

25 April 2026

**His Excellency Wang Wentao**

Chair, Meeting of APEC Ministers Responsible for Trade  
Minister of Commerce  
**CHINA**

Dear Minister Wang,

The APEC Business Advisory Council (ABAC) serves as the voice for APEC's large, diverse and vibrant business community. We write today to express our deep concern at the acute stresses on the global trade and investment environment, and to offer our recommendations for the bold action that we believe is needed to restore the region's trajectory to sustained prosperity.

Severe shocks to energy markets are disrupting supply chains, threatening energy security and food production, and adding fresh urgency to the longstanding challenges facing our region. The latter include policy volatility, rising trade and investment restrictions and harmful climate and other environmental impacts. These factors are weighing on the global trade outlook. GDP growth is also forecast to slow across Asia and some other APEC economies into 2027; renewed inflation threatens further strain on businesses and households barely emerging from a difficult period. Unfortunately, the outcomes of the recent 14<sup>th</sup> WTO Ministerial Conference have done little to help us tackle these complex challenges.

In short, the stakes for business confidence, jobs, living standards and long-term prosperity in our region could not be higher – and if we fail to develop effective solutions, the impacts will be greatest for those who can least afford them: micro and small businesses, women entrepreneurs and Indigenous communities.

As a first step, we urge Ministers to consider a standstill on new trade restrictions. This would help reduce uncertainty and mitigate escalating costs.

Looking beyond immediate priorities, we call on Ministers to take action to reduce trade and business costs, improve productivity, boost resilience and unlock new opportunities, and specifically to:

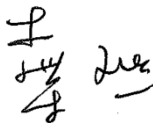
- **Accelerate progress towards the Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (FTAAP)** by prioritizing work on bottom-up practical deliverables in the areas of greatest impact for business, as well as top-down convergence in trade rules architecture. Progress on practical outcomes will build momentum toward APEC's vision for an open trade environment amongst our economies. **We are urging Trade Ministers to speed up progress in key areas of interest to business, and would welcome regular updates on progress in these areas.** Our FTAAP Statement includes more detail.
- **Safeguard and strengthen connectivity and resilience**, including in supply chains, by working together to identify and address vulnerabilities and chokepoints, ensure responsible sourcing of internationally traded minerals, facilitate legitimate trade, including addressing transboundary waste dumping and misdeclared cargo, and enhance supply chain sustainability and transparency. For our part, we are updating our Supply Chain Resilience Toolkit.
- **Invest in trade and logistics infrastructure and reduce barriers to maritime and air transport**, including by building more usable passenger, cargo and secondary-city aviation connections across the region, recognizing that air connectivity is a key enabler of business mobility, investment, trade, tourism and education. Our Connectivity Statement includes more detail.

- **Advance market diversification strategies**, including improved access to market intelligence, trade facilitation tools and capacity building for businesses, particularly MSMEs, to engage in new markets.
- **Tackle rising non-tariff barriers (NTBs) on food trade**, such as burdensome or unscientific technical requirements, by prioritizing the application of the APEC Cross-Cutting Principles on Non-Tariff Measures and other actions to enhance food security and sustainability.
- **Broaden the benefits of technological transformation by removing barriers to digital trade and digitalization**, including through establishing a permanent APEC-wide prohibition on tariffs on digital products. Other early priorities include universal paperless trade, enabled through capacity building undertaken by the APEC Centre of Excellence for Paperless Trade (ACCEPT), an interoperable regulatory environment for digitally delivered services, adoption of responsible AI in key sectors, reduction of online scams and fraud; and responsible development and application, shared governance initiatives and enhanced literacy for quantum technology.
- **Step up work to remove structural barriers to women’s economic empowerment, including in leadership and decision-making roles**. ABAC’s Equal Pay Framework will aid in boosting women’s productive engagement in the economy. Strengthening the care economy as critical economic infrastructure will similarly support women’s economic participation.

Our theme this year is “Openness, Connectivity, Synergy”. It reflects our conviction that open markets, enhanced connectivity and deeper economic integration will enable our region to be more than the sum of its parts. Our accompanying report and statements provide further detail of business priorities.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss our recommendations with you in May.

Yours sincerely,



**Li Fanrong**  
ABAC Chair 2026