

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

*Adopted on 14 May 2020*

**WE**, the Labour Ministers of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Member States, namely 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 Meeting of ASEAN Labour Ministers on Response to the Impact of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) on Labour and Employment through a video conference on 14 May 2020;

**RECOGNISING** the widespread and profound impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the health well-being and livelihood of peoples and economies of ASEAN Member States and other countries around the world;

**EXPRESSING** our deepest sympathies to the bereaved of those who lost their lives due to the pandemic and to the individuals and sectors in our societies affected by COVID-19, including workers who lost their jobs and income;

**EXPRESSING** our gratitude to medical professionals, health care workers, researchers, scientists and other frontline personnel for their invaluable efforts in response to COVID-19;

**ADHERING** to the determination and commitment of ASEAN Member States, in the spirit of a Cohesive and Responsive ASEAN, to remain united and to act jointly and decisively to control the spread of the disease while mitigating its adverse impact, safeguarding the people's well-being and maintaining socio-economic stability, as stipulated in the Declaration of the Special ASEAN Summit on Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) held on 14 April 2020 through video conference;

**ACKNOWLEDGING** the ASEAN Coordinating Council (ACC) Chairman's Press Statement on COVID-19 issued on 20 February 2020 which highlighted ASEAN's commitment to maintaining open economic and integration policies and fostering regional resilience, while being prepared to explore cooperation with ASEAN's external partners and international community to enhance readiness and response measures to mitigate and eliminate the impact of COVID-19;

**FURTHER ACKNOWLEDGING** the Statement of the 26th ASEAN Economic Ministers' Retreat (AEM Retreat) held on 8-10 March 2020 on Strengthening ASEAN's Economic Resilience in Response to the Outbreak of the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) which reaffirmed the commitment of keeping the ASEAN market open for trade and investment, working closely with industries to instill confidence in Southeast Asia as a trade and investment hub and tourism destination, and strengthening a long-term supply chain resilience and sustainability;

**FURTHER ACKNOWLEDGING** the Joint Statement of Special Video Conference of the ASEAN Health Ministers in Enhancing Cooperation on Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Response held on 7 April 2020 which reaffirmed agreement to enhance the exchange and sharing of timely data and information on COVID-19 on the prevention, detection, control and response measures, among others;

**NOTING** the joint responses of other ASEAN sectoral ministerial bodies to COVID-19, including the health, economic, defense, foreign affairs, tourism, and agriculture sectors;

**BEING MINDFUL** of the urgency to address the impact of COVID-19 on labour and employment in timely and effective manner, while acknowledging the on-going efforts of individual ASEAN Member States to assist workers and employers affected by COVID-19;

**AGREED** that with regional solidarity, we will continue to strengthen cooperation in this challenging time and take the following actions:

1. Provide support for the livelihood and health of all workers, especially those working in high-risk sectors, and safeguard their labour rights amidst the impact of COVID-19 to the economies and industries of ASEAN Member States;
2. Endeavour to provide that all workers, including migrant workers, laid off or furloughed by employers affected by the pandemic are compensated appropriately by the employers and eligible to receive social assistance or unemployment benefits from the government where appropriate, in accordance with the laws, regulations and policies of respective ASEAN Member States;
3. Facilitate access of all workers infected by COVID-19 to essential health care services and other relevant medical support as necessary and prevent discrimination against infected workers;
4. Provide appropriate assistance and support to ASEAN migrant workers affected by the pandemic in each other's country or in third countries, including effective implementation of the ASEAN Consensus on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers, working towards their health, well-being and safety as well as facilitating their movement and reuniting them with their families;
5. Further strengthen the effectiveness of active labour market policies at national and regional levels, occupational safety and health standards, and social protection systems through productive and harmonious social dialogue to retain employment, reduce the vulnerabilities of at-risk workers, and improve their resilience;
6. Utilise digital technology as communication and consultation media amidst temporary restrictions of movement in many countries so as to further regional cooperation and national responses to the impact of the pandemic on labour and employment;
7. Enhance effective and transparent public communications through official forms of media for timely updates of government labour and employment policies and measures in response to the pandemic and counter misinformation;
8. Enhance cooperation with tripartite partners, civil society, international organisations, ASEAN Dialogue Partners and other stakeholders in mutually agreed areas such as knowledge sharing, research and development technical assistance and resource mobilisation to support rapid responses and post- pandemic recovery plan; and
9. Continue sharing of best practices and lessons learnt among ASEAN Member States on measures to help at- risk workers and employers and promote their resilience.

**WE** tasked the ASEAN Senior Labour Officials to undertake joint efforts to promote preparedness of labour and employment policies for the adverse impact of potential pandemic, economic crisis or natural disasters in the future. The joint collaboration shall be planned in the ASEAN Labour Ministers' Work Programme 2021-2025 for submission to the 26th ASEAN Labour Ministers Meeting.

*(\*) Thailand strongly supported the adoption of this Joint Statement pending its Cabinet's approval.*

## **LIST OF ASEAN LABOUR MINISTERS AND SECRETARY-GENERAL OF ASEAN**

**H.E. Pehin Abu Bakar Apong**

Minister of Home Affairs  
Brunei Darussalam

**H.E. Ith Samheng**

Minister of Labour and Vocational Training  
The Kingdom of Cambodia

**H.E. Ida Fauziah**

Minister of Manpower  
The Republic of Indonesia

**H.E. Dr. Khampheng Saysompheng**

Minister of Labour and Social Welfare  
The Lao People's Democratic Republic

**H.E. Datuk Seri M. Saravanan**

Minister of Human Resources  
Malaysia

**H.E. Thein Swe**

Union Minister for Labour, Immigration and Population  
The Republic of the Union of Myanmar

**H.E. Silvestre H. Bello III**

Secretary of Department of Labour and Employment  
The Republic of the Philippines

**H.E. Josephine Teo**

Minister for Manpower and Second Minister for Home Affairs  
The Republic of Singapore

**H.E. M.R. Chatu Mongol Sonakul**

Minister of Labour  
The Kingdom of Thailand

**H.E. Dao Ngoc Dung**

Minister of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs  
The Socialist Republic of Viet Nam

**H.E. Dato Lim Jock Hoi**

Secretary-General of ASEAN