

and sustain growth in the region, APEC is working on a set of competition and regulatory reform principles to support the strengthening of markets.

Economic and Technical Co-operation

Enhancing economic and technical co-operation among members was a driving force behind the creation of APEC in 1989 and is essential to building capacity in APEC economies to meet the challenges of sustainable development and economic growth. Under the 1995 Osaka Action Agenda, an action plan was devised to structure economic and technical co-operation through work programs in areas such as energy, tourism, fisheries, transportation and telecommunications.

In 1996, ministers endorsed six priority themes for economic and technical co-operation: developing human resources; developing safe and efficient capital markets; strengthening economic infrastructure; harnessing technologies; safeguarding the quality of life through environmentally sound growth; and supporting small and medium enterprises. In Kuala Lumpur in 1998, leaders focused on developing human resources and harnessing technologies, and they directed ministers to develop a framework for the integration of women into APEC. Presently, APEC economies are co-operating in some 300 projects in the six priority areas, including initiatives aimed at alleviating the social impacts of the financial crisis.

Electronic Commerce

APEC is working toward a more predictable and consistent legal and regulatory environment that will allow all APEC economies to reap the benefits of electronic commerce (e-commerce). The forum is working to identify the needs of small and medium enterprises; reduce impediments to the introduction of e-commerce in the region; promote the public sector use of e-commerce for developing paperless systems; assess the impact of the Year 2000 problem; and look for options and identify opportunities for technical co-operation and capacity building.

Year 2000

The APEC leaders' meeting in Kuala Lumpur in 1998 identified the risk presented to the region by the Year 2000 (Y2K) problem. A symposium to examine the cross-border trade implications of Y2K was convened in Singapore in April 1999, co-sponsored by Canada, Japan and Singapore. The symposium reviewed APEC members' Y2K preparations, raised awareness of the trade facets of the Y2K challenge and compared best practices. As well, the symposium generated two initiatives: APEC networks of Y2K experts for key sectors of the economy and a new Y2K section within the APEC Web site. Canada prepared the latter for members seeking comprehensive and current sources of information and advice on Y2K.