Global Industry Urges APEC Economies to Jump-Start ITA Expansion Negotiations

Industry associations from around the world urge the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) trade ministers gathering in Qingdao, China May 17-18 to take active steps to restart the tariff-elimination negotiations to significantly expand product coverage of the Information Technology Agreement (ITA).

These negotiations made tremendous progress last year, but were suspended in November when all the negotiating parties could not agree on a final list of products to be included in an expanded ITA.

This was unfortunate as the ITA is one of the most commercially successful trade agreements in the World Trade Organization (WTO), and an expanded ITA would do even more to help drive innovation, accelerate productivity, create jobs, lower consumer prices, and bridge communities across the globe in ways unimagined 18 years ago when the agreement was established.

Product expansion of the ITA, as well as expansion of geographic scope of the agreement would yield immediate and substantial benefits, removing tariffs on a vast array of tech products not currently covered.

APEC has deep ties with ITA. APEC ministers meeting in Singapore in 1995 played a critical role in helping to launch the ITA. More recently, the 21 APEC leaders in October 2013 called for conclusion of ITA negotiations before the WTO ministerial meeting in early December of last year.

We therefore urge the APEC economies participating in the negotiations to exercise strong leadership, embrace the long-term benefits of ITA expansion, and limit product sensitivities so an ambitious outcome can be achieved as soon as possible.

The APEC Ministers Responsible for Trade have an excellent opportunity in Qingdao this month to re-energize APEC’s ties with the ITA by providing the leadership and determination to get the expansion negotiations restarted. We very much
hope they don’t miss this opportunity.

We continue to be deeply committed to working closely with our governments to achieve a swift and ambitious outcome that will expand trade, stimulate growth, increase jobs, spur innovation, and promote prosperity around the world.