

STATEMENT BY KURT W. TONG
Ambassador-designate, U.S. Senior Official for APEC
BEFORE THE U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
APRIL 6, 2011

Mr. Chairman, and Members of the Committee, I am honored to appear before you today as the President's nominee to serve as the U.S. Senior Official for APEC with the rank of Ambassador. I appreciate the confidence that President Obama and Secretary Clinton have shown in me and, if confirmed, I look forward to working with you to advance U.S. interests through the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum as we strive to create an economic system in the Asia-Pacific region that supports growth and job creation here at home.

APEC is the premier economic organization in the Asia-Pacific region and a key venue for engaging the most economically dynamic region of the world. APEC's 21 members, stretching from Chile to China, account for more than half of the global economy. They purchase 58 percent of our goods exports, and comprise a market of 2.7 billion potential consumers.

Through APEC, the United States works to tackle a wide range of issues critical- to long-term prosperity around the Pacific Rim.

For example, the United States works within APEC to open markets in the Asia-Pacific region and connect them to American exporters. Their focus includes eliminating barriers to trade and investment and creating better environments for our citizens to do business overseas. APEC initiatives also lay the foundation for high-standard, comprehensive trade agreements – including the Trans-Pacific Partnership – that can deepen America's economic ties to the region and build a more level economic playing field that will help Americans to compete successfully.

At the same time, the United States and the other APEC members recognize that attaining high rates of growth is not enough to ensure meaningful prosperity. We must also achieve high quality growth that provides widespread benefits to society. This is why efforts have been made to work within APEC to promote growth that is balanced between and within economies, sustainable environmentally, fosters innovation, and empowers all citizens with the skills and opportunities to prosper in the global economy.

In 2011, the United States is hosting APEC for the first time since 1993. In early March, we successfully held the first APEC Senior Officials Meeting of the year here in Washington. Hosting APEC this year presents a tremendous opportunity for the United States to exhibit leadership by forging a 21st century economic agenda for the Asia-Pacific, and by building an enduring economic architecture for the region that is open, free, transparent, and fair.

Much is at stake. As President Obama has stated, "if we can increase our exports to APEC countries by just 5 percent, we can increase the number of U.S. jobs supported by exports by hundreds of thousands." American products, innovation, and know-how are competitive and in high demand in Asia. APEC 2011 is a critical chance to showcase our strengths. If confirmed, I will work with Congress, the business community, and my colleagues in the

Executive Branch to utilize our hosting of APEC this year to the fullest as an opportunity to both restore confidence at home and promote new opportunities for our exporters overseas.

If confirmed, I will put my experience and energy to work to advance our overall economic interests in the Asia-Pacific region. During my 21 years as a career Foreign Service Officer, I have handled trade, finance and development issues at our Embassies in Manila, Tokyo, Beijing, and Seoul. I have also served as Director for Korean Affairs at the State Department and Director for Asian Economic Affairs at the National Security Council.

Mr. Chairman, it would be a great privilege to serve my country as the U.S. Senior Official for APEC with the rank of Ambassador. The Asia-Pacific region represents the future of the global economy, but the exact contours of that future have yet to be fully defined. APEC plays a key role in shaping the region, and I am ready to help the United States work through the organization to promote growth and job-creating opportunities in the Asia-Pacific for American businesses and citizens.

Thank you for considering my nomination. I look forward to your questions.

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