

Report of the APEC Secretariat Executive Director on the Alignment of Fora Work Plans with APEC's Overall Vision and Objectives 2020

Introduction

1. In line with the recommendations for *Strengthening Economic and Technical Cooperation in APEC* issued in 2010, the APEC Secretariat Executive Director provides an annual report on how SCE sub-fora work plans address APEC's overall vision and objectives.
2. The SCE sub-fora annual work plans are tabled at the annual SCE-Committee of the Whole Meeting (SCE-COW) seeking approval in accordance with the recommendations of the 2010 ECOTECH Report.
3. The 2020 alignment report considers how well the activities set out in the work plans align with the priorities established by Leaders and Ministers and the annual 2020 APEC priorities.
4. After SCE sub-fora work plans were endorsed by the SCE, the region experienced significant travel disruptions as a result of COVID-19. These changes required sub-fora to reevaluate work plans, including postponing work and/or focusing on new work.

Status of Work Plan Submission

5. The SCE Terms of Reference stipulate that Working Groups and Policy Partnerships should submit their annual work plans three weeks prior to the annual SCE-COW on the margins of SCE1. The APEC Secretariat analysed fifteen (15) sub-fora work plans: Anti-Corruption Working Group; Agricultural Technical Cooperation Working Group; Counter-Terrorism Working Group; Experts Group on Illegal Logging and Associated Trade; Emergency Preparedness Working Group; Energy Working Group; Human Resources Development Working Group; Health Working Group; Oceans and Fisheries Working Group; Policy Partnership for Science, Technology, and Innovation; Policy Partnership for Women and the Economy; Small and Medium Enterprises Working Group; Telecommunications and Information Working Group; Transportation Working Group; and Tourism Working Group as of 6 March 2020.
6. The work plans of Agricultural Technical Cooperation Working Group; Anti-Corruption and Transparency Working Group; Experts' Group on Illegal Logging and Associated Trade; Energy Working Group; Human Resources Development Working Group; Policy Partnership on Science, Technology, and Innovation; Policy Partnership on Women and the Economy; Small and Medium Enterprises Working Group; Telecommunications Working Group; and Transportation Working Group were submitted at SCE-COW as they were endorsed by the respective sub-fora.
7. The SCE sub-fora are asked to develop their work plans in accordance with a template approved at SCE2 2016. In 2017, guidance was added to the template to encourage identification of gender-related initiatives or aspects thereof. Additional guidance was provided in 2019 to focus reporting on those deliverables that align with the 2019 priorities.
8. The Secretariat conducted an analysis of the work plans and came to the following general conclusions:

Alignment of Work Plans with Broader APEC Objectives

- The majority of SCE sub-fora (12 out of 15) focused their activities to respond to the mandates given to them by the Leaders and Ministers. The majority of sub-fora, such as ATCWG, EPWG, OFWG, and TWG specifically cite recent instructions of Ministers.
- Almost all work plans (14 out of 15) refer to 2020 APEC priorities.
- All work plans also make linkages between their specific activities and the relevant ECOTECH Medium Term Priorities, which is facilitated by the template.
- 7 of the 15 work plans have specific references to gendered perspective projects or work streams.

Planning Elements (Cross-fora collaboration, Capacity Building and Expected Deliverables)

- All submitted work plans identify some degree of collaboration with other sub-fora on cross-cutting topics. The Secretariat presents its analysis in a separate paper.
- Most initiatives and projects have been identified as capacity building, which is in keeping with ECOTECH priorities.
- Only eight of the work plans responded to the work plan guidance seeking identification of gender-related initiatives or aspect thereof.
- There remains room for improvement amongst sub-fora work plans focusing on deliverables, or outputs and outcomes, which advance APEC priorities, rather than on activities and routine administrative issues.
- Reforms to the SCE-COW arrangements have aided a focus on concrete deliverables.

Changes in response to COVID-19

9. Six of the 15 sub-fora added work to their work plan in response to COVID-19.
10. All sub-fora postponed work planned for 2020
11. All sub-fora had meeting schedules and project events rescheduled as a result of COVID-19.
12. Sub-fora have largely moved to virtual platforms for meetings. These meetings have been facilitated by Malaysia, the APEC Secretariat, and the economies of the various Chairs/Lead Shepherds.

Secretariat Comment

13. A further reminder that work plans contain gender-related initiatives and implementation plans for the La Serena Roadmap on Women and Inclusive Growth should be added to the 2021 template to reiterate Senior Officials' continued commitment to these issues.
14. A reminder to continue with ongoing work in the face of COVID-19 will keep APEC moving.

15. A continued emphasis on expected deliverables in work plan preparation could aid Senior Officials and conveners in maximizing capacity building through cross-fora collaboration.