



## APEC 2021 – achievements against New Zealand’s objectives and policy priorities

While hosting the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum virtually in the midst of a global pandemic was challenging, New Zealand progressed our 5 objectives and 3 policy priorities:

### **Objective 1: Lead a Collaborative Regional Response to COVID-19**

Throughout 2021, APEC NZ drove a collaborative response across APEC to the health and economic impacts of COVID-19. As well as providing meaningful benefits for APEC peoples, this demonstrated that APEC is able to respond effectively to challenges such as COVID-19.

By achieving consensus on the [Aotearoa Plan of Action](#) (APA), New Zealand played a decisive role in setting APEC’s trade and economic agenda for the next 20 years, ensuring that our values are embedded in the region’s blueprint.

### ***Policy Priority: Economic and Trade Policies to Strengthen Recovery***

Through the Informal Leaders’ Retreat, the Finance Ministers’ process and the Structural Reform Ministerial, APEC forged shared understandings around macro and microeconomic policy tools to sustain economies through the crisis and drive innovation in the post-pandemic era in a way that will support inclusive and sustainable growth. This included a focus on the future of fiscal policy and on Environment, Social and Governance investing which helped expand regional knowledge sharing in the face of the pandemic.

On COVID-19 specifically, Ministers Responsible for Trade built consensus on facilitating trade in vaccines by: rejecting export restrictions; supporting the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS)-waiver for COVID-19 medicines; facilitating accelerated movement through ports for vaccines and other essential goods and in some cases, by cutting tariffs on vaccines and related products. APEC committed to look at simplifying COVID-19 measures for air crew, as part of APEC’s broader support for return of international trade.

On other trade policy matters, APEC led the way globally in signalling its support for the World Trade Organization. It eschewed protectionism by rejecting competitive devaluations and reducing costs to business of border clearances, including increasing use of digital clearance processes.

***Policy Priority: Increasing Inclusion and Sustainability for Recovery***

In addition to fiscal and structural policies that drive an inclusive recovery, our effort focused on supporting SMEs, women and indigenous peoples.

New Zealand's unique contribution was ensuring the region's 270 million Indigenous Peoples had, for the first-time, a place in APEC's agenda, where they had previously been ignored. A key achievement was the hosting of a number of Indigenous economy related meetings across public sector agencies (such as New Zealand Customs Service, Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment, Ministry for Primary Industries and Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade), including a Senior Official Policy Dialogue, and the production of an accompanying report on "Understanding and Valuing Indigenous Economies within APEC".

We built on APEC's existing work programme on women's economic empowerment, with a focus on how to reverse the US\$1 trillion shock of women being driven out of the workforce due to the pandemic. We continued the work on mainstreaming, with over 100 activities underway across APEC contributing to women and inclusive growth.

New Zealand hosted a SME Ministerial centred on small business owners' needs in the pandemic.

On sustainability, New Zealand was successful in cementing APEC's focus on climate change for years to come. In addition to having climate change literally on the agenda at the APEC Ministerial Meeting by having the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Executive Secretary and the Pacific Island Forum (PIF) Chair speak, this was accomplished through the strong reflection of climate change in the Aotearoa Plan of Action and the mainstreaming of climate change across APEC's work this year, including through its structural reform agenda.

A mandate to operationalise a voluntary standstill on fossil fuel subsidies was agreed, and we made progress in getting APEC to facilitate trade in environmental goods and services.

Hosting APEC provided an opportunity to pursue a number of oceans and fisheries related initiatives including on Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing and seabird conservation.

Ministers adopted the Food Security Ministerial Statement and delivered the Food Security Roadmap Towards 2030 which aims to ensure that people always have access to sustainable, sufficient, safe, affordable and nutritious food.

***Policy Priority: Innovation and a Digitally Enabled Recovery***

Alongside the demonstration effect achieved by New Zealand hosting a fully virtual year, within APEC there was agreement on the importance of the digital economy in driving economic growth through and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.

New Zealand led a wide range of initiatives across APEC's broad agenda, including projects on paperless trade, innovation policies, rural broadband access, digital skills training, online learning, and interoperable digital standards to support the food value chain.

The Aotearoa Plan of Action established a number of additional work streams to support digitalisation and innovation.

Our APEC host year was also an opportunity to promote initiatives such as the Digital Economy Partnership Agreement.

## **Objective 2: Demonstrate the Relevance of APEC**

### **APEC's relevance for the region:**

Aotearoa New Zealand ensured APEC's agenda was relevant to the issues the region was grappling with, making a difference for governments at home and regionally. Leaders' and Ministerial meetings attracted excellent attendance and were the engine room for progress in 2021.

We ensured confidence in APEC's functioning through a year of consensus on ambitious Leaders' and Ministerial decisions, reinforcing an APEC culture of dialogue and compromise.

We succeeded in putting APEC on a stronger footing for future years. The Aotearoa Plan of Action sets APEC's agenda for the next 20 years, with things that matter to New Zealand embedded in it, such as indigenous and climate change.

### **APEC's Relevance for New Zealand:**

APEC is the region's premier trade and economic forum. New Zealand benefits when the institution is in good health and when we have the greatest influence over the direction of regional growth and the strength of the recovery. As hosts we were able to shape the regional agenda so that it responded to the issues New Zealanders cared about most – the pandemic, climate change, indigenous and inclusion.

The responsibility of hosting APEC also provided an opportunity to enhance New Zealand's reputation and influence. This was achieved across a range of measures:

- 43 bilateral meetings were held at Leader or Ministerial level throughout the year.
- We leveraged our position as Chair to demonstrate the power of regionalism and to promote a stronger connection between APEC and the Pacific Islands Forum

### **APEC Business Advisory Council (ABAC):**

Aotearoa New Zealand underscored the importance of having the voice of business at the heart of APEC's work, supporting engagement across the APEC meeting schedule, including for the first time an ABAC dialogue at the Informal Finance Ministers' Meeting in June 2021.

Other outputs included recommendations around coordination of pandemic responses, a World Trade Organization Statement, ongoing championing of progress on FTAAP (Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific), an innovative Indigenous Business Leaders' Dialogue, recommendations on digital inclusion, a set of Climate Change Business Leadership Principles, as well as strong inputs into the APEC Food Security Roadmap 2030. In 2021, ABAC's New Zealand members pursued the theme "people, place and prosperity - tāngata, taiao me te taurikura".

### **Voices of the Future (VOTF):**

With the objective of demonstrating APEC's relevance to youth, we helped revitalise Voices of the Future. Hosted as part of APEC Leaders' Week, the event brought together approximately 90 youth delegates from around the region and was livestreamed to a wider audience.

A further 45 New Zealand students participated in a parallel online domestic event organised by the APEC New Zealand Voices Trust and Auckland University of Technology.

VOTF 2021 provided opportunities for young people to learn about and discuss APEC-relevant themes. The event culminated in the handover of a Youth Declaration to the New Zealand Prime Minister, who addressed the delegates and took part in a Q&A.

### **Objective 3: Position New Zealand as an Enabler of Digital Diplomacy**

New Zealand hosted around 350 formal meetings, totalling more than 1,000 hours on a dedicated meeting platform, which included an integrated event management system. Cyber security remained robust throughout, with no disruption to the meetings.

Our personalised delegate support, including "concierging" onto the platform and assistance with presentations, ensured around 8,500 delegates used the system successfully. Their experience was enhanced by infusion of a sense of Aotearoa New Zealand throughout the meeting through opening welcome videos, use of te reo, consistent presentation of Aotearoa New Zealand's theme and visual identity, a New Zealand music playlist and in the choice of gifts.

The quality of meetings and the achievement of consensus statements was tied to our adaptation of meeting agendas for the virtual context, extensive pre and between meeting contact with delegates on substance, and an early decision to host meetings at time that best suited the majority of economies (despite the late hour in New Zealand).

The results of our surveys of participants show that their overall experience of the year was rated at 4.3 out of 5 while New Zealand's hospitality was rated at 4.5 out of 5.

Approximately 550 media were accredited to cover APEC. The APEC virtual media conferences attracted top international media (including CNN, BBC, ABC, Channel News Asia, Bloomberg, Caixin, Reuters, Associated Press, The Australian, SBS and the Sydney Morning Herald). APEC NZ's media monitoring service identified over 14,500 media results mentioning APEC, with significant spikes around every virtual media

conference. iSentia reporting showed an usually high level of positive sentiment, high impact scores and a strong focus on Aotearoa New Zealand's key messages.

Overall, New Zealand used digital diplomacy effectively in the APEC context, and was seen to have done so.

**Objective 4: Demonstrate New Zealand's partnership with Māori and inclusive approach by connecting Indigenous Peoples to the work of APEC:**

Beyond the work done to get indigenous economic empowerment embedded in the APEC agenda, New Zealand concluded an Indigenous Peoples' Economic and Trade Cooperation Arrangement (IPETCA). The IPETCA, which is not part of APEC, is an open plurilateral instrument, committing economies and Indigenous Peoples to work together to strengthen the economic empowerment of Indigenous Peoples.

A commitment to working in partnership with Māori on a virtual APEC was formalised by a Memorandum of Understanding with eight Māori entities, named "Te Rangitūkupu". Significant achievements included leading an Indigenous to Indigenous dialogue, ensuring Maori interests were reflected in IPETCA, selecting rangatahi scholars, and producing virtual content to showcase Māori businesses and culture.

**Objective 5: Profile New Zealand to support our Trade Recovery Strategy**

The significant investment in communications, brand and media, together with the positioning of New Zealand as a leader in digital diplomacy, ensured New Zealand's high profile internationally during a year when borders were shut.

The CEO Summit profiled Aotearoa New Zealand in support of our trade recovery strategy. It was opened by a keynote address from the New Zealand Prime Minister, reaching over 1000 local and international delegates, and providing a unique opportunity for New Zealand business to engage with world leaders, influential CEOs, thought leaders and investors from around the region.

A line-up of world-renowned speakers, including German Chancellor Angela Merkel, human rights lawyer Amal Clooney, Microsoft Chief Executive Brad Smith, PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) global chair Bob Moritz, together with 9 APEC Leaders, was delivered online via a high-quality off-the-shelf customised technology platform.

The two-day summit focused on the biggest challenges facing the planet as we navigate the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change. We showcased our unique New Zealand identity through collaboration with Ngāti Whātua, and regular use of te reo Māori throughout, supported by a suite of video content that showcased innovative New Zealand businesses. The summit attracted significant media coverage.

The CEO Summit material is now [available on YouTube](#)