

APEC Chemical Dialogue: Strategic Framework for Chemicals in the Asia-Pacific Region 2024-2027

Promoting sustainability and innovation through chemistry

Preamble

Committee on Trade and Investment

Trade and investment liberalization and facilitation are the cornerstones of APEC's mission and activities. The Committee on Trade and Investment (CTI) is the coordinating body for all of APEC's work in these areas.

The CTI provides a forum for APEC's member economies to deliberate on trade and policy issues. Its objective is to help APEC economies achieve free and open trade and investment, while working to reduce impediments to business activities. The CTI oversees:

Eight sub-groups:

- Business Mobility Group (BMG)
- Electronic Commerce Steering Group (ECSG)
- Group on Services (GOS)
- Intellectual Property Experts' Group (IPEG)
- Investment Experts' Group (IEG)
- Market Access Group (MAG)
- Sub-Committee on Customs Procedures (SCCP)
- Sub-Committee on Standards and Conformance (SCSC)

Two industry dialogues:

- Automotive Dialogue (AD)
- Chemical Dialogue (CD)

The CTI was established in November 1993 by the Declaration of an APEC Trade and Investment Framework. APEC Leaders and Ministers direct its work and APEC Senior Officials provide guidance. The scope of the CTI's work was expanded and further clarified by the Osaka Action Agenda in 1995.

Chemical Dialogue

The APEC Chemical Dialogue serves as a forum for government officials and industry representatives to find solutions to challenges facing the chemical industry and users of chemicals in the Asia-Pacific region. It reflects APEC member economies' recognition of the importance of engaging with the private sector and building public-private sector dialogue and cooperation for mutual benefit. Overall, roughly 8.3 million people are directly employed in the APEC chemical industry, about 48% of the world total. Another 58 million jobs are supported by chemical manufacturing and its extensive supply chain in the Asia-Pacific.¹

Issues addressed by the Chemical Dialogue include chemical sector liberalization, chemical trade facilitation, capacity building, regulatory alignment and product stewardship. The Chemical Dialogue raises awareness about the chemical industry as a provider of innovative solutions for sustainable economic, environmental, and social development, for example through its support for the Roadmap on Marine Debris, which was endorsed by APEC ministers in 2019. The Chemical Dialogue also focuses on improving regulatory policies and business practices with the aim to reduce trade barriers and protect public health, safety and the environment, for example through its 2023 publication Risk Assessment Policy Tools.

The Chemical Dialogue has developed this Strategic Framework to guide its work, to achieve its objectives, and to help position the industry as a strategic contributor to the economy, sustainable

¹ Sources: ACC, CEFIC, FERI, UNComtrade, Oxford Economics

innovation and trade in the region.

The APEC Chemical Dialogue Strategic Framework for 2024-2027 has been developed in line with the APEC Chemical Dialogue Terms of Reference, set to be renewed in 2025, and reflects broader APEC strategic objectives such as: strengthening regional economic integration and expanding trade, including through resilient supply chains; promoting green growth and a circular economy; and expanding regulatory cooperation and advancing regulatory convergence. The APEC Chemical Dialogue Terms of Reference are on a different renewal timeline than the Strategic Framework, in all cases the Terms of Reference supersedes the Strategic Framework. The goals of the CD also support the Aotearoa Plan of Action for implementing the APEC Putrajaya Vision 2040, and the Bangkok Goals on a Bio-Circular Green Economy, in particular the promotion of trade and investment, innovation, and inclusive, sustainable growth. The CD also supports the goals and outcomes of the Bangkok Bio-Circular Economy Goals. More information and data regarding the chemical sector's contribution to Asia-Pacific and global supply chain can be found in Annex A of this Framework.

This framework is designed to guide the strategic priorities and actions that the Chemical Dialogue will undertake in the years 2024 – 2027, including through its four Virtual Working Groups (VWG), which prepare outcomes for CD endorsement across a range of areas. The VWG on Regulatory Cooperation and Convergence advances CD initiatives designed to promote regulatory alignment and convergence through regulatory cooperation and the implementation of good regulatory practices. The VWG on the Globally Harmonised System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS) promotes greater alignment by APEC economies to the UN GHS. The VWG on Marine Debris is a cross-cutting initiative to promote development of and investment in innovative solutions to land-based waste management and ensure coherence on marine debris initiatives across the Chemical Dialogue, the Oceans and Fisheries Working Group (OFWG), and other APEC fora and sub-fora. Finally, the VWG on Data Exchange is a platform for APEC economies and industry to share data and information on the sound management of chemicals².

Goals

The goals and supporting actions identified below give effect to the strategic objectives of the APEC Chemical Dialogue Strategic Framework 2024 – 2027. This Framework is designed to integrate health, environmental and sustainable development considerations related to the sound management of chemicals in a meaningful way.

Shared Goal 1: To facilitate trade and raise the standard of sound management of chemicals by expanding and supporting regulatory cooperation and regulatory alignment in the region.

- a. Building support for and participation by chemical regulators in the Chemical Dialogue to:
 - increase capacity and technical capabilities among chemical sector regulatory officials, including to conduct risk assessments and engage in regulatory cooperation activities, in APEC economies;
 - exchange information on best practices in the sound management of chemicals;
 - increase regulatory cooperation, good regulatory practices, and regulatory

² Additional information regarding the APEC Chemical Dialogue Virtual Working Groups may be found on the APEC website at: <https://www.apec.org/Groups/Committee-on-Trade-and-Investment/Chemical-Dialogue>

- alignment within the region in order to lift the capability and capacity of developing economies; and
- facilitate the flow of essential goods and services in emergencies, , particularly regarding open regional markets and supply chain resilience.
- b. Identifying opportunities to enhance regional economic integration in chemicals through:
- Regulatory cooperation and convergence;
 - Supply chain mapping for key industrial chemical supplies and products;
 - Understanding areas of strategic importance and stress points within regional supply chains; and
 - Cross fora collaboration with other APEC fora and sub-fora (e.g., the Subcommittee on Standards and Conformance, the Alliance for Supply Chain Connectivity, and the Economic Committee,)
- c. Promoting alignment in GHS implementation, taking the UN's recommendations and members' laws and policies into consideration, across member economies and sharing information on GHS implementation status.
- Identifying specific opportunities to engage with key international fora working on chemicals-related issues such as the OECD (e.g., continuing engagement on the OECD Mutual Acceptance of Data (MAD) system), UN, WTO and WHO.
- d. Conducting outreach to include SMEs, through collaboration with the APEC SME Working Group, and entities such as downstream users and article manufactures along the value chain in the sound management of chemicals, in order to promote common understanding, and facilitate regional economic integration.
- e. Continuing to serve as a forum to exchange information about chemical regulatory initiatives, changes and developments within and outside of the APEC region.

Shared Goal 2: To promote understanding of the chemical industry's role as a provider of innovative solutions for sustainable economic, environmental and social development.

- a. Identifying barriers to and opportunities for the use of chemicals, products and processes to achieve the three pillars of sustainable development: economic, environmental and social.
- b. Highlighting the importance of products and technologies enabled by chemistry for advancing global sustainable development; promoting the sound management of chemicals and waste; and facilitating progress towards achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (e.g. zero hunger, good health and wellbeing, clean water and sanitation, economic growth etc.).
- c. Encouraging the development of enabling policy and regulatory frameworks to facilitate the innovation and deployment of chemical technologies and solutions, for example to improve agricultural production, utilize safe health care products, combat marine debris, among others.
- d. Promoting the development of new innovations and technologies to improve waste management (e.g., chemical recycling) and reduce the emissions of CO₂, as well as increasing investment across the lifecycle of chemicals to use resources more efficiently and sustainably to contribute to a circular economy.

Shared Goal 3: To enable effective cooperation between industry and

governments to improve chemical product stewardship and safe use.

- a. Leveraging voluntary industry stewardship activities (e.g. industry's Responsible Care® program); industry commitments to provide appropriate hazard, use and exposure information, and to demonstrate transparency and collaboration for products, processes or initiatives along the supply chain that promote resiliency, safe use of chemicals, open cross-border data flows, and informed sustainability decision-making and risk information and management, Best Available Techniques (BAT), and ecolabelling.
- b. Taking into account the special needs of SMEs, develop specific tools that can enhance chemical management capabilities (e.g., environmental, health, safety and security performance assessment, life cycle assessment and risk assessment).
- c. Promoting chemical product stewardship and consumer information as components of the safe use of chemicals, in partnership with external stakeholder groups, where appropriate.
- d. Promoting the responsible production of chemicals to achieve high standards of protection for human health and safety and the environment.

Key Documents/Resources

- [2008/SOM2/CD/002rev1 Principles for Best Practice Chemical Regulation](#)
- [2016/MRT/007 Best Practice Principles Checklist for Chemical Regulations](#)
- [2017/SOM3/CD/018 Chemical Trade Paper A: Chemical Trade Data – Regional Flows](#)
- [APEC#220-CT-01.5 Survey for Review of Chemical Management Regulatory Systems Worldwide – Summary](#)
- [APEC Roadmap on Marine Debris](#)
- [APEC Marine Debris Sub-Fund](#)
- [2022 Report to AMM on Implementation Convergence of the GHS in APEC Economies](#)
- [2023 Report: APEC Chemical Dialogue: Risk Assessment Policy Tools](#)