

## *Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum*

Since its inception in 1989, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum's agenda has evolved in response to developments in world trade. APEC ministers and leaders have acted as an informal caucus in support of strengthening the multilateral trading system. During the latest APEC Economic Leaders Meeting held in Bangkok, Thailand, in October 2003, leaders issued a strong statement in support of the World Trade Organization's (WTO) Doha Development Agenda, which had suffered a setback at the Cancun Ministerial Conference a month earlier. Leaders also emphasized the need for more WTO programs, including those aimed at technical capacity building, to assist less-developed member economies. They called for structural reform as an essential tool in creating economic growth and prosperity. In keeping with Thailand's themes for 2003, leaders also urged development of domestic and regional bond markets, micro-enterprise financing structures and capacity-building initiatives for small and medium-sized enterprises, and they affirmed the importance of social safety nets in promoting sustainable economic development in the region.

Since the Shanghai Summit of 2001, APEC has been active in the war against terrorism through the promotion of secure trade, highlighting the linkages between security and prosperity. In 2003, leaders re-committed APEC to the war against terrorism and built upon the 2002 Secure Trade in the APEC Region (STAR) initiative, a program inspired by the achievements of the G8 Kananaskis Summit and designed to enhance security in the transport sector. Canada's most notable contribution in 2003 was a symposium in Vancouver on the Canada-U.S. Smart Border Action Plan, which successfully met its goal of exposing our APEC partners to the innovative solutions we are implementing with the United States and encouraging them to follow our example in dealing with the new security environment. This event was organized by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade in partnership with Canadian

## 6 *Opening Doors to Asia Pacific*



Manufacturers and Exporters, the U.S. government, Transport Canada, Canada Customs and Revenue Agency, Citizenship and Immigration Canada and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Following up on the "Shanghai Accord"—adopted in 2001 to reinvigorate APEC's trade agenda and help provide momentum toward APEC's goal of free and open trade and investment in the region by 2010 for developed economies and 2020 for developing economies—members continued to implement in 2003 the APEC Trade Facilitation Action Plan. The plan aims to cut transaction costs in the region by 5% by 2006, and it includes a menu of concrete actions and measures that members can implement to reach this goal. A World Bank-APEC study on the economic impact of trade facilitation (which Canada oversaw on behalf of the APEC Committee on Trade and Investment) shows that improvements in trade facilitation could increase intra-APEC trade by US\$280 billion.