

26 October 2007

**Second session of the Ministerial Council of the Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement**  
**Ministerial Declaration**

We, the Ministers of the Participating States of the Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement, gather today in Goa, India for the Second Session of the Ministerial Council of the Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement.

We reaffirm our commitment to the principles and objectives of the Ministerial Declaration adopted by us at our First Session held in Beijing, China on 2 November 2005.

In particular, we reaffirm our commitment on a priority basis to expand the membership of the Agreement to evolve it into a truly pan-Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement. In this regard we direct the Standing Committee to consider and facilitate the accession of new members which are ESCAP developing member countries including members which are countries with economies in transition, and accord particular attention to members which have been confirmed by the Standing Committee as priority countries. We look forward to welcoming at least a few new members when we meet again in two years time.

We also reaffirm our commitment to further widen product coverage and deepen the tariff cuts and in this regard announce the launch of the Fourth Round of negotiations. We direct the Standing Committee to adopt modalities and a schedule for the conduct of the negotiations with a view to concluding the negotiations by the Third Session of the Ministerial Council to be held in 2009. We also direct the Standing Committee to adopt modalities for the extension of negotiations into other areas, such as non-tariff measures, trade facilitation, services, and investment, as soon as possible.

We adopt a common set of Operational Procedures for the Certification and Verification of the Origin of Goods under the Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement finalized by the Twenty-Seventh session of the Standing Committee and agree to implement these procedures on 1 January 2008. We are of the view that this represents an important step forward in strengthening the implementation of the Agreement. We also agree to direct the Standing Committee to review the implementation of the Procedures on a regular basis.

While we remain fully committed to a successful conclusion of the Doha round of multilateral trade negotiations, we recognize that the conclusion of bilateral and regional trade agreements as building blocs of the multilateral trading system remains an important mechanism to advance our trade interests. We will therefore further strive towards coordinating our commitments under APTA with various other regional and bilateral trade agreements and instruct the secretariat to analyze other

regional trade agreements with a view to identify commonalities between them and APTA so as to facilitate this coordination process.

We note the importance of improving data on trade flows benefiting from APTA concessions and direct the Standing Committee to evolve a mechanism for the systematic exchange of relevant data and statistics among Participating States.

We express our appreciation to the ESCAP Secretariat for providing secretariat services to the Agreement and request the secretariat to continue performing these functions within its overall mandate of economic and social development through regional cooperation. In particular, we request the secretariat to provide all necessary assistance to facilitate the Fourth Round negotiations and undertake all actions necessary within the limit of available resources to expand the membership of the Agreement. With a view to help strengthen APTA we agree to give positive consideration to support the secretariat's activities related to APTA.

We express appreciation to the Government of China for its role in notifying the Agreement to WTO and to the ESCAP secretariat for its assistance in this regard.

We extend our full cooperation and support to the accession of Lao People's Democratic Republic to the WTO.

We express appreciation to the Government of India for graciously hosting the Second Session of the Ministerial Council of the Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement and to the Government of the Republic of Korea for their offer to host the Third Session of the Ministerial Council of the Agreement on 22 October 2009.