

Overview of APEC Ministerial Meetings

The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Ministerial Meeting was held in Honolulu, Hawaii, on November 10 and 11 with the participation of the foreign and trade ministers and other officials from APEC’s 21 member economies. The Foreign Ministers’ Meeting was chaired by U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, while Ambassador Ron Kirk, U.S. Trade Representative, chaired the Trade Ministers’ Meeting. Minister for Foreign Affairs Koichiro Gemba, Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry Yukio Edano and Parliamentary Senior Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Tsuyoshi Yamaguchi represented Japan at the meetings.

The following is an overview of the discussions at the meetings.

Foreign Ministers’ Meeting

1. High-level Policy Dialogue on Disaster Resiliency

(1) The ministers discussed, among other things, the importance of promoting public-private partnership in preparation for future natural disasters in the Asia-Pacific region and strengthening the private sector’s resiliency against disasters. Thai delegation reported on the latest status of damage caused by the recent floods. Prominent figures in the region attended the meeting included Mr. Hiromasa Yonekura, Chairman of the Japan Business Federation; Mr. Gempachiro Aihara, a member of the APEC Business Advisory Council; and Mr. Thomas Donohue, President of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

(2) Based on lessons learned from the Great East Japan Earthquake in March, Minister Gemba stressed the importance of coping with natural disasters with the participation of all members of society, referring to community-level efforts in Japan such as organizing private-sector fire-fighting units and other voluntary disaster prevention groups. He pledged Japan’s continued contribution to enhancing disaster resiliency through such efforts as hosting a high-level meeting on large-scale natural disaster next year in an affected area by the earthquake and inviting the third U.N. World Conference on Disaster Reduction to Japan.

2. High-level Policy Dialogue on Open Governance and Economic Growth

(1) To promote the liberalization and facilitate trade and investment in the APEC region, the ministers discussed the need to enhance regional transparency and open governance through such efforts as eradication of corruption.

(2) The participating economies explained how their governments are fighting corruption and ensuring transparency and accountability. They reconfirmed that the APEC member economies would continue strengthening their administrative endeavors to combat corruption and ensure transparency, fairness and accountability.

(3) Minister Gemba spoke on the measures being taken by the Government of Japan for those purposes, and pointed out the importance of making persistent efforts for further promoting a free and open market economy environment to attain economic growth in the Asia-Pacific region.

Trade Ministers' Meeting

1. Support for Multilateral Trade System

At this session, Minister Edano and Parliamentary Senior Vice-Minister Yamaguchi represented Japan.

(1) With the Doha Development Agenda (DDA) negotiations of the WTO at an impasse, the ministers discussed how APEC could contribute to maintaining and strengthening the multilateral trading system based on the WTO.

(2) On the DDA negotiations, the APEC economies opined that (a) there is no prospect of the talks being concluded in the near future, (b) it is important to find new approaches such as achieving partial agreement, and (c) it is essential to attain some results in time for the WTO's eighth Ministerial Conference (MC8) scheduled for the end of this year.

(3) On the subject of resisting protectionism, the ministers agreed to extend through the end of 2015 the commitment to a standstill made by the APEC Leaders in 2008 to refrain from introducing of any new protectionist measures, including export controls.

(4) Minister Edano stated that participants in the upcoming MC8 should express strong determination to prevent protectionism. Parliamentary Senior Vice-Minister Yamaguchi stated that APEC, as an economic "growth center" of global economy, would require high-level of

commitments, including one to fend off protectionism. He also said Japan welcomed the virtual agreement to allow Russia's accession to the WTO.

2. Session on U.S. Priorities

Minister Gemba, Minister Edano and Parliamentary Senior Vice-Minister Yamaguchi took part in the session that took up three priorities presented by the United States.

(1) On the subject of “regional economic integration and expanding trade,” the ministers offered their views on matters of importance, including the Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (FTAAP), small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and innovation. Ministers Gemba and Edano said that the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) agreement would be an undertaking which would form a basis, together with ASEAN+3 and ASEAN+6, upon which to pursue an FTAAP. They announced that on November 11, Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda decided that Japan would enter into consultations towards participation in the TPP negotiations with the countries concerned. The participants in this session concurred with the recognition that the APEC Leaders would continue to study policy principles governing innovation in connection with next-generation trade and investment issues while sharing perception among the member economies regarding the importance of innovation.

(2) As for “green growth,” ministers advanced work to promote liberalization in trade and investment in environmental goods and services, and submitted the issue to APEC Leaders to consider how best to move this work forward. Japan made substantial contribution to progress in these discussions, with Minister Edano becoming the first conferee to mention the importance of liberalizing trade in environmental goods and services, and Parliamentary Senior Vice-Minister Yamaguchi making remarks that changed the tone of discussion toward unifying the views of the participants.

3. Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP)

Both inside and outside the conference room, the Japanese delegates explained Prime Minister Noda's November 11 announcement regarding the TPP Agreement, the only pathway being negotiated to the FTAAP, that Japan decided to enter into consultations towards participating in the TPP negotiations with the countries concerned. Representatives of several economies welcomed the announcement from Japan.

Outcome documents issued at the 2011 APEC Ministerial Meetings are as follows:

- Statement of the 23rd APEC Ministers' Meeting
 - Annex A: Pathfinder to Enhance Supply Chain Connectivity by Establishing a Baseline De Minimis Value
 - Annex B: Actions to address barriers facing SMEs in trading in the region
 - Annex C: Facilitating the diffusion of advanced technology and alternative-fueled demonstration motor vehicles
 - Annex D: Pathfinder on facilitating trade in remanufactured goods
 - Annex E: Emerging green technologies – APEC Regulatory Cooperation Advancement Mechanism: Revised Recommendations on Smart Grid Interoperability Standards
 - Annex F: APEC regulatory cooperation plan
- APEC Ministers' Statement on the WTO, the Doha Development Agenda Negotiations, and Resisting Protectionism
- APEC High-Level Policy Dialogue on Disaster Resiliency
- APEC High-Level Policy Dialogue on Open Governance and Economic Growth

(http://www.apec.org/Meeting-Papers/Ministerial-Statements/Annual/2011/2011_amm.aspx)

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