

REPORT TO THE OECD PARIS FORUM OCTOBER 12-13 OCTOBER 1999

APEC ELECTRONIC COMMERCE ACTIVITIES.

As mandated by APEC Ministers in Kuala Lumpur in 1998, the APEC Steering Group for Electronic Commerce was established in 1999. The purpose of the Steering Group is to ensure continued co-ordination and pursuit of the APEC Blueprint on Electronic Commerce. The Steering Group is co-chaired by Thailand and the United States and consists of representatives from member economies and other APEC fora. It has welcomed significant participation by the business sector.

Steering Group Meeting, Auckland, June 27 and 28 1999

The Steering Group held its first meeting in Auckland, New Zealand on June 27 and 28 1999. The meeting included a workshop on legal frameworks and sessions on-paperless trading and readiness assessment, as well as a review of e-commerce work by other APEC fora.

Key Activities

A. Legal Foundations for Electronic Commerce

The presentations and discussions at the workshop on the Legal Foundations for electronic commerce highlighted the importance of appropriate legal frameworks for establishing trust and confidence both for domestic and international e-commerce.

The Steering Group concluded that given the range of views, there was a need for further study of certain legal issues. By February 2000, the Steering Group will ascertain what further work may be required within APEC to identify and resolve legal regulatory impediments, and suggest how this work might be progressed together with what options there might be for working with UNCITRAL and other multilateral fora on "legal foundations."

B. Electronic Commerce Readiness Assessment Tool

A self-assessment and planning tool has been produced that can be used by economies, countries, cities, and communities to help identify problems and develop strategies in order to benefit fully from electronic commerce. It can be accessed at <http://infoserv2.ita.doc.gov/otea/apec/Comments.nsf/shortcuts/readitool>

C. Paperless Trading

The APEC Blueprint on Electronic Commerce calls for the achievement of the paperless trading initiative by 2005 for developed and 2010 for developing economies or as soon

as possible thereafter. The Group agreed to a commitment by APEC economies and business to making paperless trading a priority issue.

D. Virtual Electronic Commerce Multimedia Resource Net (VECMRN)

A Virtual Electronic Commerce Multimedia Resource Net (VECMRN) has been set up by Canada, Singapore and Thailand. The physical Electronic Commerce Training Centre (ECTC) is one of the two components of the VECMRN. It was established in Bangkok and is already operational. However the development of the other component, the Virtual Information Network, is still pending due to technical difficulties.

E. Measurement of Electronic Commerce

The Steering Group is creating an informal experts group on measurement and indicators of electronic commerce. This is in recognition of the benefits to both policy makers and the private sector of consistent and comparable definitions, and the development, so far as practicable, of APEC-wide indicators of e-commerce.

G. Consumer Protection

The Steering Group will develop an initiative on consumer protection focusing on information sharing, benchmarking and best practices for 2000.

The Eleventh APEC Ministerial Meeting Joint Statement, Auckland, New Zealand 9-10 September, 1999.

As a result of the work of the Steering Group APEC Trade Ministers included the following comments on electronic commerce in their joint statement:

Electronic commerce has the potential to provide an extraordinary stimulus to regional growth and trade. The private sector has the key role in driving change and innovation, and the primary role of the public sector is to ensure a favourable regulatory environment for e-commerce to flourish. Economies should pay particular attention to the needs of consumers and small business. To this end Ministers:

- encouraged economies to take advantage of the self-assessment tool for e-commerce readiness to be developed by officials and the private sector, and tasked officials to further refine the assessment tool and report back next year;
- directed officials to develop effective data and indicators of e-commerce uptake in APEC economies;
- encouraged economies to consider the UNCITRAL model law in developing their regulatory frameworks;
- instructed officials to initiate work on consumer protection, focusing on information sharing, benchmarking and best practices;
- directed officials to develop an APEC-wide plan to support use of e-commerce by small and medium enterprises.

Ministers accorded high priority to the targets, stipulated in the Blueprint for Action on Electronic Commerce, for achieving paperless trading, where possible, by 2005 for developed economies and 2010 for developing economies, or as soon as possible thereafter, and instructed officials to increase their efforts to achieve these targets, and to report to Ministers Responsible for Trade at their next meeting in 2000. Ministers welcomed proposals from Japan to host an APEC E-commerce Convention and an E-commerce leaders' seminar and by Brunei Darussalam and Japan to co-host a Workshop on e-commerce in June next year.

Documents

Documents relating to the activities of the Steering Group are held on the Steering Group web site at <http://www.ecommerce.gov/apec/>. The full Eleventh APEC Ministerial Meeting Joint Statement is at <http://www.apec.org/nz/n/index.htm>.