

Facilitating the Participation of Indigenous Peoples within APEC and Canada's Year of Asia-Pacific

Canada should promote the involvement of Indigenous Peoples within appropriate APEC fora, including the various APEC working groups and meetings. Financial support for participation will also be necessary. Canada can move most directly to promote and support such involvement for Indigenous Peoples in Canada, inviting Indigenous representatives to attend meetings and be part of delegations and working groups, but the Canadian government can also encourage Indigenous involvement from other APEC members. One specific initiative to do this could be for Canada to sponsor an international conference to look specifically at Indigenous economic and business development within the APEC region.

It was noted that national and international agreements and policies are generally developed well in advance of international meetings like APEC. The round table participants recommended that the input of Indigenous Peoples be sought during the development of Canadian positions on APEC issues. It was suggested that some of the participants in this round table should be among the wider range of Indigenous representatives invited to participate in APEC related meetings.

Given the widespread lack of knowledge about APEC among Indigenous communities and organizations in Canada, there is a need for education. Information about APEC needs to be made available to Indigenous people and organizations, including information about the working groups and committees and Canada's representatives on these groups. Educational workshops need to be held with interested Aboriginal people and organizations. It was recommended that the government make available financial and other support for such initiatives. It was emphasized that these educational efforts should not just reflect pro-APEC propaganda, but should involve and reflect a range of perspectives on APEC.

There is an urgent need to begin these steps during Canada's year as host of APEC, then to build on the initial foundation in future years.

The round table also looked at the specific issue of Indigenous Peoples' participation in the November meetings associated with Canada's hosting of APEC. It was noted that Indigenous Peoples are among the most economically marginalized throughout the APEC region and will thus have great difficulty in being represented in Vancouver. There is a high likelihood that the voices of Asia-Pacific Indigenous Peoples will not be heard within the broader debates about trade, the environment, human rights and other topics. It was therefore recommended that the Canadian government provide a pool of funds to support travel and participation for Asia-Pacific Indigenous Peoples within the People's Summit and associated meetings. A portion of these funds should be specifically targeted at participation by Indigenous youth.

It was further recommended that the Canadian government work with Indigenous leaders and organizations to identify meaningful ways for Indigenous participation in the official APEC meetings beyond the usual ceremonial and cultural entertainment roles.