

2020 PRESS STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE ASEAN COORDINATING COUNCIL

Adopted in Vientiane, Lao PDR on 20 February 2020

1. The ASEAN Coordinating Council (ACC) held a Special Meeting on 20 February 2020 in Vientiane, Lao PDR to discuss follow-up actions to the ASEAN Chairman's Statement on ASEAN collective response to the Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19).
2. The Ministers emphasized the importance of ASEAN solidarity and unity to effectively respond to challenges from the outbreak of COVID-19.
3. The Ministers reviewed ASEAN's existing efforts both at national and regional levels and in cooperation with external partners and the international community to prevent and control the spread of COVID-19; commended timely and effective actions undertaken by the ASEAN health sector and relevant sectoral bodies, including the ASEAN defence establishments, as agreed by the ASEAN Defence Ministers in Ha Noi on 19 February 2020.
4. The Ministers stressed the resolve of ASEAN Member States to prevent the impacts of the disease from affecting the overall ASEAN Community building process and the normal functioning of ASEAN.
5. The Ministers noted the outcome of the Special Video Conference of ASEAN Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Network with China on 20 February 2020, which will further contribute to ASEAN-China's collective efforts and coordination in addressing the outbreak of the COVID-19.
6. The Ministers discussed the way forward to further strengthen ASEAN cooperation and collective action in curbing the threat from COVID-19 and agreed to:
 - Reaffirm ASEAN's cohesiveness through joint actions of mutual assistance, including sharing transparent information, experience and best practices, building capacity in the prevention, detection, research and treatment of COVID-19 and other emerging infectious diseases; appropriate consular support to ASEAN Member States' citizens where needed; based on relevant Guidelines agreed to by ASEAN Member States; expressed confidence in our collective ability to manage the situation.
 - Enhance ASEAN's responsiveness to act promptly and effectively in the control of the disease through promoting multi-sectoral and whole of ASEAN Community engagement, building upon existing efforts by the ASEAN health sector; encouraging collective action by ASEAN with the enhanced role of the ASEAN Coordinating Council as the main monitoring body and the ASEAN Secretariat serving as the regional coordination hub that helps facilitate networking and exchanging of timely information among relevant ASEAN bodies.
 - Task the ASEAN Secretariat to regularly update the ASEAN Coordinating Council on the ASEAN Collective Response to COVID-19.
 - Intensify efforts to promote correct public awareness about the COVID-19 situation.
 - Call on ASEAN Member States' governments and relevant agencies to duly inform the public on real-time situation, act responsibly and decisively to stop the spread of disinformation and misinformation.
 - Emphasize the high responsibility of Governments in ensuring the accuracy of the information shared with their peoples and to other Member States in the ASEAN Community on the actual situation in each country and measures undertaken.

7. The ASEAN Coordinating Council shall prepare a consolidated report on the COVID-19 situation update and response to the 36th ASEAN Summit for the Leaders' further guidance and instruction.
8. The Ministers further reaffirmed their commitment to maintaining ASEAN's open economic and integration policies, fostering regional resilience, while standing ready to explore cooperation with ASEAN's external partners and the international community to enhance readiness and response measures to mitigate and eliminate the impacts of the COVID-19.
9. The Ministers also welcomed cooperation and assistance from ASEAN Dialogue Partners, the WHO and other international and regional organizations to strengthen capacity for ASEAN in health emergency preparedness and response.
10. The Ministers looked forward to the Special ASEAN-China Foreign Ministers' Meeting to be held on the same day which they believe will provide good opportunities for ASEAN and China to deepen cooperation to effectively respond to COVID-19.
11. The Ministers expressed their appreciation to the Government of the Lao PDR for the excellent arrangements made for the Meeting and the warm hospitality extended to their respective delegations.