

intellectual property rights. Implementation of the plans began in 1997. Leaders agreed to continue reducing trade barriers and to expedite customs clearance procedures as a way to reduce transaction costs for goods and travellers.

In Manila, leaders also endorsed the Ministerial Framework for Economic Co-operation and Development, which outlined six priorities for APEC's economic and technical co-operation agenda: developing human resources through training, education and skills development; fostering safe and efficient capital markets; strengthening economic infrastructure; harnessing technologies of the future; promoting environmentally sound growth; and encouraging the growth of small and medium enterprises. Leaders also directed that APEC's activities have a greater focus on people-to-people links, including women, academics, smaller business, and youth.

The fifth Economic Leaders' Meeting was held in Vancouver in 1997. There, the APEC leaders accepted the ministerial recommendation that the liberalization process be accelerated by two years in 15 sectors, nine of which would be advanced in 1998 with a view to implementation in 1999. The nine sectors advanced in Vancouver were energy, environmental goods and services, fish and fish products, forest products, medical equipment and instruments, toys, gems and jewellery, chemicals, and the telecommunications mutual recognition arrangement. The aim is to remove both traditional barriers, e.g., tariffs, and other obstacles that increase business and consumer costs, such as differing customs procedures and product standards.

APEC leaders also recognized 1997 as an action year, and reflected on the concrete results that APEC co-operation had generated over the years. Leaders called for a vision for the 21st century which would connect the APEC community in a number of areas, including infrastructure, electronic commerce, science and technology, sustainable development, climate change, and emergency preparedness, as well as connecting the people of Asia-Pacific by extending the dialogue to include broader sectors of society.

## **Structure**

The chairmanship of APEC rotates yearly among the leaders of its members. The APEC chair hosts the annual meeting of ministers and, since 1993, the leaders' meeting. Senior officials meet regularly between the APEC meetings to carry out instructions by leaders and to make recommendations.

APEC has three committees: the Committee on Trade and Investment, the Economic Committee, and the Budget and Administrative Committee. The Senior Officials' Subcommittee is responsible for overseeing the economic and technical co-operation work program. APEC also has 10 sectoral working groups and several ad hoc groups addressing issues such as environment, agricultural