

PASCN Discussion Paper No. 99-25

Gender Dimension in APEC

Amelia C. Ancog



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Amelia C. Ancog

University of the Philippines

July 1999

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GENDER DIMENSION IN APEC *

Amelia C. Ancog **

The challenges confronting APEC economies in the coming millenium open exciting opportunities for policy innovations and reforms that will contribute to the enhancement of the lives of people. Improving the economic circumstances of people, reducing poverty, and supporting sustainable development are some of the many fundamental goals of society. The attainment of these beneficent purposes imply that access to opportunities will be open to all-men, women and children. Thus, a number of scholars and policy makers have adopted as part of the agenda of their careers, the study and advocacy for gender and development. It is therefore significant that APEC is moving towards a more systematic approach in incorporating gender in its reofrms and innovations.

That this Conference on "Towards APEC's Second Decade: Challenges, Opportunities and Priorities" includes in its agenda "The Role of Women in APEC" is a truly significant development. This forum is an excellent way of eliciting from the best minds in the region, ideas, suggestions and recommendations to ensure that gender concerns dins their place in key decisions and action plans of the various APEC fora.

The diverse roles of women in APEC economies have been discussed intensively int he Ministerial Meeting on Women in 1998. Essential information and policy reforms pertaining to women in the labour force, in small and medium enterprises and in human resources development were highlighted. It was stressed in the deliberations, that women's participation in the labour force has enhanced the capacity of APEC economies to engage and benefit from international trade. Moreover, some opportunities for women's involvement in new jobs and business activities have been opened due to trade liberalisation. Nevertheless, a number of disadvantages of negative effects on women entern into contracts, inappropriate technologies in the workplace and the undervaluing of women's work. These limitations can be deminished if not eliminated through relevant innovations and reforms.

Various fora sponsored by the United Nations and its agencies have tek n up womens' concerns and concrete recommendations have been adopted for considerations by member countries. In APEC, gender was expressly mentioned in the 1996 Leaders' Declaration adopted in Manila, and were also enhanced in the Leaders Declaration in Ottawa and Kuala Lumpur. The inclusion of gender in the processes, projects and activities of apec will enable the economies to fulfill the Leaders' commement.

In the last few years, APEC through a number of Technical Working Grousp in Economic and Technical Cooperation successfully development gender-oriented projects.

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More significantly the APEC Leaders embodied in their Declarations encouragement for the full participation of women and youth in economic cooperation and welcomed the progress of the involvement of women and youth and the business sector in various APEC fora (1996-1997). The unprecedented APEC Ministerial Meeting on Women in 1998 signalled a more proactive and systematic intervention for gender in the APEC fora.

This paper traces the incorporation of gender concerns in APEC's TWG in Economic and Technical Cooperation and Ministerial Meetings. It will also highlight the challenges and opportunities for gender programs in science and technology in the new millennium.

There are five subtopics in the paper. The first subtopic summarises some of the key recommendations on gender by international organisations. It also touches on the observations of writers on selected policies and implementation of gender-oriented programs. The second focuses on key decisions of APEC Leaders and Ministers which brought about significant policy innovations and the incorporation of gender dimensions in a number of projects of APEC. It will also deal briefly on the advocacy role of the Women Leaders' Network. The third covers issues and concerns on gender in science and technology, good practices and gaps.

The fourth discusses the recommendations of APEC's Ministerial Meeting on "Women in Economic Development and Economic Cooperation in APEC." The fifth discusses potential areas of collaboration between the APEC Study Centers and APEC economies on gender programs and conclusion.

I. United Nations

Covenants had been entered into by many countries where gender was explicitly recognised. International conferences and meetings also developed principles and plans of action which embody principles that would apply to gender and access to opportunities, participation in policy formulation or decision-making, and protection against discrimination among others. Some of these are the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women (U.N. 1985), Agenda 21 (U.N. 1992) and the Platform for Action adopted in Beijing (1995).

These documents advocate the participation or involvement of women in economic and other activities, and the adoption by national bodies of policy reforms addressing gender concerns and institutionalisation of programmes which will provide access by women to employment, education, ownership and use of property, positions and other resources among others. For instance, the Nairobi document enjoins governments and concerned sectors of society "to enhance the awareness by women of environmental issues and the capacity of women and men to manage their environment and sustain product resources; disseminate information on environmental sustainability, and recognise women as 'active and equal' participants in ecosystem management and environmental degradation." It also "stresses the need to educate women to fulfil their role as full members of society; promote functional literacy among women; provide equal opportunities at all levels of education and career; eliminate gender stereotyping in education; promote women studies; introduce programs at all levels to enable men to assume responsibility for child upbringing and household maintenance." Furthermore, it "encourages governments to

promote human rights and full participation in societal change of indigenous women and populations; to guarantee fundamental human rights to women in minority groups and indigenous populations; and to ensure that women have access to services in their own language.”

The Platform for Action adopted in Beijing contains an extensive list of issues and concerns covering among others, education, health, science and technology, and environment. It also recommended initiatives that will facilitate the adoption of gender sensitive policy reforms in economic, social and political arenas. It recognised the important role of non government organisations, the private sector and trade unions to support the choice of women for non-traditional professions. It also urges governments and private sector institutions to eliminate all laws and regulations that discriminate against women in economic activities especially those that discriminate against rural women, those in the informal sector and self-employed in their access to economic resources.

UNDP and UNIFEM in collaboration with Swaminathan Foundation sponsored a conference of women policy-makers, scientists and researchers in Chennai in 1996 to mobilise science and technology and the integration of gender for sustainable and equitable growth and development. The Chennai Declaration sought to develop and apply technologies to alleviate poverty giving priority to information technology, biotechnology and skill empowerment. Upon the initiatives of national governments, academic institutions and non-government organisations, projects addressing the problems of poor women are being implemented in South Korea, the Philippines, Mongolia, India, Thailand and Malaysia.

In the recently concluded UNESCO sponsored meeting in Sydney among scientists and policy makers in the Asia Pacific region, gender integration in the programmes in the region was affirmed (December 1998).

II. APEC Leaders and Ministers Support

In the last three years, encouraging statements were expressed by APEC Leaders regarding gender dimensions in APEC's programmes and activities. In November 1996, the Leaders stated: “The implementation of our economic cooperation agenda is based on a genuine partnership to which all APEC economies contribute. We direct our ministers, working in partnerships with the private sector, to identify ways to encourage such participation by all APEC economies. In addition, we ask that they put special emphasis on the full participation of women and youth” (APEC Leaders' Declaration, Subic, Philippines). Subsequently, when the Leaders met in Vancouver they recognised the progress of APEC fora in involving business, academics and other experts, women and youth in 1977 activities and encouraged them to continue these efforts. Furthermore, they welcomed the offer of the Philippines to host a Ministerial Meeting on women in 1998 to take stock of the progress of women's involvement in APEC's agenda and to determine next steps to integrate women into the mainstream of APEC activities (APEC Leaders' Declaration, Vancouver, Canada, November 1997).

The Eight Ministerial Meeting's Joint Statement of November 1996 took note of the goals set by the APEC's Science and Technology Ministers to strengthen the exchange of scientific and technical men and women across the region and to attract creative and talented young people to take up careers in science and technology. The S & T Ministers recognised gender as a "cross-cutting concern with implications in other APEC fora." They also affirmed the importance of improving recruitment and retention of highly talented women in science and technology and the importance of removing barriers and promoting the full contribution of women in S & T as essential elements in meeting APEC's goal of achieving sustainable and equitable development (Second APEC Ministerial Conference on Regional Science and Technology cooperation, Seoul, Korea, 1996.)

The active participation of support groups contributing to the development of SME's to address challenges and concerns of women entrepreneurs and SME's in rural areas was encouraged in the Eight Ministerial Meeting (Manila, Philippines, November 1996).

In the succeeding year, the Ministers recognised the "broadening engagement of the private sector, including young entrepreneurs and women leaders in the activities of Working Groups." In particular, they cited the various APEC fora which discussed issues on gender, including the Industrial science and Technology Working Group (ISTWG), Human Resources Development (HRDWG), Tourism Working Group (TWG), Transportation Working Group and the Policy Level Group on Small and Medium Enterprises and Senior Environment Officials (Ninth Ministerial Meeting, Vancouver, Canada, November 1997).

One will note the increasing commitment of the Ministers to women's active participation in businesses, and the professional enhancement of women entrepreneurs. In the meeting in Ottawa Canada in September 1997 of Ministers on Small and Medium Enterprises, they agreed to promote gender sensitive policies and measures related to the development of SME's and to employ women in technical, managerial, and entrepreneurial fields. They directed PLG members to consider actions recommended by the Women Leaders' Network to support the development and growth of women entrepreneurs.

To carry out in a more systematic manner the full involvement of women in enterprises, the ministers commended the inclusion of micro enterprises and women entrepreneurs as in integral part of SPAN (Integrated Action Plan for SME Development). Likewise the Ministers welcomed the Declaration of the 1998 Women Leaders' Network (WLN) Meeting and took note of their recommendations. They emphasised the importance of eliminating barriers to the full participation and contribution of women to APEC economies and noted the establishment of the confederation of Women's Business Councils as catalyst to facilitate and enhance business networking and partnerships among women entrepreneurs (Joint Ministerial Statement of the Fifth Meeting, APEC Ministers Responsible for SME's, 1998).

It is important to note that in the Environmental Ministers meeting in 1997, stressed that projects to enhance human well being should include a project which will incorporate the poorest and most disadvantaged sectors of the population into productive processes, with

a special emphasis on programs designed to incorporate women (Toronto, Canada, 1997.) As regards the financial crisis facing many economies in Asia Pacific, the APEC Finance Ministers recognised that “the situation is placing strains on the social fabric and the burden in many cases falls on the poorer segments of society and those least able to protect themselves especially women and children” (Kananaski, Canada, 1997).

One important development in gender advocacy was the organisation of the Women Leaders’ Network by women leaders in APEC in 1996 in Manila. It is a network of women leaders from government, the private sector, civil society and the academe. It has successfully brought forward to the various APEC fora the inclusion of gender concerns in their agenda. It’s annual meetings precede the Ministerial Meetings and the Leaders’ Meeting. It has encouraged and supported the proactive participation of women in businesses, SME’s, policy bodies and the adoption by the economies of significant programmes that will provide access and opportunities to women in economic and technical cooperation. It also recommends specific policy initiatives which will enhance the collaboration of women in various APEC economies, including business interactions and strategic alliances. The annual meeting of WLN provides opportunities for women leaders in APEC to develop, initiate, and continue programmes that will strengthen and broaden the women’s involvement in activities in education, trade and policy making. It supported the launching of the Confederation of Women’s Business Councils in APEC Economies in Kuala Lumpur in 1998.

III. Issues, Concerns and Developments in Gender

Technological competence, adaptability and openness to new learnings contribute to the capability of members of society to address problems of survival, well-being and security. As economies open their markets, and exchange of goods and services take place regionally and globally, scientific and technical knowledge and skills are required in a greater degree for productivity and competitiveness. It is significant that APEC’s S & T Ministers recognise the value of creative scientific and technical men and women who will fuel innovation and underpin sustainable industrial productivity. They also encourage the mobility and movement of scientists among APEC economies, to share information and knowledge and to enhance technology diffusion and transfer (APEC Agenda for Science and Technology Cooperation into the 21st Century, 1998).

The scientists, science administrators and policy makers who participated in the Conference on Priorities for Science in the 21st Century for the Asia-Pacific Region in Sydney agreed to recommend the following gender related key points to the World Conference in Science:

- Scientists have a social responsibility to focus on matters of economic value to people in alleviating poverty, which is a global and gender issue;
- SET (Science, Engineering and Technology) in a transformed science-society partnership will ensure a sustainable and equitable future and will be one where the experiences of women and men from all cultures are equally valued and respected and where all people participate meaningfully at all stages of the SET process;

- Accessibility to knowledge (including issues of education, gender and traditional knowledge) should be addressed as priority by UNESCO, as lead agency for science within the UN system;
- UNESCO and other bodies should devote resources to ensuring international equity in training in all aspects of SET including R & D management. Scientific competence will only come from a sound educational base, accordingly nations should provide for adequate gender-inclusive training at all levels (Sydney Communiqué, 1998).

It is truly encouraging that gender dimensions will be part and parcel of the World Science Conference in Budapest this year. However, to operationalise gender equality policy statements need political will, resources, commitment and participation of many sectors of society. To address science and technology gender concerns require appropriate mechanisms, programmes and monitoring systems.

A. Good Practices

Policies are embodied in the constitutions, laws or issuance's or governments. There are a number of good practices in some economies which foster gender. For instance, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982), ensures constitutional protection for gender equality by providing that the rights and freedoms set out in the Charter are guaranteed equally to women and men. The Charter prohibits discrimination based on any inherent attributes such as race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.

In the private sector, the Bank of Montreal of Canada introduced an employment equity policy (1986). The Bank created a Task Force on the Advancement of Women in the Bank, a Vice-President Workplace Equality and an Advisory Council on the Equitable Workplace to guide the transformation processes. Among the gender policies adopted are: proportional representation in recruitment, customised benefits packages covering child care referral services, elder care advice, parental leave, flexi-time, flexi-place and part-time work and job sharing arrangement. The Banks' management information system assesses the attainment of the bank's targets on gender equality (Resource Document: Science and Technology Platform, WLN Meeting, Ottawa, 1997)

Laws favourable to gender had been enacted by the Philippine Congress. One important piece of legislation is Republic Act No. 7182 which mandates that a portion of the development assistance funds be set aside for projects and activities on women. It also requires the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA, the Planning Agency) to prioritise projects in the countryside and to provide income and employment opportunities to women and ensure the active participation of women in planning and implementation of projects. It also liberalised other laws restricting the capacity of women to sign contracts in their behalf by authorising women to enter into contracts which in every respect shall be equal to men. On the other hand, women are given equal access to membership in all social, civic and recreational clubs, committees and associations, as well as opportunities to appointment, admission, training, graduation and commissioning in all military, or similar schools of the Armed Forces of the Philippines

and the Philippine National Police. The liberalisation of entry of women in traditionally exclusive men's domain, allowed the admission of women in the Philippine Military Academy (PMA). Its 1999 valedictorian is a woman (Arlene de la Cruz). To ensure the implementation of gender programmes in all government agencies, focal points are designated by the ministers/secretaries who coordinate and oversee gender-oriented projects.

Chile adopted the "Equal Opportunities Plan for Chilean Women for 1994-1999." This is a key instrument embodying guidelines in the areas of legislation, family, education, culture, work, health, participation and the strengthening of public institutions. The National Service for Women (Servicio Nacional de la Mujer, SERNAM) is responsible for the follow up and evaluation of the measures described in the Plan. On the other hand, the government ministries have the primary function of including the measures in their jurisdiction or area of operation.

The People's Republic of China has the "National Compendium of Chinese Women's Development Plan 1995-2000" which promotes women's professional development in education and training in order to increase women's opportunity for employment and to improve their management skills (Zheng, citing Ministry of Personnel, PROC, 1998)

B. Women in Science: Gaps and Deficiencies

While there are good practices on gender in a number of economies, nevertheless access to opportunities and involvement in policy development and formulation suffer from infirmities. Mitter calls these the "disturbing dimensions in the current paradigm of technology." She stresses that "it fails to elicit and appreciate what women could contribute to modern S & T and overlooks women's specific needs and thereby affects women's opportunities and career progression." She encourages researchers and policy makers to examine ways and propose action that will ensure that technical training and retraining programmes for women consider cultural and ideological constraints within their societies (1995).

S & T careers particularly in engineering and natural sciences had been dominated by men. Harding and McGregor point out that women in S & T are affected by the "glass ceiling" where careers are impeded by an unfriendly work environment. There are historical and cultural factors that affect the role of women scientists. The challenge for women is to combine family, child bearing and rearing with careers. That the latter activities take place in the phase of the lives where critical career opportunities also present themselves, subject women to certain "penalties." Where men and women do not equally share in child care and household work, it is frequently the women who sacrifice their education and career opportunities for home and family. Such choices—as long as society and S and T institutions do not value them—will result in lost opportunities to advance careers and compete for tenure or overseas scholarships and a loss to the S & T community (1995)

Vivian Gormick illustrates vividly in case studies, the pains and discrimination that women in science suffered; where aspiring young scientists could not obtain tenure and were assigned to work in laboratories as perpetual assistants; where women scientists

married to male scientists and working in the same academic institution were bypassed in promotions because their husbands were working in the same institutions and the latter's ascent to better jobs were perceived as a priority concern. But despite the women's equally good qualifications, they were not in the agenda for promotion. It was unfortunately, the perception that the woman-scientist can serve only as an assistant or at the maximum, as an associate. These are sad stories of discrimination. And yet Gormick states: "I asked many scientists (men and women) if they see a difference in the practice of science between the sexes. All replied 'No. Once they get there women work exactly as men.' I myself was unable to see women organising their thoughts differently, or asking different kinds of scientific questions, or applying different methods of investigation."

Women researchers and scientists, particularly in some countries in Asia tend to gravitate towards life sciences. Biotechnology, for instance is attractive to women scientists in the Philippines and their involvement is increasing through the years. Many laboratories hire women as research aides and assistants because of their patience and perseverance. However, except in few instances, women find it difficult to rise to the highest positions in research institutions because of unwritten preference for male heads/directors. For instance, a woman scientist became the head of the Institute of Biotechnology in the University of the Philippines, Los Baños, and was thereafter promoted as Executive Director of the Philippine Council for Advance Science and Technology. There are other women scientists in a few economies who must have risen to better positions, but it is doubtful whether broad opportunities and access are equally accessible to most women in other parts of the world.

Along the way to career growth, women faces the 'glass ceiling', constraining their advancement to jobs which are rewarding and fulfilling. Many talented women are not tapped for crucial and significant work in S & T—a loss to the science community, the nation and the region.

Fraser-Abder and Metha wisely point out that there are no physical or intellectual barriers to women's full participation in S & T. However, in some economies, formidable legal, cultural, or socio-economic barriers result in the continuing under-utilisation, devaluation and disregard to the knowledge of women can contribute to the male dominated S & T fields (1995). Gormick's case studies of women in science depict the struggles of women scientists who faced almost insurmountable difficulties in attaining meaningful jobs in the scientific world. Many never reached the peak of their careers because of discriminatory practices; majority devoted their lives to scientific activities despite extreme constraints. But quite often without the rank and privileges commensurate with their capability.

The commitment to work in science is often seen as mysterious, unfathomable and inspiring. Gormick cites Bronowski who states that science does not grow in an empty space but in the liberation of personality. She adds quite eloquently that "science grows out of a compulsion in the human spirit to understand, to make sense of the world around us. If the compulsion is stifled it fights for air, if it is perverted it struggles to right itself, if it is killed it is—in time—reborn" (1983). It is not uncommon for women and men in

science to give up comfort and a lifestyle of ease in exchange for an austere lifestyle in antiseptic laboratories or forbidding field situation.

Studies consistently bring out the constraints and limited opportunities accorded to women in science, engineering and research. Thus, the UNESCO World Science Report state that gender issues are not systematically addressed by governments. Some of the salient findings contained in this report refer to S & T Education and Careers. These are as follows:

- There is gender inequity in access to schools and to enrolments in science and technology, particularly in tertiary levels and in vocational schools. This situation is by no means improving steadily in all disciplines or in all regions. Industrialised countries do not necessarily have the best rates and data suggest that the countries in transition are experiencing a decline in women's participation.
- Where science is part of the core school curriculum and not optional, women pursue science careers in greater proportion.
- There exists a phenomenon of 'gender tracking' or the concentration of women in particular disciplines; the 'tenure track' is a 'slippery slope' for women professionals, with disproportionately few women achieving tenured status.

In science and technology employment, UNESCO reports that:

- Women's participation rates are higher in government than in the private sector, but in both cases, the under-representation of women is pronounced.
- Women professionals are not present in science and technology either in 'critical mass' or at a 'critical level' in national governments or in the United Nations or any other regional or inter-governmental body.
- As the status, remuneration and recognition of professions originally considered feminine increases, so access to them becomes more difficult for women and men move into the field; conversely as the status of a field declines, men abandon it for more lucrative and prestigious work.
- The hiring, promotion and appointment of women in S & T lag behind increases in female enrolments and the professional experience and gender disparity in pay for equivalent work persists.

In S & T decision-making, the findings of UNESCO are:

- The presence of professional women is negligible in decision-making bodies, high level advisory boards and national academies.
- There appears to be a 'glass ceiling' for women in science and technology decision-making bodies—the higher in the system, the fewer the proportion who are women. This phenomenon cannot be attributed only to a smaller supply pipeline. Appointments are not keeping pace with increased numbers of professional women candidates with experience.

The paper on Women in Industrial Science and Technology presented in the Ministerial Meeting on Women held last year provides an overview of the role of women in innovations, in technology development and in contributing to the alleviation of the financial crisis. It reiterates the desirability of supporting the access of women to S & T education and providing opportunities for their professional growth and greater role in

development efforts. It stresses the need for the collection of sex desegregated data and the need for APEC to examine best practices on gender including supportive policies such as teleworking, day care establishments, inclusion of women in key/vital decision-making bodies, among others.

- One will note the recurring themes of access to opportunities for education, job placement and career progression, and recognition of the role of women in contributing to development efforts. APEC is in a most crucial position to influence the policies which will open the doors for women so that their talents and intelligence can be brought to bear in decisions essential to the prosperity of the economies.

IV. Ministerial Meeting on Women

In October 1998, Ministers involved in women concerns participated in a meeting in Manila to discuss the theme "Women in Economic Development and Cooperation in APEC," with the sub-themes: "Women and Small and Medium Enterprises"; "Women and Science and Technology"; and, "Women and human Resources Development." In this regard it may be mentioned that these were the topics that were discussed in the first and organisational meeting of the Women's Leaders' Network in October 1996 also held in Manila. The Call to Action by WLN was forwarded to the SOM and the SOM addressed these concerns and gave appropriate recommendations to the APEC Leaders.

Noting the barriers faced by women to the realisation of women's full economic contributions and the differential impact of the current economic and financial crisis on women, the Meeting identified the following common themes:

- Expand economic opportunities in areas where women are traditionally underrepresented;
- Empower and increase capacity building of women to respond to economic opportunities and challenges;
- Eliminate barriers to women's full participation in the economy;
- Recognise the economic contributions of women's unpaid work and that APEC economies address, where possible, the constraints created by these responsibilities;
- Increase the availability and quality of sex-disaggregated data, research, and analytical information;
- Increase the integration of women in the planning, design and implementation of responses to the current economic and financial crisis.

The Ministers sought the endorsement of APEC leaders to the following:

- Recognise gender as a cross-cutting theme in APEC.
This will entail the successful integration of women into the mainstream of APEC processes and activities under TILF and ECOTECH through a comprehensive, horizontal and gender-sensitive approach to all APEC planning, programming and implementation, by sector, of women-specific activities and projects.
- Place a high priority on the collection of sex disaggregated data.

- Implement gender impact analysis of policy, program and project proposals as an integral component of APEC decisions, processes and activities; including planning, priority setting, resource allocation, design, implementation and evaluation.
- Place a high priority on the development of further studies on the impact of financial and economic crisis on women and the development of strategies to minimise any disproportionate effects on them; and to explicitly integrate the economic interests of women into regional and domestic strategies for economic recovery and future prosperity;
- Accelerate the progress of integrating women in the mainstream of APEC processes and activities.

The development of a Framework for the Integration of Women is a major recommendation of the Ministers, an activity which is now in progress. The completion the Framework will contribute to the enhancement of the participation of women in APEC 's activities.

V. Challenges and Opportunities

The new millennium is barely six months away. APEC economies face challenges to ensure that its members live in peace and prosperity. Women and men are assets who can be mobilised to serve the goals of the regional community. Endowed with tremendous talent and skills scholars of the APEC Study Centers may wish to collaborate with national or regional institutions involved in gender programmes so that appropriate gender orientation projects can be initiated.

The challenge that faces a gender advocate is convincing learned men and women to look at gender as a real concern—with significant implications in sustainable development and progress for the region. It is recognised that there will be uneven levels of appreciation, understanding and commitment for gender equality. However, the Centers have a pivotal role in advocacy and development of policy recommendations to further the cause of gender.

The human resources available to the centres, their influence and credibility are potent factors which will ease the advocacy role faced by current advocates. The partnership with academic institutions in pursuing the agenda for action proposed in the Ministerial Meeting on Women will bring about progressive integration of gender in various APEC fora.

Similarly, studies on best practices and comparative studies on gender-sensitive programmes currently implemented in a number of economies can be undertaken to provide insights on the appropriate methodology and approaches to move forward gender sensitive programmes. Even the development of indicators for gender analysis has to be given priority since there is a strong need for consistency in the assessment of the gender content of the programmes and projects of APEC.

It is anticipated that the inclusion of gender concerns in the APEC Study Centers agenda for the 21st century will enhance the involvement of women in the processes and activities of APEC and contribute to the wealth of ideas and knowledge essential for regional cooperation.

- Implement gender impact analysis of policy, program and project proposals as an integral component of APEC decisions, processes and activities; including planning, priority setting, resource allocation, design, implementation and evaluation.
- Place a high priority on the development of further studies on the impact of financial and economic crisis on women and the development of strategies to minimise any disproportionate effects on them; and to explicitly integrate the economic interests of women into regional and domestic strategies for economic recovery and future prosperity;
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VI. Conclusion

Mothers, wives, daughters, farmers, scientists, researchers and many other fulfilled by women to make this world a better place to live in. Women have so share—their talent, commitment, care and intelligence. As we reach the new millennium let us consider these resources, enable them to contribute their best by creating an environment that is conducive to growth and development. Let us open the opportunities to women and enhance their capacity to be active members of the regional community.

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