

CLOSER GOVERNMENT TO BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP URGED TO OVERCOME DIGITAL DIVIDE IN OECD-APEC

Singapore, January 13, 2003 -- "Strengthening the partnership between the government and private sector to maximize digital economy access" will be a key message the Executive Director of the APEC Secretariat will deliver the OECD-APEC Global Forum on the Knowledge Economy in Honolulu on January 15.

Ambassador Piamsak Milintachinda said access to the knowledge-based economy is a fundamental necessity for growth in all APEC and OECD economies.

"Every APEC and OECD economy, regardless of its level of economic development, is home to people who have the potential to be leaders in the digital economy if only they were given the opportunity," said Ambassador Piamsak.

"Technology of today such as the Internet means that young people in every corner of the earth should be able to access education and training in ways that were not possible in the past.

"Collectively the government and the private sector can work together to broaden access to the digital economy.

"Working together, Governments and the private sector from APEC and the OECD already undertake projects designed to increase access to the digital economy. There is always room to strengthen this government and private sector cooperation.

"The private sector has a role to play alongside governments in investing in human capacity and raising skill levels.

"Current priorities for APEC governments include fostering more dynamic market conditions that will encourage business to invest and trade in areas that have limited access to the digital economy.

"The key tool for APEC to open up the digital economy is the reform and liberalization of trade and investment policies in APEC economies.

"The leaders of APEC economies have also made a commitment in the 'APEC Digital Divide Blueprint for Action' to triple the number of people in the region with direct internet access by 2005.

"By 2010 the APEC goal is that all people in the APEC region will have at least community-based access to the Internet.

"This forum will provide the opportunity for me to outline APEC's digital economy related programs to the OECD and other interested parties.

Ambassador Piamsak said that as governments reduce barriers to trade and investment there is an increasing responsibility on the private sector to invest in human capacity building.

"Reducing barriers to trade and investment creates opportunities for business to introduce and develop the skills required for developing areas to participate in the digital economy.

"Ultimately private sector investment in training and skills development will not only create jobs, but will provide business with a local pool of skilled workers to draw from."

Ambassador Piamsak said promoting the knowledge-based economy is one of the central themes of the 2003 APEC year hosted by Thailand.

“The APEC theme for 2003 is: ‘A World of Differences: Partnership for the Future.’

“The people of all APEC-OECD economies have great entrepreneurial capacity that comes from our diverse cultures and histories.

“We must work together to ensure that we share the best of our skills, knowledge and talent to build a stronger global economy that will benefit all people.

“Increased trade, more jobs and higher living standards are the end result of people in all APEC economies bringing their natural skills to the global market place.

“By sharing and developing our strengths we all benefit.”

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