

**APEC BUSINESS ADVISORY COUNCIL**

**PRESENTATION TO ABAC IV  
17 NOVEMBER 2020**

**RACHEL TAULELEI  
ABAC CHAIR 2021**

**ABAC 2021 WORK PROGRAMME**

*SLIDE 1*

Kia ora tātou e te whanau, e ngā rangatira tēnā koutou katoa

Thank you, Dato' Rohana: if we have come to this item on our agenda, it must mean that, still with a few weeks still to go, the finish line is in sight for you and what amazing race you have run this year !

Colleagues, I have the honour to present to you today ABAC New Zealand's work plan for 2021.

Together with Malcolm Johns, Toni Moyes and our whole team, I do so mindful of all the work that has been done this year and in previous years to position ABAC as the business voice of APEC.

The strength of ABAC's voice depends on the hard work of our Members and in 2021 we will be relying on your commitment and efforts to build on the legacy of past years.

*SLIDE 2*

2021 will again be a different sort of year.

The pandemic is still with us and we simply do not know when borders will be opened and travel might become possible.

In case there is any doubt, the New Zealand Government has made it clear to us that there is no contingency planning underway to allow us to hold a physical meeting in Auckland in November 2021.

On the other hand, the New Zealand Government's decision to host all APEC meetings virtually allows us to plan ahead and to adapt our processes to suit the times.

At ABAC III I had the opportunity to speak about our proposals to change our operating model.

As you recall these were captured in our paper "Towards a Virtual ABAC in 2021".

We are particularly grateful for the feedback and the many supportive comments we have received from Members.

We have considered these carefully and today I am able to put more flesh on the bones of our work programme by announcing:

- Our theme
- Our priorities as Chair
- The names of our Working Group Chairs
- The proposed priorities for the Working Groups
- Our meeting calendar for 2021.

*SLIDE 3*

### **Our Theme**

ABAC's core mandate remains the same as in previous years - that is, to provide Leaders with robust advice and recommendations from the private sector about APEC's agenda for sustainable and inclusive growth in the Asia Pacific region.

With this in mind, we propose to adopt the theme of:

***“People, Place and Prosperity”***

expressed in te reo Maori as:

***“Tāngata, Taiao, me te Taurikura”.***

While the pandemic is still with us and demands a strong health response, we believe we must look beyond the current health crisis and focus on what is needed to get our economies and indeed the global economy moving again.

We have before us a unique opportunity not just to rebuild, but to build back better, hopefully avoiding some of the mistakes of the past.

*SLIDE 4*

### **Chair's priorities**

You see here our twelve priorities and the way they relate to our theme.

***People (tāngata)*** need to be at the heart of this new agenda – their well-being, their hopes and aspirations for a future beyond Covid.

We hope that next year we can keep the needs of our fellow citizens and their social and economic progress firmly in our sights, building greater inclusion for women and indigenous people and continuing to find ways to build the capabilities of MSMEs.

If this current crisis has taught us anything, it is not to ignore the environment and ***place (taiao)*** in which we live.

The pandemic may have led to a brief pause in the inexorable rise of global temperatures, but the trajectory and the risks are still very clear.

Despite a contested political and economic context, we have the opportunity to show leadership in addressing and mitigating climate change and building a more sustainable, lower carbon future.

We need in particular to consider how to expand the development of renewable energy, level the playing field for environmentally responsible goods and services and build a more holistic trade-friendly and digitally enabled food system.

As businesses too we know a lot about the creation of value over time – this value is what gives rise to economic and social progress and shared **prosperity (taurikura)**.

In 2021, as we look on the damage done to our economies, we need to think more purposefully than ever before about what is needed for us to do business successfully and seamlessly in the Asia Pacific region and to deliver value to our communities.

Successful business is underpinned by effective trade rules, by processes and negotiations which reduce barriers over time and by an enabling environment for the uptake of new technology, especially in the digital space.

Today our businesses are constrained by the pandemic, but we need to look tomorrow and the ways in which our economies can be rebuilt and revitalised.

These are the considerations which will guide our work programme in 2021 and help us articulate how we can make progress, as we have advocated to APEC this year, towards a seamless, dynamic, resilient, sustainable and inclusive Asia Pacific economic community.

As in any ABAC year it is no small challenge to build, from this broad vision, a meaningful agenda which leads to practical recommendations to Leaders, Ministers and senior officials.

Added to this is the challenge of the “pivot to virtual” which means we will need to maintain a tight focus and concentrate on a narrower range of topics than in the past.

*SLIDE 5*

### **Working Group Chairs**

It will be the task of our Working Groups to turn our priorities into a work programme.

At ABAC III, I told you about the five Working Groups we intend to establish next year: REI, Sustainability, Inclusion, Digital and Economy.

Today I am delighted to announce the names of our Working Group Chairs and I am so grateful to all of them all for being willing to work closely with us next year:

**Regional Economic Integration – Ho Meng Kit (Singapore)**

**Sustainability – Frank Ning (China)**

**Inclusion – Julia Torreblanca (Peru)**

**Digital – Jan da Silva (Canada)**

**Economy – Robert Milliner (Australia)**

I hope you will notice that this superb team is drawn from all parts of the ABAC family and contains a pleasing level of diversity as well as representing newer and longer-serving Members.

I have spoken with all of them about the need for us to build a strong leadership team to keep the show on the road and to maintain a tight focus.

They will join me, Dato Rohana and Thailand's Chair for 2022 in meeting regularly to monitor our progress during the year.

The Executive Director, Stephen Jacobi, will convene a similar group at Lead Staffer level.

We will announce the roles of Chair of the Advisory Group on Financial System Capacity Building and PPFS Vice Chair at ABAC I in February.

Once again we appreciate very much each of these Members' availability and commitment.

*SLIDE 6*

### **Working Group priorities**

Working Group Chairs have three important responsibilities:

- They will determine how the work programme will be taken forward by Task Forces in specific areas
- They will nominate the Convenors of those Task Forces – these Convenors will effectively take on the roles for the former Working Group Co-Chairs
- They will report back to the plenary on progress in the Task Forces, bringing forward any recommendations for adoption.

We have asked the Working Group Chairs to take a preliminary look at how they will reflect our priorities in their work and you see this here.

You will note that some priorities are shared between Working Groups and we will need to work out how to take these issues forward.

Just to clarify Task Forces will be open to any Member or staffer who wishes to participate and we will seek expressions of interest in the Working Groups in coming weeks.

At ABAC I in February we will confirm the forward programme together with an initial series of Task Forces and the names of Task Force Convenors.

*SLIDE 7*

## **Calendar**

Lastly I come to our schedule of meetings for 2021.

We are proposing to hold six formal plenary meetings of approximately 3 hours in length, which will be held on the following dates (expressed here as NZT which may mean the day prior for some economies):

- ABAC I: 9 February
- ABAC Dialogue with Senior Officials: week of 8 March
- ABAC II: 11 May
- ABAC III: 3 August
- ABAC IV: 3 or 10 November (depending on timing of Leaders' Week)
- ABAC Dialogue with Leaders: to be scheduled during Leaders' Week

The ABAC Secretariat will update the forward schedule of meetings on a regular basis, adding in the dates of Task Force meetings as these become known.

I'm pleased to tell you also that the plenary meetings and dialogues will be held on the platform to be used for APEC official meetings in 2021: more information about how to register and access the platform will be issued before ABAC I.

Task Force meetings will be continue to be held on the Microsoft Teams platform as now.

Colleagues, this is the work programme that we at ABAC NZ, together with the Working Group Chairs, plan to roll out with your support next year.

Although we cannot meet in person, we pledge to remain connected with you all and do what we can to make the year as efficient and pleasant as possible.

I am sorry to have to tell you that we will not have the pleasure of Toni Moyes on this journey next year – a change of role and family situation means that Toni is stepping down from ABAC and a successor will be named before ABAC I.

These ideas have all had Toni's active input this year: we appreciate her work and wish her all the best for the future.

*SLIDE 8*

Colleagues, it is our hope that by addressing the key issues associated with *“People, Place and Prosperity”* we will once again make an impactful contribution to the future success of the Asia Pacific region.

As this often quoted whakataukī, or proverb, reminds us

**“He aha te mea nui ki te ao?**

**He tāngata, he tāngata, he tāngata”.**

This translates as:

“What is the most important thing in the world ?

It is people, it is people, it is people”.

May this wisdom guide us as we work closely together next year.