

Opening Remarks
By Hon. Roberto R. Romulo
Chairman, PPECC
At the 14th General Meeting of PECC
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Dr. William Fung
Hon. Tung Chee Wa
PECC Colleagues
Distinguished Participants to the 14th General Meeting of PECC

It has been a tradition in PECC for the immediate past chair to deliver some remarks at the beginning of the General Meeting. It has served as an occasion to congratulate the current chair for a job well done. It is a task I am most happy and comfortable with for truly, our Chairman William Fung, has done an outstanding job in steering PECC through the past two years, particularly in maintaining its relevancy in a rapidly evolving regional and global settings.

What has not been a tradition is passing on to the next chair the next cycle of global crisis. This may sound a bit paranoid, but I think I can be forgiven for entertaining that thought. When I assumed the chairmanship in 1997, the world was reeling from the Asian financial crisis and the word “contagion” became part of our lexicon. Understandably, our preoccupation in PECC became the development of a comprehensive response to the financial crisis. And since the crisis was an offspring of globalization, we also began to put our collective thinking cap to examine how we could prepare our economies to the challenges of an increasingly globalizing world, in which technology and markets were the primary driving force.

Barely a few months since William took over, Seattle happened and over the course of the last two years, we saw a world where wide swaths of the population had become increasingly skeptical of the glowing promises of globalization and who now saw it as a malevolent force that was impoverishing people and destroying the environment. The

failure of the WTO Seattle meeting and subsequent demonstrations in Washington, Davos and Genoa against what were perceived as the other instruments of globalization – the IMF and the World Bank, the World Economic Forum, and the G-8, respectively - were symptomatic of such skepticism and distrust. Indeed, while those in these meetings had no such doubts about the prosperity that globalization has brought to the majority of the world's population, they themselves were grappling with the question of how globalization can benefit all. The choice therefore by our chair of PECC's theme of Managing Globalization in the 21st Century cannot be more appropriate and timely. I congratulate the Chair for being so perceptive and directing our collective energies to addressing this challenge. We do not have all the answers of course and the work is far from finished. Indeed recent events have added new complications.

This year, as we pass on the baton to the next chair, we find a world on the brink of recession and living under times of great fear and uncertainty. Once again, we see the hand of globalization at work. But this time around, we see terrorists turn the very tools of globalization against it. The ease with which people could communicate with each other, travel and move freely and transfer funds were all put to use to bring terror of unimaginable proportions to the world community. Now this mobility is being seriously questioned which would be unfortunate because terrorism had existed long before globalization. Throughout history, terrorism has found fertile breeding grounds where poverty and instability reign. Where there exists sections of the global community, which are marginalized and socially excluded, you will find those who have no loyalty to democratic institutions or see any merit in openness and global interaction.

I continue to believe that the processes that are involved in driving regional and global integration have to be inclusive and representative in terms of participation and holistic in terms of approach. It would be a mistake to regard globalization solely as an economic phenomenon. It affects all aspects of society and the fact that it has created winners and losers has given rise to conflicts which while no longer likely to involve pitting nations against each other, now finds no borders as well – a contagion of a different kind but no less dangerous. We cannot continue to function with the artificial division between

economics and politics because as we have seen economic well-being is intertwined with social and political stability and security.

PECC must likewise evolve if it to continue to make important contributions in the shaping of this process I have referred to. I think we are well positioned to do that because of our tri-partite character. I look forward to the interesting discussions that we can expect in the next few days and take this opportunity to express our assurance of support to the work of PECC in the coming years under our new Chair.