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Summary Report: Strengthening Governments' Role in Promoting Business Continuity Planning

Purpose: Information
Submitted by: Australia



APEC PERU
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**10th Emergency Preparedness Working Group
Meeting
Lima, Peru
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Summary Report

Strengthening Governments' Role in Promoting Business Continuity Planning

Overview

Since 2012, Australia has led a self-funded APEC project to strengthen the role of governments in promoting the use of business continuity plans (BCPs). Effective adoption of BCPs can help better manage the impact of disasters and guide businesses to be better prepared when resuming operations under adverse conditions.

Unfortunately, only a small portion of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) operating across the Asia Pacific have BCPs in place. Regional efforts to increase the use of BCPs among SMEs are seen as a policy priority in building resilient economies and communities across APEC. These efforts can help protect supply chains, commercial activities and cross-border trading.

APEC's BCP-related activities are also helping to deliver the 2011 Leaders and Ministers' mandate and the subsequent calls they have made to encourage economies to boost disaster resiliency among local businesses

The Workshops

Australia conducted two BCP workshops in 2016. The first was implemented in Lima on 5-6 May with training focused entirely on Peruvian participants. The second workshop was conducted on 7-8 June in Kuala Lumpur and was implemented as a multilateral activity that involved participants from several APEC economies (Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, PNG, Thailand and Vietnam).

Both workshops were designed and delivered based on lessons learned and activities conducted in past workshops led by Australia, including workshops implemented in Singapore (2012), Hanoi (2013), Bangkok (2013), Manila (2014) and Bangkok (2015).

Previous workshops culminated with the publication of a guidebook to help government agencies in their efforts to support business operations become more resilient. The guidebook was released by Australia's Foreign Minister Julie Bishop at the 2014 AMM in Beijing.

Objectives

The targeted workshops focused on training government officials to overcome the obstacles they encounter when encouraging more SMEs to implement BCPs. This involved identifying the specific policy and technical challenges faced by government agencies in promoting BCPs and helping them to develop options or strategies for addressing these challenges. Workshop activities also included developing an understanding of how BCPs are formulated and how businesses need to maintain a viable and current BCP. Targeted economies that benefited from this work included the Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam, PNG and Peru.

Key Outcomes

Lack of cooperation, poor coordination and a fragmented approach towards the promotion of BCPs among some government agencies were among the barriers identified by economies during the workshops. Several economies argued that more work is needed to develop a united or whole-of-government approach to promoting BCPs within their jurisdictions. Most participants at the workshop had at minimum a basic understanding of why BCPs is important for SMEs. Some economies shared and discussed the various approaches that they have adopted to build local capacity in order to boost wide-spread use of BCPs in their economy. This included taking a train-the-trainer strategy where more BCP experts could be deployed to remote communities to help local trainers support small businesses to be better prepared for disasters.

Going Forward

Improving the use of BCPs as a practical tool to help businesses protect operations against the impact of disasters will need to continue as a policy priority for APEC's EPWG. In 2012, it was estimated that only 13 per cent of SMEs operating in the APEC region have BCPs in place. No comprehensive survey has been conducted since to gauge the current levels of BCP usage among SMEs. While many policy makers and experts believe that the level of awareness on the importance of BCP usage has probably risen in recent years, the investment in developing and adopting BCPs is still believed to be extremely low.

Inquiries: