

Trade and Investment

APEC's economic leaders are committed to achieving free and open trade and investment in the region by 2010 for the developed members and by 2020 for the developing members. APEC's liberalization efforts rest on a firm commitment by all members to an open trading system and market-based economic principles. APEC members make individual and collective commitments to liberalize trade on a most-favoured-nation basis, that is, benefits are extended to non-members as well.

APEC's trade and investment liberalization and facilitation agenda is advanced along two equally important routes. First, through individual action plans, member economies liberalize their trade regimes by removing tariffs and by non-tariff measures. Second, through collective action plans, member economies facilitate trade and reduce the costs for both consumers and producers in the region. While the individual plans drive APEC toward the goal of free and open trade in the region, members are currently trying to augment these plans with an initiative intended to liberalize trade in selected sectors. APEC remains committed to ensuring that its efforts to liberalize and facilitate trade in the region fully support the ongoing work of the World Trade Organization.

Trade and Investment Liberalization

Individual Action Plans

Individual action plans describe the state of each member's existing market access regime in 15 specific areas, and they set out each economy's plan for achieving free and open trade. The plans, which were implemented in January 1997, provide a comprehensive view of each trade regime. This increased transparency contributes to a more predictable business environment. The individual action plans are available on the APEC Secretariat Web site.

Early Voluntary Sectoral Liberalization

In Vancouver, APEC leaders endorsed an agreement by ministers that action should be taken with respect to early voluntary liberalization in 15 sectors. Nine sectors were selected to be advanced throughout 1998 and implemented in 1999. The nine sectors are energy, environmental goods and services, fish and fish products, forest products, chemicals, medical equipment and instruments, toys, gems and jewellery, and the telecommunications mutual recognition arrangement.

Despite the current economic and financial problems affecting the region over the past year, officials from APEC member economies have been developing framework agreements for the selected sectors. Liberalization in these sectors would augment the actions being undertaken through the individual action plans.