

## **Minister John Deng's intervention at 2023 APEC Ministerial Meeting (AMM)**

### **Session II: Building a resilient and interconnected region that advances broad-based economic prosperity.**

*- How can our experiences and successes in the WTO at the Twelfth WTO Ministerial Conference (MC12) inform our approach to MC13?*

*- How are APEC economies implementing sustainable trade and investment reforms that include women and those with untapped economic potential, and what more can be done to facilitate this process?*

1. First of all, I would like to thank the United States for hosting this year's very successful APEC meeting and for setting this session's theme: "Building a resilient and interconnected region that advances broad-based economic prosperity," which is of great significance to all APEC Members.
2. After a short hiatus, the WTO's 12th Ministerial Conference was successfully held in Geneva, where we witnessed historic achievements in the face of a global pandemic, recurring natural disasters, and the ongoing depletion of natural resources. Through Director-General Ngozi OKONJO-IWEALA's tireless efforts, MC12 was ultimately successful in addressing some of the most pressing issues of our time, with consensus being reached on fishery subsidies and vaccines.
3. Looking ahead to MC 13, while the perils of the global pandemic are mostly behind us, we are still confronted with

the dire challenges of food security and supply chain disruptions brought about by climate change and geopolitical unrest. There is also a need for Members to reach consensus on dispute settlement reform, so to restore confidence in the multilateral trading system and ensure the proper functioning of the WTO. In any event, while substantive issues can be addressed piecemeal, the process itself must remain transparent so as to ensure that all Members understand each other's interests.

4. Recent global economic and trade developments have also demonstrated the responsibility all APEC Members have to cultivate a freer, more transparent, sustainable, inclusive, and rules-based environment. In fact, sustainability and inclusivity are complementary, and we must preserve in our efforts to prevent the marginalization of underrepresented groups, such as SMEs, women, and Indigenous peoples, while doing more to unlock their economic potential.
5. So I would like to take this opportunity to briefly share some of the results of these efforts. With respect to gender equality, we have the highest ratio of female legislators – 43.4% – in all of Asia, with women accounting for more than 50% of all mayors. Our women's entrepreneurship index – 36.4% – is also the highest in Asia and fourth in the world, and the financial resources made available to our Aboriginal enterprises has caused their number to double over the past seven years. As for SMEs, we have about 1.6 million employing more than 9.2 million people. While large businesses can reduce carbon emissions on a larger scale, SMEs also play an important role. To ease the substantial burdens carbon emissions compliance imposes on SMEs, we

have proposed a five-year plan (2022-2026) to invest NT\$95 billion (approximately US\$3 billion) to facilitate the digital and green transformation of SMEs while improving their overall competitiveness.

6. With the 21st century being the era of digitalization and AI, we would also like to emphasize the positive role that digital technology can play in promoting economic sustainability, inclusiveness, and expanding economic participation of disadvantaged groups. This is why we launched the Cloud Generation Industry Digital Transformation Plan in 2020, and have since developed more than 1,100 cloud technology tools to accelerate the digital transformation of SMEs. To date, more than 50,000 companies, including over 2,000 businesses in rural areas, have applied to make use of these tools, and we will continue to promote their use throughout our industries.
7. At the same time, however, we should also be mindful of the negative impacts of the digital divide, which is why the role of government will be crucial, and we hope to share our experience in promoting digital equality.
8. In closing, we look forward to collaborating more closely with all Members – including Peru, which is set to host the upcoming meeting in 2024 – in order to ensure the ongoing success of APEC.

## **AMM Working Lunch on Anti-Corruption**

1. Corruption significantly impacts public governance and the welfare of citizens, diminishing the efficiency of trade and commerce as well as investors' confidence. It raises operating costs, resulting in economic losses, and obstructs the sustainable development of our society and environment. Moreover, corruption exacerbates the unequal distribution of resources, perpetuating inequality among vulnerable groups such as workers, women, and micro, small and medium enterprises, thereby compromising the sustainability and inclusiveness of economic development.
2. In response to the threats posed by corruption, we have undertaken substantial measures to prevent and combat corruption:
  - 1) We have in effect adopted the norms outlined in the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC). On our own initiative in 2018 and 2022, we invited anti-corruption experts from Transparency International to review its anti-corruption practices and garnered recognition for its efforts.
  - 2) Furthermore, since 2009, we have implemented the "Integrity Building Action Plan", which covers public governance, corporate integrity, and education, among others, to reinforce its anti-corruption efforts. This plan has undergone continuous updates, incorporating recommendations from the expert reviews.

3. Drawing from our anti-corruption experience, we recommend focusing on the following priorities:
  - 1) First, involve the private sector. Aligned with UNCAC's core objectives, we emphasize private sector involvement in our Integrity Building Action Plan, including formulating corporate integrity rules, fostering a social consensus of zero tolerance against corruption, and enhancing ethical awareness through education.
  - 2) Secondly, improve governance transparency. To this end, we established the Government Procurement Integrity Platform in 2016 to enhance cross-agency cooperation and transparency for public projects and minimize corruption risks.
  - 3) Third, promote international cooperation. Cross-border enforcement cooperation is essential to successfully combat global corruption. As an active participant in APEC's Anti-Corruption and Transparency Experts Working Group, we support the early adoption of the Framework for APEC Anti-Corruption Thematic Areas 2023-2026 to enhance international cooperation on eliminating safe harbors for corruption in the Asia-Pacific region.
4. In addition, I am delighted to share with you that, in June of this year, we signed the first agreement of our Initiative on 21st Century Initiative on Trade with the United States, which includes a dedicated chapter on anti-corruption. The chapter established high standards for combating anti-

corruption, including enhancing ant-corruption enforcement mechanisms, strengthening private sector compliance by encouraging independent internal accounting controls and compliance programs, and incorporating whistleblower provisions to protect external auditors from improper legal action.

5. We hope the high standards from this agreement can serve as a stand bearer in the Asia-Pacific region. We are more than happy to share our experience.