The 21st century is unveiling new promises and new challenges. The global and regional environment is being transformed by the rising influence of the Asia-Pacific region, as well as the rapid adoption of new information and communication technologies. Driven by these changes, one of APEC’s main priorities that will be discussed at the APEC 2011 Summit is the topic of employment generation and growth.

Under APEC’s human resource and entrepreneurship development agenda, APEC leaders will implement policies to create more and better jobs, enhance education and training with equal opportunities for women, youth, and the elderly. They will create more business opportunities for small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) and encourage measures to enhance their participation in high-growth sectors and access to global markets. They also recognize that the full potential of women to contribute to the regional economy remains untapped. In addition, APEC leaders are also working to promote green jobs and education to foster the green growth initiative.

APEC’s goals for employment growth

As part of the APEC Leaders’ Growth Strategy, APEC leaders are working together to promote job creation, human resource development, and active labor market policies. APEC economies are exchanging ideas to improve the quality of education and to increase employment opportunities for women, youth, elderly workers, and vulnerable groups. This includes helping students and workers adapt to changing economic circumstances through education and training focused on skills and competencies they need to remain competitive in the 21st century workplace. APEC leaders will also address the promotion of green jobs education and training by identifying relevant skills and competencies, sharing best practices, supporting education for sustainable development (ESD), and expanding ecotourism.

Why are SMEs important to APEC economies?

SMEs play a vital role in economic growth and job creation in APEC economies. APEC leaders are working toward taking a holistic approach to make a significant impact in enhancing the business environment for SMEs trading in the region. SMEs account for 90 percent of the businesses operating in our economies and employ well over half of the workforce for the majority of our economies. Because of their entrepreneurial nature, SMEs are an important source of innovative business models and new technologies that contribute to economic growth and job creation in these economies. As entrepreneurship is fostered by innovation, APEC strives to provide a better environment where the exchange of information and promotion of innovation among APEC economies can flourish.

The work being done by APEC on SME policy issues is critical to accelerating economic growth and creating jobs in all of our member economies. Economic growth and job creation in APEC’s member markets can be bolstered by embracing business ethics to enhance the competitiveness of SMEs, promoting the use of new technologies by SMEs to reduce the cost of doing business, and identifying policies that support green SMEs to thrive in a green growth economy.
**WHAT ARE GREEN JOBS?**

One of APEC’s main priorities that will be discussed at the APEC 2011 Summit is the topic of green growth, which will promote the need for the successful transition into a clean energy future. Having a greener economy represents a new engine of growth—a net generator of jobs.

According to the United Nations Environment Program, green jobs (also known as green-collar jobs) refer to agricultural, manufacturing, research and development (R&D), administrative, and service activities that contribute to preserving or restoring environmental quality.

Some examples of green collar jobs include:
- Urban Planners
- Solar Energy Technicians
- Eco-Tourism Occupations
- Thermal Engineers
- Green Building Designers

The demand for green collar jobs is on the rise, as more sophisticated technologies are being developed for a more sustainable future.

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**APEC’S PROGRESS IN EMPLOYMENT CREATION**

**ABAC 2011 Work Program**

After the 2008 economic crisis, the APEC Business Advisory Council (ABAC) adopted the themes: “21 Economies for 21st Century Prosperity” & “Employing people and ideas for sustained growth in Asia-Pacific”.

The 2011 work program will focus on the following key areas:
- Regional economic integration encompassing APEC’s core trade and investment liberalization and facilitation agenda
- SME and entrepreneurship with an emphasis on job creation
- Sustainable growth with an emphasis on energy security and food security

Reflecting these priorities, ABAC established the following working groups:
- Regional Economic Integration Working Group (REIWG)
- SMME and Entrepreneurship Working Group (SMMEEWG)
- Sustainable Growth Working Group (SGWG)
- Finance and Economics Working Group (FEWG)
- Action Plan and Advocacy Working Group (APAWG)

**ABAC’S Small and Microenterprises & Entrepreneurship Working Group**

The working group suggests and endorses policies that promote the establishment of new businesses and business models, the longevity of SMEs, and the economic inclusion, including women’s issue. ABAC’s SMME Working Group also submitted its agenda to the APEC SME Ministers. The report focuses on SMME start-up and sustainability, facilitating economic inclusion, and building capacities such as the knowledge to exploit new resources like cloud computing to help lower costs. It also seeks ways to and ease access to international business opportunities.