

Chance to promote recovery

BEIJING, Sept. 6 (Xinhuanet) -- APEC leaders should work out specific measures to stimulate trade and economic exchanges and 'green' growth. The 2012 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit has begun in the beautiful city of Vladivostok, presenting an occasion for many meetings among senior officials, ministerial officials and APEC economic leaders. Afterward, the members will release a statement advocating integration, innovation and common prosperity. This marks the first time that Russia has played host to the organization's annual meeting. This year's event has inherited outcomes from the 2011 summit, which was held in the United States, and will continue to be a forum for discussing proposals to establish an APEC Free Trade Area. In the face of stalled world economic growth, the meetings will have the goal of finding ways to fuel economic development and prosperity and manage global economic and financial difficulties. First, the liberalization of trade and investment will be a central topic at the meetings. With the furtherance of APEC's goals, APEC members' average tariff has been kept lower than the average tariff of members of the World Trade Organization. In response to concerns about "free riders", many APEC members have established various small free trade agreements that will not only complement the original APEC system but also affect APEC's actions. The US will use the meeting to tout the Trans-Pacific Partnership, promoting it as the best means of ensuring the Asia-Pacific has a free trade area. By advancing the Trans-Pacific Partnership - a free trade agreement among nine economies - the US in part wants to ensure it has a leadership role in the economic cooperation that is taking place in the Asia-Pacific region. Other APEC members, though, must overcome many difficulties if they are to participate in the Trans-Pacific Partnership and open their markets further. In their work to promote the Free Trade Area of the Asia Pacific - a proposal to form a free trade agreement among the 21 APEC economies - APEC members might come to some sort of consensus. At the same time, they are likely to place an emphasis on APEC's best practices in the free trade agreements. Second, the meetings will have food security as a topic. Those who attend will continue to discuss ways to best achieve and maintain physical and economic access to food products, ensure international standards of quality and safety, promote food production through the introduction of innovative technologies and promptly identify and prevent threats to agriculture. The APEC region has a large population and large expanses of arable land. Many APEC members play an important role in agricultural production and trade, and have an effect on food supply and prices in the international market. Because of recent changes in the global climate, 2012 has seen frequent hurricanes, typhoons, rainstorms and droughts - disasters that have resulted in not only heavy losses of people and property but also reduced the global food supply and pushed prices upward. APEC members, in their work to ensure food is safer, are now faced with the need to mitigate and prevent disasters. The meeting will discuss food security concerns that are arising from the current reduction in grain yields, as well as from global warming, which has had a tremendous effect on food security. Third, those who attend the meetings will discuss the need to establish reliable supply chains.

Economic globalization and regional economic integration are now bringing more and more enterprises to the international market and allowing raw materials, semi-finished products, finished products and services, technology, knowledge and other resources to be circulated throughout the world, thereby helping to form an international supply chain. For APEC, the establishment of reliable supply chains can help to further reduce intra-regional trade and investment barriers, and give rise to more-open, efficient and low-cost business conditions in the Asia-Pacific region. The regional supply chain now has a series of deficiencies. Supporting APEC's regional economic development will require the establishment of a strong and barrier-free APEC product supply chain, the elimination of trade barriers, reduction of transaction time and costs and the adoption of transparent policies. Fourth, those in attendance will discuss the need to promote innovation through close cooperation. Given the current international economy, this year's meeting in Russia will put more emphasis on innovation and environmentally "green" growth. Along with economic development, APEC members will pay more attention to environmental protection, encourage economic integration and collaboration and promote sustainable economic development in the Asia-Pacific region. Even though APEC members form a diverse group, they can reach a consensus on the need to promote the stable and sound development of the Asia-Pacific and global economy. After all, these problems are related to the interests of all APEC members. The Russia APEC meeting will provide a good opportunity to promote APEC economic development and a global economic recovery. The author is professor with the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Study Center at Nankai University. (Source: China Daily)