



APEC Meeting Sets Direction for 1997

Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) leaders and Foreign Affairs and Trade Ministers brought the APEC forum one step closer to its goal of free and open trade and set directions for 1997 at their November 22-25, 1996 meetings in the Philippines.

In Subic, APEC leaders endorsed the Manila Action Plan for APEC (MAPA), which includes 18 individual action plans outlining members' commitments to liberalize and deregulate their economies. Implementation of the plans will begin on January 1, 1997.

Over the next year, APEC leaders agreed to improve their individual action plans on an ongoing basis to ensure that they are comparable in their commitments and comprehensive in their scope. As Chair of APEC in 1997, Canada will oversee the review and implementation of these plans.

The leaders also instructed APEC Ministers to expedite customs clearance procedures and other concrete measures to facilitate doing business. They established six priority areas for strengthening economic co-operation, including human resources, sustainable development and the use of information technology, which will be implemented in partnership with the private sector.

APEC leaders provided strong support for the multilateral trading system by calling for the conclusion of an information technology agreement by the first World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial Conference in Singapore in December.

In keeping with their commitment to engage the private sector, leaders met for the first time with the APEC Business Advisory Council (ABAC), a high-

level group established in Osaka in 1996 to provide views on expanding trade and investment.

In reviewing his plans as Chair of APEC next year, Prime Minister Chrétien said Canada will work closely with its partners to build on what was achieved in 1996 and to fulfil the directions established by leaders for 1997.

Canada will place emphasis on advancing trade and investment

liberalization, business facilitation, economic and technical co-operation and dialogue with the private sector. Emphasis will also be placed on involving youth and small- and medium-sized enterprises, as well as on developing infrastructure and addressing other issues that have an impact on prosperity, growth and employment.

Canada Hosts APEC Forum in 1997

In 1997, Canada will assume the chairmanship of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum. The overall mandate will be to manage APEC's agenda for trade and investment liberalization and economic and technical cooperation.

During the year, Canada will host three meetings of senior officials, several sectoral ministerial meetings, including trade, sustainable development, transportation, small and medium-sized enterprises, and energy, and several working group meetings.

As chair of the APEC process in 1997, Canada will be uniquely positioned to direct APEC's future course, as well as to take on challenges associated with doing business in the fastest-growing region in the world —

challenges such as customs procedures, harmonization of standards, market access, and market information.

Canada's stewardship will conclude in November 1997 with meetings of APEC's leaders and trade and foreign affairs ministers in Vancouver. They will review APEC's activities and, in particular, consult with senior business representatives of APEC member economies on facilitating business interests in the region.

The legacy of Canada's year as chair of the APEC forum will be a stronger awareness of Canada's Pacific dimension in the eyes of its Asia-Pacific partners, as well as a fuller understanding of the trade and investment opportunities the region holds for Canadian businesses.