

APEC EDUCATION MINISTERIAL MEETING
Washington, D.C.
6 August 1992

DECLARATION

"TOWARD EDUCATION STANDARDS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY"

1. Education Ministers and other senior education officials¹ from Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, the People's Republic of China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, New Zealand, the Republic of the Philippines, Singapore, Chinese Taipei, Thailand and the United States of America, met in Washington from 5 to 6 August 1992. The Ministers came together at the invitation of the President of the United States to discuss education standards and related issues of mutual interest.

2. The Ministers noted that this occasion is a recognition of the importance of education as a topic of international discussion and cooperation, and an affirmation of the direct link between education and economic development. The Ministers agreed that high-quality education for all has a positive impact on the level, growth, and distribution of income in the region, and on the quality of life of the region's people. Notwithstanding the importance of education for economic development, the Ministers emphasized the crucial role played by education in human development. In particular, Ministers noted that primary- and secondary-level education is a key to instilling qualities such as flexibility, creativity, and adaptability, that will be required in the Twenty-first Century. They affirmed that education plays a valuable role in developing students who are tolerant and respectful of others, view learning as a lifelong pursuit, possess a sense of their own cultural identity, and are responsible citizens of their communities, their societies, and the world.

Need for Cooperative Action in Education

3. The Ministers declared that there is a need for APEC participants to continue to work cooperatively to identify strategies for addressing the challenges presented to their education systems by the growing interdependence of economies and peoples in the Asia-Pacific region and the world. These challenges include the need for students to develop the skills required in a technologically sophisticated world and a better understanding of the cultures and economies of the Asia-Pacific region. The Ministers noted that the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum is an appropriate and attractive arena within which to discuss these issues, due to APEC's ability to relate education to the broader economic, social, and cultural environment of the Asia-Pacific region.

"Toward Education Standards for the Twenty-first Century"

4. The Ministers declared that the unifying theme for APEC cooperation in education would be "Toward Education Standards for the Twenty-first Century." The Ministers noted that developing and maintaining education standards appropriate to the needs of the Twenty-first Century is a high priority for every education system in the Asia-Pacific region. The Ministers agreed to define "Education Standards for the Twenty-first Century" as those levels of achievement, performance, and personal development that each APEC member determines that its students must attain in order to prepare for productive and fulfilling lives in a rapidly changing world.

5. The Ministers noted that education standards for the Twenty-first Century must be set at high levels if societies are to ensure that students are well-prepared to be successful learners, workers, and citizens. At the same time, the Ministers acknowledged the importance of harmonizing such goals as striving for high levels of achievement, meeting the needs of a student population with a range of abilities and interests, and stimulating students' individuality, creativity, and capacity for independent thought.

6. The Ministers declared that standards of educational excellence are determined within each individual APEC member in order to meet its particular needs and consistent with its particular situation and culture. They agreed that, at this point in time, it probably is neither possible nor

¹ (hereinafter referred to as 'the Ministers')

desirable to define common standards in all areas of education across the APEC region. Nevertheless, the Ministers agreed that in a limited number of specific curriculum areas such as mathematics, the natural sciences, and some technical subject areas, it may be possible, appropriate, and desirable to develop comparable standards. They expressed their interest in exploring the feasibility and desirability of such an undertaking.

7. Further, the Ministers affirmed that there are broad common interests in the Asia-Pacific region such as economic growth and cooperation, development of new technologies in the service of human well-being, protection of the environment, mutual understanding, and promotion of world peace. In addition, the Ministers declared that, as we approach the Twenty-first Century, the internationalization of the world economy has made it increasingly true that a substantial amount of the knowledge and many of the skills and attitudes needed in today's world are common across international boundaries. The Ministers noted as examples of such common needs that:

- All students need to develop a strong skills foundation in literacy and numeracy;
- All students need to learn to reason and solve problems;
- All students need to develop an international perspective as well as an understanding and appreciation of their own and other cultures, including those in the Asia-Pacific region;
- All students need to become familiar with technologies that can make human interaction with nature and knowledge more fruitful; and
- All students need to learn to work cooperatively with others.

Establishment of the APEC Education Forum

8. To address the need of each APEC member to ensure that its education standards respond to the needs of the Twenty-first Century, the Ministers declared their intent to engage in mutually beneficial cooperative activities in education. For the purposes of (a) developing and implementing these joint activities, and (b) carrying on further discussion of high-priority education issues, the Ministers agreed to endorse and support the establishment of an APEC Education Forum, working under the auspices and within the procedures of the APEC Human Resource Development (HRD) Working Group as recommended by the APEC Senior Officials meeting in Bangkok in June 1992. The Ministers agreed that this forum would also serve as a communication link among APEC members, for discussion of education-related issues.

9. By establishing the APEC Education Forum, the Ministers declared their intention to engage in specific, mutually beneficial joint initiatives of two types:
- i. the exchange of information. The Ministers agreed that there is a need for exchanges of information among APEC members for the purposes of increasing mutual understanding and improving their education systems.
 - ii. the exchange of people for education-related purposes. The Ministers agreed that there is a need to promote exchanges of people directly involved in the development and delivery of education, such as education policy makers, researchers, teachers education administrators, and students.

Exchanges of information and people could be undertaken for the purposes of conducting joint research, developing cooperative programs, learning more about effective educational methods and programs, and sharing knowledge with APEC counterparts.

General Principles for Exchanges of Information and People

10. In general, the Ministers declared that the exchanges of information and people described above should be based on the following principles:

- that initiatives shall offer the potential of mutual benefit to participating APEC members;

- that undertaking a specific initiative shall have the potential to improve education in APEC participants; and
- that initiatives selected shall not duplicate existing efforts in the region, and shall be coordinated with and informed by the results of such efforts.

Priority Areas for Cooperative Activities

11. The Ministers identified the following as possible areas for cooperative activities to be undertaken through the APEC Education Forum, but agreed that additional areas could be accepted if they are proposed and supported by the members:

- a. Comparative studies of existing standards for curriculum content, and assessment of student performance against these standards, including comparative analyses of curricula, textbooks, and assessment instruments, particularly in the areas of mathematics natural sciences, and technical subjects.
- b. Research into effective instructional practices that meet the needs of the Twenty-first Century, including the appropriate and effective use of new technologies for instructional purposes, as well as widespread dissemination of the results of such research.
- c. Enhancement of the capacity of teachers to offer effective instructional programs to students, paying attention to appropriate standards for teacher education and professional development as well as to school organization, and maintenance or, in some cases, enhancement of the prestige of teaching.
- d. Identification of ways to ensure that the knowledge and skills learned in schools (in particular, in primary- and secondary-level education) are relevant to the needs and standards of the workplace and institutions of higher education. Also, exploration of ways of encouraging recognition of qualifications across the region.
- e. Exploration of innovative and effective ways to encourage the sustainable development of skilled human resources in the region, in particular through exchanges which build skills and capacities within the region in ways that do not drain such resources from the economies in which they are most needed.
- f. Identification of promising ways for students in the region to learn more about the languages, cultures, people, geography, and history of other APEC participants, thus potentially increasing mutual understanding within the region.
- g. Increasing the availability, reliability, and comparability of information about the APEC region in general and education in the region in particular, through joint work to enhance and expand available databases and repositories of relevant informational materials.

Principles of Participation and Next Steps

12. The Ministers agreed that participation in the APEC Education Forum should be open to all APEC members. Specific cooperative initiatives may be proposed by any individual member or group of members that so desires. Participation in any given initiative is open to all members, but such participation is voluntary. Members participating in an initiative would be responsible for identifying the resources required to carry it out. The Ministers noted that funding of APEC activities is to be considered at the APEC Ministerial Meeting in Bangkok in September 1992, and that the operations of the Education Forum would take into account the deliberations of that meeting.

13. The Ministers agreed that each APEC member wishing to participate in the Education Forum should nominate a senior official and/or institution as coordinator, to assume secretariat functions and act as a channel of communication on education issues between his or her own APEC member, other APEC members, and the Human Resources Development Working Group.

14. The Ministers agreed that officials would formulate further details regarding the management and activities of the Education Forum as soon as possible. A summary of these details would be presented to the next meeting of the Human Resources Development Working Group. In addition, the Ministers requested that the United States report on the Education Ministerial at the APEC meeting of ministers in Bangkok in September 1992.