

02 June 2026

Dear Members,

As we look ahead to APEC 2026 in Shenzhen this November, I want to ensure our members remain informed and well positioned. With China hosting this year, APEC is effectively on our doorstep, and the policy frameworks now being shaped through the Senior Officials' Meetings (SOM) will have direct implications for businesses across Hong Kong and the Asia-Pacific.

SOM2, recently concluded, is widely regarded as the most substantive stage of the process. While earlier meetings set priorities and later meetings finalise outcomes, SOM2 is where the detailed frameworks are negotiated. This is the stage where policy architecture takes shape.

Several themes emerging from SOM2 are particularly relevant for our members:

Trade Digitalisation

The signature deliverable of this host year is the proposed Trade Digitalisation Cooperation Framework. It aims to standardise digital trade processes across all 21 APEC economies, including electronic documentation, interoperability systems, digital identity frameworks and governance settings covering cybersecurity and privacy.

If implemented effectively, these measures could reduce transaction costs, streamline customs processes and improve supply chain visibility. For Hong Kong, as a logistics and financial services hub, the implications are significant. The treatment of cross-border data flows remains a key area to watch, particularly how sovereignty and security considerations are balanced with commercial interoperability.

AI and Technology Standards

China's showcase at SOM2 placed strong emphasis on AI, advanced connectivity, green technologies and smart systems. Beyond capability, there is a clear effort to shape governance approaches and technical standards.

For members operating across multiple markets, alignment or divergence in AI governance and digital standards will influence compliance settings, partnership decisions and long-term investment strategies. Hong Kong's position as a bridge economy places our members in a unique position to engage constructively while remaining aligned with international standards.

Supply Chain and Digital Connectivity

Digital port integration and supply chain modernisation also featured prominently. The focus is shifting from resilience alone to technology-enabled efficiency and regional connectivity. Pilot programmes planned through 2026 and 2027 signal that this agenda is moving into implementation.

Trade Architecture Convergence

Discussions around the Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific continue, with attention on practical convergence between RCEP, CPTPP and IPEF frameworks. While full harmonisation remains complex,

incremental alignment in digital trade, services and investment would reduce regulatory fragmentation and compliance costs for business.

Looking ahead, the process now moves toward SOM3 and ultimately the APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting in Shenzhen in November 2026. The implementation phase that follows will determine how quickly these frameworks translate into operational change.

In parallel, AustCham will continue convening practical discussions to connect policy developments with commercial realities. This Thursday, AustCham's **Construction, Property and Infrastructure Committee** will host a members-only committee meeting from 09:00 to 10:00, where CBRE will lead a discussion on digital infrastructure investment in the age of AI. The conversation will directly link regional digitalisation policy with infrastructure strategy and capital deployment considerations. Please register here: [Reimagining Digital Infrastructure Investment in the Age of AI](#)

APEC 2026 is shaping the economic operating environment of our region. We will continue to keep you updated and engaged as developments unfold, and we welcome your input as we represent the interests of our members.

Warm regards,
Mary Simpson, AustCham Hong Kong Chief Executive