



Tan Sri Dr Rebecca Fatima Sta Maria

**Former Executive Director
APEC Secretariat, Singapore**

Until 31 Dec 2024, Tan Sri Datuk Dr Rebecca Fatima Sta Maria was the executive director of the APEC Secretariat based in Singapore, which serves as advisory body, implementation arm and custodian of institutional memory for the 21 member economies that make up the APEC forum.

Prior to joining the APEC Secretariat, Dr Sta Maria was a top-level Malaysian civil servant and trade negotiator.

She began her career in the Administrative and Diplomatic Service in 1981 and served in various capacities in the then Ministry of Trade and Industry.

She retired from the Malaysia Civil Service in 2016, having served as Secretary-General of the Malaysian Ministry of International Trade and Industry from December 2010 to July 2016. In this capacity she oversaw the formulation of Malaysia's international trade policies and positions. She often took the lead in their implementation as chief negotiator for bilateral and regional free trade agreements such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership.

Dr Sta Maria played an integral role in Malaysia's participation in multilateral forums such as APEC, where she often represented her economy during the APEC Ministers' Responsible for Trade Meetings and the Small and Medium Enterprises Ministerial Meetings. In the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Dr Sta Maria chaired the body that drafted the ASEAN Economic Community 2015 Blueprint as well as the ASEAN Economic Community 2025 Blueprint.

An accomplished academic and writer, Dr Sta Maria's scholarship has been recognized through awards from the American Academy of Human Resource Development (Malcolm Knowles Award for the best dissertation of the year in the field of human resource development) and from the University of Georgia. In 2017, she authored a book about her personal slice of Malaysian heritage and cuisine, called *The Smell of Home*.

In 2024, she was featured in Forbes' third annual 50 Over 50: Asia list, which showcases 50 inspirational women over the age of 50 from across the Asia-Pacific region.

Dr Sta Maria was the first woman executive director of the APEC Secretariat. Before 2010, the position of executive director of the APEC Secretariat rotated yearly among officials assigned by the incumbent host economy. Starting in 2010, the appointment was opened to applications from highly qualified professionals who will, when appointed, lead the Secretariat in fixed three-year terms with an option to renew.