

## PRESS RELEASE

### **APEC at 25: Survey shows APEC's increasing relevance**

**7 November 2014 (Beijing, China)** – According to the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (PECC)'s 2014 survey of the policy community, 61 percent of respondents thought that the organization was just as, if not more, important today than it was when it was launched. However, this has not always been the case. “When we first started doing the survey we were struck by the ambivalence of the policy community towards APEC,” said Mr. Eduardo Pedrosa, Secretary General of PECC. In 2007, just as many respondents agreed as those who disagreed with the proposition that APEC was still as important as it was when it was founded.

When the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum was established 25 years ago, views were clearly divided as to whether it could endure. The grouping brought together a diverse membership with seemingly very little in common. Indeed there have been moments in APEC's history that it seemed that the organization had lost its way, for example during the Asian Financial Crisis, whereby the organization was not seen to have been helpful to a large number of its members.

Over the years that PECC has been tracking opinions about APEC, a strange phenomenon was occurring where the both positive and negative sentiments were decreasing. One way to read this would be that people were becoming jaded about APEC – they neither objected or enthused. This was especially true for the region at the heart of all Asia-Pacific cooperation processes – Southeast Asia. “Since the Asian Financial Crisis there has been a prevailing feeling that while we recognized the importance of the idea of APEC, the agenda was not quite relevant for ASEAN members,” said Mr. Jusuf Wanandi, co-chair of PECC. “After 1997-1998, new institutions like the East Asia Summit and the Chiang Mai Initiative were established rather than turning to APEC.”

However, in this year's survey, there has been a renewed sense of the importance of APEC, especially amongst the Southeast Asian policy community. “It's hard to give a specific reason for this shift – it might be that Indonesia was host to APEC meetings last year which raised the profile of the organization in Southeast Asia's most populace economy, or it might be more directly related to some of the initiatives that have been underway seen as more concrete and influential of the actual economic performance,” said Pedrosa. “Last year's survey was instructive; while Southeast Asian opinion-leaders supported the idea of trade liberalization, there was also a general feeling that the region had not benefitted as much from integration as it should have due to the supply side constraint. Last year, APEC adopted a connectivity agenda which is intended to address those constraints,” Pedrosa added.

Of concern to the future of APEC is continued ambivalence from North America. Although more North Americans continue to have a positive view of APEC it is far from a ringing endorsement. “The challenge for North America is to define itself as being part of the Asia-Pacific,” said Don Campbell, co-chair of PECC and former Canadian Deputy Minister for International Trade. “All members will have a variety of motivations for participation. In Canada's case, it should be clear that APEC provides an excellent vehicle to boost our participation and opportunities in Asia provided we are committed,” he said. “For example, the challenge has been to turn the potential for Canadian trade with Asian into actual trade. A case in point is Canadian energy – we are a potential energy supplier for the region but inadequate infrastructure and domestic politics have posed as key obstacles,” he added.

Of 602 opinion-leaders who contributed to the PECC annual survey, 164 were from the business sector, 121 from government, and 317 from the rest – academic, media, and/or civil society. For full report, please visit: <http://www.pecc.org/research/state-of-the-region>

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**About the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council**

The Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (PECC) is a non-profit international organization committed to the promotion of cooperation and dialogue in the Asia Pacific. Founded in 1980, PECC is a tripartite network of 26 member committees comprising individuals and institutions dedicated to this shared mission. Of the 26 member committees, 23 represent the economies of Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Ecuador, Hong Kong (China), Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Mexico, Mongolia, New Zealand, the Pacific Islands Forum, Peru, the Philippines, Singapore, Chinese Taipei, Thailand, the United States of America, and Vietnam. The PECC also has one associate member, France (Pacific Territories), and two institutional members, the Pacific Trade and Development Conference and the Pacific Basin Economic Council. As the only non-governmental official observer of APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation), PECC provides independent business and research input for the regional policy-making process. [www.pecc.org](http://www.pecc.org)