Perhaps there is no one more qualified for the title of APEC Expert than Lauren Moriarty, the former U.S. Ambassador to APEC and current Dean of the Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies. With her firsthand knowledge of the Asia Pacific region, Ambassador Moriarty was instrumental in helping Hawai‘i secure its place as host to the 2011 summit.

Ambassador Moriarty highlighted the importance of APEC to Hawai‘i in a recent talk with UH students. “Hawai‘i is not going to get another opportunity like this in my lifetime. The United States hasn’t hosted APEC in almost 20 years, and because it rotates, we are not going to host again in a while,” said Moriarty. “APEC is going to bring here the leaders of the most important economies of the world, including the finance ministers, the trade ministers, the foreign ministers, and every news broadcast in the world is going to open on Hawai‘i. They are coming for APEC, but we have a chance to show Hawai‘i.”

Indeed, the APEC summit is expected to draw 17,000 visitors to Honolulu and will be the culmination of months of local preparation and international coordination. APEC has been preparing its agenda through meetings for senior officials, finance ministers and business leaders.

In addition, Honolulu will not only host Leaders Week but also the APEC Climate Advisory Symposium in October and the APEC Business Advisory Council in November. Thus, APEC encompasses much more than a single week of international leaders’ meetings—it is an opportunity for Hawai‘i to contribute to the international dialogue on global business, trade and environmental issues.

While APEC is a non-binding forum, Ambassador Moriarty understands the significance of trade agreements made between APEC members and has participated in trade negotiations herself. As a career diplomat and senior Foreign Service Officer, she helped Chinese Taipei and China enter the World Trade Organization and is familiar with the sensitivity of the issues that come into play during discussions.

Because the U.S. already has a liberal trade policy, it has much to gain from trade agreements, as the U.S. often faces greater trade barriers overseas. “In general, in negotiating agreements, we are pushing the other side to lower their barriers,” Moriarty said.

The APEC process, said Moriarty, is also important for smaller economies, which are not usually given the opportunity to discuss trade issues with bigger economies, like the U.S. The discussions within APEC allow for all parties to contribute their ideas and goals.

Moreover, organizations like the World Trade Organization and APEC are integral to peace-keeping. “Instead of going to war (when there is a dispute), we have this set of rules from the WTO and so we are going try to resolve these issues through rules,” she said.

Basic principles promoted by APEC, such as transparency in laws, have an impact on the peace and prosperity of the people of an economy. Transparency allows for the publishing of laws and prevents corruption, Moriarty said. Thus, organizations like APEC and trade agreements point economies in the right direction for development.

While many economies are at different stages of development, building consensus, while recognizing differences, is the aim of APEC. With its aloha spirit, Hawai‘i provides the ideal environment for leaders to resolve their differences and will be crucial in setting the global agenda.

ABOUT AMBASSADOR MORIARTY

Lauren Kahea Moriarty, a UH Mānoa alumnus, is Dean of the Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies. Previously, she served as U.S. Ambassador to APEC from 2003 to 2005, becoming the first ambassador of Native Hawaiian descent in U.S. history. Her career spans many countries: she has served as a senior Foreign Service Officer in Nepal; the director of the State Department’s Office of East African Affairs; the Minister-Counselor for Economic Affairs at the U.S. Embassy in Beijing, China; and the Deputy Head, as well as the Chief of the Economics Section, at the American Institute in Chinese Taipei. Her husband, James Moriarty, is the Ambassador to Bangladesh.