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APEC'S COUNTER-TERRORISM TASK FORCE

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Overview

The need to secure the Asia-Pacific region's economy and trade against terrorism has become a major focus of Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)'s agenda, spearheaded by the Counter-Terrorism Task Force (CTTF). The Counter Terrorism Task Force is committed to coordinating the implementation of APEC Leaders' Statement on Fighting Terrorism and Promoting Growth agreed to in October 2002. Its role is to identify and assess counter-terrorism needs, coordinate capacity building and technical assistance programs, cooperate with international and regional organizations and facilitate cooperation between APEC fora on counter-terrorism issues.

Priorities and activities

APEC represents sixty percent of the world's GDP and half of its trade. Most of the world's top mega ports are in APEC economies, as are most of the world's busiest airports. Thus one of APEC's key counter-terrorism priorities is the Secure Trade in the APEC Region initiative (STAR) which is aimed at securing and enhancing the flow of goods and people through measures to protect cargo, ships, international aviation and people in transit.

Delegates at the STAR Conference held in Chile in March 2004 agreed that implementing new security measures and securing a more stable economic environment requires collaboration between the public and private sectors and a sharing of information between governments. However, concerns were expressed about the impact that security measures could have on trade facilitation. Taking note of the concern flagged by the business community on the additional costs generated by security-related measures APEC Ministers in their November 2004 statement underscored the need to secure trade while removing obstacles to trade and minimizing costs to businesses. A global approach towards the full

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implementation of these measures is vital and it is in every economy's own interest to see that their neighbours and trading partners also proceed to meet the requirements.

This year's APEC STAR Conference will be held in Incheon at the end of February[3]. Delegates will have an opportunity for an open exchange of views on the relationship between security and trade facilitation and to participate in panels on Maritime and Aviation security measures. They will also be able to view STAR related devices and technologies such as : hazardous material detectors, biometrics identification systems, container inspection systems, goods-flows control systems using RFID technology, ship security alert system, VMS (Vanning Management System), AIS (Automatic Identification System), customs procedure automation system, etc.

A high priority is also placed on international technical cooperation and the involvement of international financial institutions. Capacity building and the assessment of needs are both important to the successful implementation of APEC's Counter-terrorism related activities. To that end APEC's CTTF has developed the Counter Terrorism Action Plans (CTAPs). CTAPs are based on the APEC Leaders' Statement on Fighting Terrorism and Promoting Growth in 2002 and security-related work underway in APEC fora. Each CTAP provides a concise check-list of counter-terrorism measures being undertaken by APEC Member Economies to achieve the key elements of the STAR initiative.

All APEC members are encouraged to detail what they can offer in the capacity building area. APEC members also have the opportunity to look carefully at their needs so that capacity building can be applied where it will be most useful. This year the Counter Terrorism Task Force will be undertaking a rigorous cross-analysis of the CTAPs with the aim of using APEC's extensive sectoral expertise to develop a regional set of concrete needs and specific themes, to which donors could respond.

Projects which cover document examination and fraud detection training; standards in travel document security and related issuance systems; and standard codes of professional conduct and service for immigration officers were completed in 2004. And in 2005 a trial of a pilot Regional Movement Alert List (RMAL) System, as well as a trial using an enhanced version of the Customs Asia-Pacific Enforcement Reporting System (CAPERS) to test improved information sharing on passport data, and to address legal issues will be undertaken.

APEC in cooperation with the Asia Development Bank (ADB) has established the ADB's Cooperation Fund for Regional Trade and Financial Security Initiative (FRTFSI). The objectives of the fund are to both undertake counter terrorism related capacity building in the region both to enhance airport and seaport security (which includes cargo and people movements), as well as to combat money laundering and terrorism financing. It is also designed to enhance the ADB's capacity to develop and implement regional counter terrorism capacity building initiatives.

Work on combating terrorism is ongoing in APEC's sectoral fora. The implementation of an inter-modal supply chain security initiative in the next two years will be the focus of APEC's Transportation Working Group as will be the continued implementation of maritime and aviation security measures, consistent with international law, with emphasis on the implementation of the International Ship and Port Facility Security Code (ISPS Code).

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[3] For details on the STAR III Conference visit APEC Korea's 2005 website at http://www.apec2005.org

APEC's Finance sector will focus on increased compliance with accepted international standards to counter money laundering and terrorist financing, and fostering closer cooperation through the exchange of financial intelligence among financial intelligence units and customs. And the Telecommunications and Information Working Group (TEL) continues activities in the area of Cyber Security and Cyber Crime within the scope of securing telecommunications through the exchange of experiences and good practices. APEC member economies have agreed to strengthen their respective economies' ability to combat cyber crime by enacting domestic legislation consistent with the provisions of international legal instruments, including the Convention on Cyber Crime (2001) and relevant United Nations General Assembly Resolutions

At this year's Economic Leader's Meeting Ministers identified key elements of effective export control systems and established guidelines on the control of Man-Portable Air Defence Systems (MANPADS). Member economies have committed to work individually to develop measures consistent with these guidelines and, as appropriate, with efforts taken at the United Nations, its agencies and other relevant international organizations, to prevent terrorists from obtaining and using these weapons to attack civilian aviation.

While much progress has been made in the short time that APEC's Counter-terrorism Task Force was established much remains to be done. In November 2004 in Santiago, Chile APEC Leaders advised APEC officials that progress on APEC's commitments to dismantle trans-national terrorist groups, eliminate the danger posed by proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, their delivery systems and related items, and confront other direct threats to the security of our region in the future will be reviewed in 2005.