Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Pathfinder Initiative

At its meeting in Cape Town, South Africa (1-3 July, 2002), the industry Section of the World Wine Trade Group agreed the following statement:

Recognising the importance of the APEC region in the production and consumption of wine;

Recognising that the APEC principles of voluntarism, comprehensiveness, consensus-based decision-making, flexibility, transparency, and open regionalism are consistent with the objectives of the (WWTG) and noting the role that APEC plays in industry development and trade facilitation;

Remembering that APEC Ministers Responsible for Trade met in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico in May 2002 to discuss concrete ways to foster economic growth and supporting the role that pathfinder initiatives could play in achieving the Bogor goals of free and open trade and investment; and,

Noting the potential of the wine industry in the region for progressing regional economic development and facilitating trade in wine;

The industry group recommends that APEC members of the WWTG jointly present a pathfinder initiative that embodies the concepts in the Mutual Acceptance Agreement on Oenological Practices to the APEC Ministerial and Leaders' Meetings in October this year.

This statement was further elaborated by the Industry Section at its meeting in Mendoza, Argentina (2-4 December, 2002):

At the last meeting of the World Wine Trade Group held in Cape Town, the industry section requested that the APEC members of the World Wine Trade Group jointly present a 'pathfinder' initiative that embodies the concepts in the Mutual Acceptance Agreement on Oenological Practices (MAA OP) to the APEC Ministerial and Leaders' Meetings.

It is critical that the World Wine Trade Group take a leading role in the development of sound wine policies and regulations in these markets.

First, the MAA OP is not a set of winemaking standards but the winemaking regulations approved by each member country could be incorporated into a standard or similar
arrangement, which could then be presented to the other APEC members for consideration as the pathfinder initiative. Such a production standard would enhance the international acceptability of wine produced in the Asia-Pacific region, while the adoption of the principles of the MAA OP would advance the free and open trade in wine, both within the region and internationally. This could provide a significant benefit to the emerging wine industries within these countries and provide an essential precursor for countries to sign onto the MAA OP.

Second, by adopting the principles in the MAA OP, particularly those in Articles 5 and 6, a trading standard for wine would eventually be established and negotiations on labeling within APEC could be opened up. It would seem to have a mutual benefit for both producer and consumer countries to sign up to the MAA OP.

Third, we could use the initiative to establish mutual recognition arrangements between certification and testing bodies for wine to reduce non-tariff barriers and facilitate trade.

The industry section of the World Wine Trade Group has formed a working group to establish a basis for mutual cooperation for the governments to present to APEC member governments. The working group will present its initial findings to the industry sector of the World Wine Trade Group at the first meeting in 2003.