

# **2020 JOINT STATEMENT SPECIAL VIDEO CONFERENCE OF ASEAN PLUS THREE 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, and the Health Ministers of the People's Republic of China, Japan and the Republic of Korea, discussed and agreed on 7 April 2020 through a special video conference the ways forward in enhancing preparedness, prevention, detection and response to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Pandemic.

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

CONCERNED with the progressive transmission and spread of COVID-19 in various countries and regions globally in which the declaration of a pandemic by WHO was made on 11 March 2020;

VALUING the contribution and leadership of ASEAN with the People's Republic of China, Japan, and the Republic of Korea, together with the WHO in rapidly responding to COVID-19;

RECALLING the Chairman's Statement on ASEAN Collective Response to the Outbreak of Coronavirus Disease 2019 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;

ACKNOWLEDGING the current efforts by individual ASEAN Member States in cooperation with relevant partners from the People's Republic of China, Japan, and Republic of Korea, together with the WHO and non-health sectors in the preparedness, prevention, detection and response to COVID-19, and the mitigation of its impact to society;

AFFIRMING the commitment to continue efforts on the implementation of the International Health Regulations (IHR) (2005) and the Asia Pacific Strategy for Emerging Diseases and Public Health Emergencies (APSED III) to enhance ASEAN Member States and Plus Three Countries' capacity to prevent, detect, and respond to public health threats as indicated in the Joint Statement of the 8th ASEAN Plus Three Health Ministers Meeting on 30 August 2019 in Siem Reap, Cambodia;

NOTING that our health development collaboration is aligned with the ASEAN Post2015 Health Development Agenda which includes, among others, specific focus on responding to communicable and emerging diseases and health threats;

RECALLING the outcomes of the Special Video Conference of ASEAN Plus Three SOMHD on COVID-19 on 3 February 2020;

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

COMMENDING the valuable efforts of various medical professionals, researchers, scientists and other health care workers in the frontlines of responding 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, and economy;

WE, the ASEAN Plus Three Health Ministers, agree to further enhance our collective response to COVID-19 by:

1. Continue enhancing free, open, transparent and timely sharing of information, data and expertise on COVID-19 prevention, detection, control and response measures, epidemiologic surveillance updates, risk assessment results, epidemiological and clinical studies on the virus and the disease, treatment experience, including the application of traditional medicine and technical guidelines, through: existing ASEAN Health Sector Cooperation mechanisms, such as the ASEAN Plus Three Senior Officials Meeting for Health Development (SOMHD), the ASEAN Emergency Operations Centre Network for public health emergencies (ASEAN EOC Network), ASEAN Plus Three Field Epidemiology Training Network (FETN), the ASEAN BioDiaspora Virtual Centre for big data analytics and visualization, and other established mechanisms, as appropriate; and, proposing to explore the possibility of the establishment of the ASEAN Plus Three EOC Cooperation Network.
2. Supporting strong, collective and orchestrated response measures that are relevant and appropriate to the severity and further evolution of the disease in Member States and within the region, as guided by: national risk assessments; the periodic reports on Risk Assessment on the International Dissemination of COVID-19 in the ASEAN Region; and, subsequent video conferences of the ASEAN Plus Three SOMHD on policy and strategic matters, and the ASEAN EOC Network on technical concerns;
3. Bolstering our coordination to share information on rapid research and development of diagnostics, antiviral medicines and vaccines, adhering to the objectives of efficacy, safety and accessibility;
4. 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;
5. Strengthening regional cooperation in risk communication on COVID-19, in collaboration with relevant sectoral bodies of ASEAN and Plus Three Countries to avert misinformation and fake news;
6. Continue utilising publicly well-known digital technology, including social media and video conferencing applications as well as artificial intelligence, in addition to existing official and formal platforms, for the efficient exchange of information which facilitates immediate and timely implementation of public health responses;
7. Ensuring the adequacy of essential medicines, vaccines and medical devices both within the country or the region;
8. Enhancing bilateral and multilateral cooperation with relevant sectors in ASEAN to reinforce efforts of the ASEAN Member States in addressing the outbreak situation through a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach, and through technical assistance to medical personnel and provision of relief supplies to medical facilities, thereby mitigating the potential negative impacts to public health as well as socio-cultural aspects and economy;
9. Combating the outbreak in ASEAN with the Plus Three Countries hand-in-hand with other Dialogue and Development Partners, and other regional and global entities such as the WHO, as well as collaborate with the academia and the 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,

10. 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 to further strengthen and institutionalise preparedness, surveillance, prevention, detection and response mechanisms of the ASEAN and Plus Three Countries on public health emergencies and other crises.