

**PECC Statement
APEC Ministerial Meeting (AMM)
29-30 October 2025**

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On behalf of the members of the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (PECC), we thank you for the opportunity to address this Ministerial Meeting.

PECC is a regional organization established in 1980 and consists of tripartite networks of individuals from government, business, academic/thinktank, and civil society. It is organized into 24 member committees across the Asia-Pacific. PECC's mission statement is "actively support economic cooperation and sustainable growth for an open and stable Pacific Community by leveraging tripartite collaboration and expertise to deliver evidence-based research insights, fostering inclusive effective dialogues, and proactively providing forward-looking and actionable solutions". PECC's ongoing work supports this year's APEC agenda, "Building a Sustainable Tomorrow" and its three priorities – Connect, Innovate, and Prosper.

Innovate and Prosper

Our recently released flagship publication, State of the Region (SOTR) 2025-2026, has a thematic focus on "Trade Policies in A Disrupted World and the Risk of Disruption". The SOTR is supplemented by our expert opinion survey conducted from June to August 2025. We gathered responses from more than 500 thought leaders from government, business, media, civil society, academia and thinktank communities from 24 Asia-Pacific economies. The result underscores the importance and urgency of digital and AI cooperation at the regional level. 66% of the regional experts identify "facilitating adoption and risk management of emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence" as among the Top 5 priorities for APEC Leaders. The issue is equally important for business, government, and civil society players, with more than 72% of each group citing it as a priority.

Our project on AI has fostered multi-stakeholder dialogues and advanced the discussions on harnessing opportunities for regional growth while mitigating risks associated with new technologies. For example, the High-Level Dialogue on "The Role of Regional Cooperation in the Governance of Artificial Intelligence" was co-organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Peru and PECC in August 2024 in Peru. The discussion underscored the need for regional collaboration in AI governance in several areas ranging from AI development to ethical use of technologies, as well as stressed the importance of balancing innovation and regulation. Also, the Seminar on "Responsible Adoption of Generative-Purpose AI" was held in September 2024 in the USA. Experts agreed that cooperation on AI governance needs to move beyond voluntary industry self-regulation toward globally coordinated and accountable structures that embed safety and equity in development and deployment phases of general-purpose AI. Priority should be given to developing inclusive, transparent mechanisms for defining acceptable risks as well as boosting participation of underrepresented players in AI rulemaking. Moreover, the Conference on "Asia-Pacific Artificial Intelligence (AI) Governance Accelerator and Preparing for AI

Transformation” in July 2025 in Singapore identified key collaboration areas to be pushed forward within APEC. They were: (1) AI safety research; (2) transparency in AI development; (3) testing of AI systems; (4) a trusted AI ecosystem for public good; and (5) development of common AI ethics and governance frameworks.

The 32nd PECC General Meeting co-hosted by the Republic of Korea and the Korea National Committee for the Pacific Economic Cooperation (KOPEC) was held in Seoul in August on the sidelines of APEC SOM 3 and related meetings. It had the overall theme of “Reimagining Asia-Pacific Cooperation: Trade, AI, and Demographics in a Shifting Global Landscape”. The discussion highlighted the need for responsible innovation, equitable access, and interoperability as well as updated metrics to effectively gauge its impact of emerging technologies on industries and societies.

Connect

Our SOTR expert survey identifies “increased protectionism and trade wars” as the top risk to growth in the APEC region. The issue was cited by 88% of respondents as one of their Top 5 risks, the highest level since 2018. Concern over this issue has surged sharply in recent years. “Global supply chain disruption” also ranks among the Top 5 risks, selected by 69% of respondents. Business respondents show notably stronger concern, with over 70% citing it as a key growth risk compared to lower shares among non-business participants. Experts call on APEC Leaders to prioritize “mitigating risks from rising protectionism and trade wars” and “strengthening supply chain resilience and efficiency to reduce disruptions.” The findings underscore the urgency for policymakers to act collectively on these fronts.

Our survey results reaffirm the WTO’s critical role in maintaining stability within an increasingly uncertain trade landscape. Against the backdrop of rising protectionism, survey participants express support for rules-based multilateral cooperation under the WTO. 47% of them anticipate their authorities will “very likely” or “likely” increase backing for the Organization. 59% of respondents believe their policymakers would leverage the WTO to propel economic collaboration. In addition, 57% of survey subjects rank “supporting and strengthening the multilateral trading system, especially the WTO” as among Top 5 priorities for APEC Leaders.

The survey also underscores the importance of strengthening regional trade and economic cooperation as a key strategy for lessening the adverse effects of protectionist measures. Over 85% of respondents believe their governments are “very likely” and “likely” to enhance Asia-Pacific economic cooperation and integration. Among regional forums, APEC stands out as the most relevant framework, with about 79% of respondents expecting policymakers to further leverage the forum. As an incubator of ideas, APEC’s strength lies in its ability to convene multi-stakeholder dialogues, build consensus, and pilot collective solutions to address shared challenges. Its flexibility and voluntary, non-binding features are core advantages that allow diverse economies to collaborate. These elements enable APEC to serve as a key driving force for Asia-Pacific economic cooperation.

In terms of specific approaches to push forward regional economic cooperation, the PECC's 32nd General Meeting examined multiple pathways. These included a bottom-up method focused on issue-based cooperation; a top-down approach involving the application of selected clauses from free trade agreements to the regional level, and APEC's Pathfinder Initiative endorsed by APEC Leaders in 2001. The latter allows a subset of interested APEC economies to pursue collaboration on specific issues with the objective of expanding participation over time and ultimately reaching APEC-wide consensus.

Referring to the PECC Yeouido Declaration, we recommend that APEC and its member economies lead in exploring new trade paradigms that foster balanced, inclusive and sustainable growth amidst rising protectionism. Seeing AI as offering the promise of new economic prosperity, we also call on APEC and its member economies to strategically define the direction of APEC's AI discussion to ensure technologies foster regional growth and shared prosperity. This can be achieved by (1) facilitating economic integration while ensuring common benefits; (2) strengthening stakeholders' capabilities for AI utilization; (3) enhancing literacy; and (4) promoting sustainable AI digital infrastructure investment and digital transformation efforts across economies in line with a shared ethical approach.