

2020 JOINT STATEMENT SPECIAL VIDEO CONFERENCE OF THE ASEAN HEALTH MINISTERS IN ENHANCING COOPERATION ON CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 (COVID-19) RESPONSE

Adopted on 7 April 2020

WE, the Health Ministers of ASEAN Member States, representing Brunei Darussalam, the Kingdom of Cambodia, the Republic of Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, the Republic of the Philippines, the Republic of Singapore, the Kingdom of Thailand, and the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, convened the Special Video Conference of the ASEAN Health Ministers in Enhancing Cooperation on Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Response, on 7 April 2020;

RECOGNISING the rapidly-evolving outbreak of COVID-19 which was declared by the World Health Organization (WHO) on 30 January 2020 as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC), and later as a pandemic on 11 March 2020;

ACKNOWLEDGING the Chairman's Statement on ASEAN Collective Response to the Outbreak of Coronavirus Disease 2019 from ASEAN Chair Viet Nam which emphasised the importance of ASEAN solidarity and the spirit of a 'Cohesive and Responsive ASEAN Community' in facing the outbreak of the COVID-19 and similar challenges;

AFFIRMING the commitments in the Joint Statement of the 14th AHMM on 29 August 2019 in Siem Reap, Cambodia, with a theme of Accelerating Health for All in ASEAN, for an effective cooperation of ongoing activities for the preparedness, prevention, detection and response to communicable, emerging and re-emerging diseases, including pandemics and neglected tropical diseases, and other public health emergencies or health impacts of disasters, and health security threats;

NOTING the complementary joint statements on COVID-19 from other relevant sectors in ASEAN, including the defence, foreign affairs, tourism and economic sectors;

RECALLING the outcomes of the Special Video Conference of ASEAN Plus Three Senior Officials Meeting on Health Development (SOMHD) on COVID-19 on 3 February 2020, the Special Video Conference of the ASEAN Emergency Operations Centre Network for public health emergencies (ASEAN EOC Network) with Health Experts of the People's Republic of China on the Clinical Case Management of COVID-19 on 20 February 2020, and other related follow-up activities, and the Special Video Conference of the ASEAN SOMHD in Enhancing Cooperation on COVID-19 on 13 March 2020;

APPRECIATING the active engagements and ongoing cooperation among ASEAN Member States, with various stakeholders through a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach, and the proactive and timely action of the ASEAN Health Sector in the collective response towards COVID-19;

COMMENDING the valuable efforts of various medical professionals, researchers, scientists, health care workers and other front-liners who are responding to COVID-19;

EXPRESSING deep condolences and sympathies to the loss of lives and those suffering due to COVID-19;

BEING MINDFUL of the urgency to address the continuing threat of COVID-19 in the region, and its significant regional impact to populations, public health, socio-cultural aspects and economy;

We, the ASEAN Health Ministers, agree collectively in:

1. Further enhancing the exchange and sharing of timely data and information on COVID-19 on the prevention, detection, control and response measures, epidemiologic surveillance updates, risk assessment results, epidemiological and clinical studies on the virus and the disease, and technical guidelines, through the existing ASEAN Health Sector Cooperation mechanisms such as the ASEAN SOMHD, the ASEAN Plus Three SOMHD, the ASEAN EOC Network, the ASEAN Plus Three Field Epidemiology Training Network (FETN) and the ASEAN BioDiaspora Virtual Centre;
2. Strengthening regional cooperation in risk communication on COVID-19, in collaboration with relevant sectoral bodies of ASEAN, to avert misinformation and fake news;
3. Utilising digital technology, including video conferencing and social media applications, as well as artificial intelligence, in addition to the existing official and formal platforms for efficient exchange of information which will facilitate the timely implementation of public health responses.
4. Coordinating cross-border public health responses, such as contact tracing and outbreak investigation, where appropriate, through existing bilateral and regional cooperation mechanisms;
5. Enhancing cooperation within ASEAN-led mechanisms and with external partners or stakeholders in capacity building interventions on public health emergency preparedness and response; sharing of critical lessons learned and good practices; resource mobilisation including technical assistance; and, policy dialogues on the latest development on COVID-19 including drug and vaccine development, and security and self-reliance;
6. Ensuring that all persons infected by COVID-19, including migrants and other vulnerable groups, can access essential health care services;
7. Supporting the timely provision of assistance that are critical in sustaining affected national health systems in the region and improving the readiness of others, including the sharing of interventions to aid in transitioning national health systems to recovery;
8. Combating the outbreak in ASEAN, hand-in-hand with Dialogue and Development Partners, and other regional and global entities such as the WHO, as well as collaborate with the academia and private sector to promote research and development on the disease, and strengthen the exchange of the latest available knowledge, as well as sharing of evidence-based management and the appropriate and innovative tools and interventions that will help to stem the outbreak; and,
9. Committing to continue, after overcoming the challenges related to COVID-19 and after revitalising national health systems, the collaboration in learning from the regional and national experiences in responding to COVID-19 challenges, as well as in further strengthening and institutionalising preparedness, surveillance, prevention, detection and response mechanisms of ASEAN with other Dialogue and Development Partners, such as the WHO, on public health emergencies and other crises.