

Also in 1998, the subcommittee drafted guidelines for working with business and developed a funding mechanism to facilitate private sector support for its work. The mechanism was approved by the APEC budget and administrative committee at its July 31, 1998, meeting in Singapore.

More than 200 participants from government and business attended the APEC Customs-Industry Dialogue held in Kuala Lumpur, June 8-9, 1998. Recommendations called for greater transparency; bridging the electronic commerce gap by encouraging developed APEC economies to share experience, information and best practices with less developed APEC economies; and developing a code of conduct. A working group has been established to draft the code.

### *Standards*

Variations in standards from one APEC economy to another mean that products and services have to be adapted for each new market. This increases business costs, which consumers eventually absorb.

Significant progress has been made in aligning domestic and international standards; and mutual recognition arrangements have been developed in areas such as telecommunications equipment standards, motor vehicle safety and vehicle emission standards, and standards for energy-consuming goods. In many cases, aligning standards means ensuring and recognizing the validity of testing and certification systems. The resulting reduction in paperwork and testing procedures means exporters save money and time. Aligning standards also means that consumers will be able to buy better and safer goods at lower prices. For example, APEC members have agreed to share information on toy safety to prevent faulty goods from one market appearing in another.

### *Electronic Commerce*

APEC leaders recognize the importance of electronic commerce and have directed officials to develop a program to establish a predictable and consistent legal and regulatory environment so all APEC economies can reap the benefits of electronic commerce. APEC economies are working to identify areas of outreach and training for small and medium enterprises; to reduce impediments to the introduction of electronic commerce in the region; to promote the public sector use of electronic commerce for developing paperless systems; to assess the impact of the Year 2000 problem; and to look for options and identify opportunities for technical co-operation and capacity building.