have taken important steps to advance women's economic inclusion. High profile commitments and multi-year action plans have been instrumental in moving the agenda forward. We need to sustain this momentum and to ensure that APEC reaches its full potential as a multilateral platform and champion for women's economic empowerment.

Policy support for the empowerment of women is key to lasting, inclusive and sustainable economic growth in APEC region. Establishing a gender-responsive enabling environment to advance women's full and equal economic participation remains a multifaceted challenge. Economies need to address barriers in order to increase female labor force participation at all levels, and to intensify efforts to promote decent work. Barriers include but are not limited to an inequitable legal and regulatory environment, as well as gender stereotypes and cultural impediments.

But merely increasing labor force participation among women will not be enough to ensure that gender gaps in economic empowerment are eliminated. To optimize the labor productivity potential of increased female employment, women should be fully integrated in the labor force, not subjected to discriminatory gender wage gaps, and not involuntarily confined to part-time

employment and to the most low-paid, low-productivity and vulnerable jobs. While there has been progress in closing gender gaps in labor market outcomes, substantial differences remain.

We encourage all APEC economies to take the following measures:

- Advocate gender equality in the society, identify and eradicate all social and cultural barriers that restrict women's full and equal participation in the economy and the realization of their full economic potential;
- Review and improve legal and regulatory frameworks, remove discriminatory laws, regulations and practices, promote those that facilitate access to decent employment and equal opportunities, ensure that women have equal access to capital, production facilities and other means of production to create, operate, and develop successful businesses;
- Establish or strengthen mechanisms that allow for convergence and interagency communication to facilitate gender integration and networks for the economic empowerment of women;
- Continue collaborative, joint activities in areas of mutual interest, particularly female labor force participation, with ASEAN, G20 and other key stakeholders. Discuss and make concrete suggestions on ways to enhance APEC's deeper engagement, mutual reinforcement, synergy and complementarity with international and regional cooperation fora and processes so as to ensure a more effective approach in solving complex cross-border challenges in advancing women's economic participation;
- Formulate and improve policies and mechanisms that increase women's and girls' access to education, enhance educational opportunities for women and girls, and encourage women and girls to study STEM fields;
- Raise the profile of female role models in leadership and STEM careers in APEC economies and companies that are excelling in advancing women's leadership;
- Provide access to entrepreneurship, business management and leadership training opportunities, and encourage the private sector's positive engagement through mentoring and internship support;
- Work toward defining and establishing measurable and aspirational voluntary goals by each economy, including women's representation in leadership and decision making roles and positions in both public and private sectors, which economies could work toward achieving by the end of 2020;
- Support the development of research from the private or public sector on gender diversity in public and private-sector leadership positions in the APEC region. Strengthen public-private collaboration, including through the exchange and dissemination of best practices domestically and with other APEC economies to share knowledge on effective strategies, to encourage positive action which promote women's participation in decision-making and leadership roles. Promote the development of mechanisms which encourage transparency and disclosure of gender diversity in the public and private sectors;
- Advance measures to address gender bias in the mindset of senior leadership and middle-management to promote women leaders, and to support work-life balance, encourage practices that attract and retain female talent, and promote shared family responsibilities;

- Encourage and promote women, affected by natural disasters, particularly indigenous and rural women, to contribute to response and reconstruction through entrepreneurship and innovation.

We encourage all APEC fora and working groups to continue cross-sectoral collaboration to advance gender integration and gender equality. We encourage all APEC economies to continue to take effective measures to promote women's economic empowerment and regional prosperity.