

APPF26/RES/04

**26TH ANNUAL MEETING
ASIA-PACIFIC PARLIAMENTARY FORUM**

**RESOLUTION ON
THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENTS IN PROMOTING
SEAMLESS REGIONAL ECONOMIC INTEGRATION**

(Sponsored by Canada, Chile, Mexico, New Zealand and Viet Nam)

The 26th Annual meeting of the Asia-Pacific Parliamentary Forum:

Reaffirming the numerous resolutions adopted by the APPF Member States at previous Annual Meetings on regional economic cooperation and integration as well as economy and trade;

Taking into account Resolution APPF25/RES.15 on “Economic and Trade cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region” and Resolution APPF25/RES.03 on “Commercial and Economic Matters Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum (APEC 2016)” adopted at the 25th annual meeting of the Asia-Pacific Parliamentary Forum (APPF) in Fiji in 2017;

Recalling Bogor Declaration adopted at the 2nd Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Economic Leaders’ Meeting in Indonesia in 1994, which establishes a common goal of free trade and investment in the Asia-Pacific by further reducing barriers to trade and investment and by promoting the free flow of goods, services and capital among APEC economies; reaffirming the commitment to fulfill the tasks aimed at their achievement as per the 2010 Pathways to Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (FTAAP) and the 2014 Beijing Road Map for APEC’s Contribution to the Realization of FTAAP;

Welcoming the results of APEC 2017 and the 25th APEC Economic Leaders’ Meeting organized in November, 2017 in Da Nang, Vietnam in creating new drivers for regional economic integration through promoting open and free trade and investment, supporting multilateral trading system, enhancing regional and sub-regional comprehensive and inclusive connectivity, increasing the competitiveness and creativity of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs);

Welcoming the results of the G20 Summit in Hamburg in July 2017, particularly the overarching commitment to shape globalisation to benefit all people and enable our people to seize its opportunities;

Recognizing that trade and investment are important engines of robust, sustainable and balanced growth as they provide access to new technology, innovative business and manufacturing processes, as well as link domestic firms, particularly micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), to global value chains, and enhance productivity and innovation;

Reiterating the leading role of the World Trade Organization in promoting an international system of liberalized trade;

Welcoming the entry into force of the WTO's Trade Facilitation Agreement and **encouraging** the APPF Member States to undertake the measures necessary to implement the agreement and those who have not yet ratified the agreement to do so;

Boosting the compliance of the Goal 17.10 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), which promotes a universal multilateral trading system based on open, non discriminatory and equitable regulations within the WTO framework;

Noting that political and economic instability has led to lower global economic growth, volatile financial conditions, employment challenges and significantly slower expansion of international trade in recent years;

Acknowledging that deeper economic ties relates to the promotion of peace, stability and development and that seamless economic integration is essential to boost inclusive and sustainable growth of each member state as well as to improve relations between countries for a stable and prosperous Asia-Pacific region;

Recognizing that the Asia-Pacific region is one of the most dynamic trading and economic growth regions in the world that engages developed, developing and emerging economies alike and that APPF Member States have different levels of economic development, calling upon Parliaments of APPF developed countries to provide assistance to Parliaments of less developed countries in strengthening institutions to foster trade and investment liberalization;

Emphasizing the importance of promoting good governance, strengthening anti-protectionist measures to facilitate free trade and investment, **committed** to the eradication of corruption and unfair trade practices that impede the optimal development and growth of the economy and international trade;

Underscoring that free trade agreements establish rules and standards by which market access for trade and investment can be more predictable and, therefore, are critical tools for economic prosperity and improved standards of living;

Also stressing that, in doing so, free trade agreements create opportunities by which businesses can benefit from global economic developments, including the rise of value chains, the digital revolution, and e-commerce;

Considering that regional economic integration that is rules-based, transparent, non-discriminatory, open and inclusive is at the core of the work undertaken by the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC);

Recognizing that today's global trade is multi-faceted and complex, involving investment and capital flows, supply- and value-chains, the movement of labour, connectivity and digitization, knowledge-transfers, as well as considerations related to women's economic empowerment, labour standards, opportunities for youth, skills-development, diversity and inclusivity, environmental protection, and sustainable development;

Cognisant that protectionism is rising, there have been some skepticisms of multilateral agreements, and the rules governing global trade are under challenge;

Acknowledging that challenges remain throughout the Asia-Pacific region regarding income inequality, uneven access to connectivity and education, as well as economic and social marginalization, among others;

Underscoring the importance of unhindered access to economic activities for all social groups, including women, youth, people with disabilities, low income people;

Also acknowledging the intensification of public debate in many parts of the world regarding trade liberalization in part because of concerns over their potential impact on the labour market, lower wage earners, the manufacturing sector and other traditional industries, intellectual property protection as well as domestically-sensitive policies and programs;

Confirming the role of parliaments of APPF member states in creating an enabling institutional environment to economic integration in the Asia-Pacific; **affirming** that the APPF is a key platform for strengthening cooperation and understanding about regional economic and trade matters;

Affirming the role of parliaments in providing appropriate national legislative frameworks and holding the government's work to account where the

negotiation, ratification and implementation of free trade agreements are concerned;

Committed to continue improving the dialogue based on the principles of equality, mutual benefit and shared responsibility in order to reach prosperity and economic growth in the Asia Pacific region and move forward to a real integration and strategic association.

RESOLVES TO:

1. **Confirm** that the main objectives of regional economic integration in Asia and the Pacific are growth, cooperation, exchange and innovation, with the aim of creating a market integrated into the global value chains;

2. **Support** the negotiation and implementation of bilateral and multilateral free trade agreements within the Asia-Pacific region that: are non-discriminatory, reciprocal and mutually advantageous; promote regional economic integration, particularly on the part of MSMEs; enhance human capital, innovation, and productivity, especially of the most vulnerable and marginalized segments of society, such as women, and youth;

3. **Affirm** the determination of APPF member states to establish a seamless and comprehensively connected and integrated economy in the Asia-Pacific through policy collaboration in trade and investment liberalization and business facilitation;

4. **Commit** to further promote free and open trade in the Asia-Pacific region by, inter alia, supporting a ruled-based, free, open, fair, transparent and inclusive multilateral trading system. Foster the establishment of the Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (FTAAP) through possible pathways including regional agreements such as the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), and the Pacific Alliance (PA), FTAs between ASEAN and trading partners. Fighting against all forms of protectionism, fostering regional and sub-regional comprehensive and inclusive connectivity;

5. **Welcome the** positive developments in sub-regional economic integration in the Asia-Pacific region and note the conclusion or on-going negotiation or expansion of various regional and bilateral trade frameworks involving APPF Member States, including the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), the Pacific Alliance, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and others.

6. **Pursue** policy strategies to ensure deeper participation of enterprises in APPF Member States, especially micro, small and medium sized enterprises (MSMEs), in regional and global value chains; to increase MSMEs' innovation capacity, especially for women and youth-led businesses;

7. **Promote** public investment and policies that facilitate the creation of public-private partnerships related to the implementation of trade agreements, such as regarding infrastructure and transportation logistics, connectivity and digitization, innovation, education and skills-training;

8. **Promote** the development and utilization of e-commerce in the Asia-Pacific through supporting the strengthening of a favorable, transparent and stable legal environment and policies for cross-border e-commerce;

9. **Ensure** that the result of trade and investment liberalization in the Asia-Pacific region will lead to the lowering of barriers in APPF members and also between APPF Member States and non-APPF countries to contribute to global economic integration;

10. **Mitigate** the potentially adverse effects of trade agreements experienced by vulnerable workers and **stress** that trade agreements and their components, including the movement of people, must reflect regional security developments and concerns;

11. **Urge** APPF Member States to consider that effective regional trade and cooperation must be built upon domestic policies and regulatory settings that support knowledge-based economies, effective use of information technology, and innovation;

12. **Recommend** Parliaments of the APPF member states to review and complete legal frameworks that promote free and open trade and investment as well as strengthen anti-protectionist measures at national and regional level;

13. **Request** Parliaments of the APPF Member States to maintain stable political and socio-economic environment as well as transparent, predictable and non-discriminatory policies for business and investment in conformity with the World Trade Organization's (WTO) agreements;

14. **Strengthen** the capacity, engagement and mechanisms for parliamentary oversight of international trade and investment as a key instrument for more profound economic integration in the Asia-Pacific;

15. **Foster** the representative role of parliamentary members in generating public support for the goals of free and open trade and investment;

16. **Promote** collaboration between legislative and executive branches to solidify a consensus around regional economic integration issues, **urge** APPF Member States to encourage their Governments to realize the opportunities for maximizing the existing regional trade architecture;

17. **Build** the necessary political will to negotiate free trade agreements among APPF Member States that incorporate elements of the modern, multifaceted global economy, including but not limited to: women's economic empowerment, corporate social responsibility, environmental and labour standards, sustainable development; and that are consistent with WTO principles and rules;

18. **Encourage** the economies and their respective parliaments to continue developing work programs with the aim of improving their ability to be part of negotiations and approval of integral free trade agreements for the future;

19. **Support** opportunities for interaction between Parliaments of the APPF member states and between Parliaments and business communities through dialogues, conferences, seminars and other exchange channels for better understanding of specific demands for a open, rules-based multilateral trading system;

20. **Encourage** Parliaments of the APPF member states to implement innovative practices that improve time and cost efficiency for international trade and investment including streamlining customs procedures and reducing tariff and non-tariff barriers as well as enhancing the business climate in each member economy;

21. **Call** on parliaments in the APPF region to undertake meaningful public consultations about trade agreements, including during and before the time that they are being negotiated, and apply the outcomes of these consultations to the ratification process;

22. **Foster** closer partnerships as well as strengthen dialogue and cooperation mechanisms between APPF Member States and parliaments in order to implement commitments to achieving strategic regional goals;

23. **Encourage** APPF member states to prepare and present progress a report at the outset of the next APPF session on promoting seamless regional economic integration.