

2020 DECLARATION OF THE SPECIAL ASEAN SUMMIT ON CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 (COVID-19)

Adopted on 14 April 2020

1. We, the Heads of State/Government of the Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) held the Special ASEAN Summit via video conference on 14 April 2020. The Summit was chaired by H.E. Nguyen Xuan Phuc, Prime Minister of Viet Nam, in his capacity as Chair of ASEAN.
2. We expressed our serious concerns about the spread of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), which the World Health Organization (WHO) declared as a pandemic on 11 March 2020, and its negative effects on the well-being of the people and global socio-economic developments.
3. We were deeply saddened by the loss of life and the suffering caused by the pandemic. We also commended our medical professionals, healthcare workers and other frontline personnel.
4. Recalling the Chairman's Statement on ASEAN Collective Response to the Outbreak of Coronavirus Disease 2019 of 14 February 2020, we reaffirmed our determination and commitment, 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 on our people's livelihood, our societies and economies.
5. We appreciated the extensive measures undertaken by each ASEAN Member State and the timely efforts by the ASEAN Health Sector and other sectoral bodies of ASEAN, in collaboration with ASEAN's external partners and the international community, to prevent, detect, control and respond to the spread of COVID-19 and address its severe and multi-faceted challenges.
6. Recognising our interconnectedness and vulnerabilities in the face of COVID-19, we emphasised the critical importance of a coherent, multi-sectoral, multi-stakeholder and whole-of-ASEAN Community approach in ensuring ASEAN's timely and effective response to the pandemic.
7. We recognised the important role of the WHO and committed to working closely with the WHO, relevant organisations and the international community towards enhancing our collective pandemic preparedness and response. We underscored the value of regular and timely exchange of information and sharing of best practices among ASEAN Member States and with ASEAN's external partners in effectively responding to COVID-19.
8. We called for further enhancement of a caring and sharing ASEAN Community where ASEAN Member States help each other in this challenging time.
9. Building upon existing efforts by individual ASEAN Member State and that of the ASEAN Community, we hereby resolve to:
 - (i) Further strengthen public health cooperation measures to contain the pandemic and protect the people, including, inter alia, through timely and transparent exchange of information on real time situation and pandemic response measures taken by Member States, sharing of experience and best practices in epidemiological research and development, clinical treatment, joint research and development of vaccines and anti-viral medicines, enhancing capacity for the public health systems of ASEAN Member States while protecting and ensuring the safety of public health workers.

In this regard, we commend the efforts to enhance practical cooperation among ASEAN defence establishments to organise information and best practice sharing activities, and with our external partners, bilaterally or multilaterally, including the holding of a tabletop exercise on public health emergencies response by the ASEAN Center of Military Medicine (ACMM); and the Network of ASEAN Chemical, Biological and Radiological Defence Experts in promoting scientific cooperation and enhancing professional linkages, as agreed by the ASEAN Defence Ministers in their Joint Statement on Defence Cooperation against Disease Outbreak of 19 February 2020.

- Intensify cooperation for adequate provision of medicines, essential medical supplies and equipment, including, but not limited to diagnostic tools, personal protective equipment etc. and encourage the development of regional reserves of medical supplies as well as utilising relevant ASEAN reserve warehouses to support the needs of ASEAN Member States in public health emergencies.

- Strengthen the implementation of the WHO International Health Regulations (IHR) (2005) and consider formulating an ASEAN standard operating procedure (SOP) for public health emergencies.

- Bolster national and regional epidemic preparedness and response, including through the possible setting up of a network of experts on public health emergencies for future need, strengthening the capacity of existing ASEAN's emergencies response network namely the ASEAN Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) Network, the ASEAN Risk Assessment and Risk Communication Centre, the ASEAN BioDiaspora Virtual Center (ABVC) and the ASEAN Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre) for future public health emergencies.

- (ii) Prioritise the well-being of our peoples in ASEAN's collective fight against COVID-19, and provide appropriate assistance and support to the nationals of ASEAN Member States affected by the pandemic in each other's country or in third countries.

- Encourage the effective operationalisation of the ASEAN Guidelines on the Provision of Emergency Assistance by ASEAN Mission in Third Countries to Nationals of ASEAN Member Countries in Crisis Situations.

- (iii) Enhance effective and transparent public communication involving multiple forms of media including timely updates of relevant government policies, public health and safety information, clarifications on misinformation, and efforts to reduce stigmatisation and discrimination. Encourage the ASEAN information sector to strengthen cooperation in countering misinformation and fake news, as well as to develop a set of guidelines and a possible common platform to facilitate timely sharing of information in ASEAN.

- (iv) Reaffirm our commitment to take collective action and coordinate policies in mitigating the economic and social impact from the pandemic, safeguarding the people's well-being and maintaining socio-economic stability.

- Task our ministers and officials to implement the ASEAN Economic Ministers' Joint Statement on Strengthening ASEAN's Economic Resilience in Response to the Outbreak of COVID-19 of 10 March 2020, including, inter alia:

Remain committed to keeping ASEAN's markets open for trade and investment, and enhance cooperation among ASEAN Member States and also with ASEAN's external partners with a view to ensuring food security, such as the utilisation of the ASEAN Plus Three Emergency Rice Reserve (APTERR), and strengthening the resiliency and sustainability of regional supply chains, especially for food, commodities, medicines, medical and essential supplies.

Implement appropriate measures to boost confidence and improve stability of the regional economy, including through policy stimulus, assist people and businesses suffering from the impact of COVID-19, especially the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and vulnerable groups.

- Cooperate in ensuring social safety net for our peoples, preventing social disruption and instability as a consequence of negative impact of the pandemic, continue efforts to design and implement risk-informed and shock-responsive social protection systems to reduce the vulnerabilities of at-risk populations and improve their overall resilience.

- Encourage the development of a post-pandemic recovery plan to share lessons learned, restore ASEAN's connectivity, tourism, normal business and social activities, prevent potential economic downturns.

- (v) Stress the importance of a multi-stakeholder, multi-sectoral, and comprehensive approach by ASEAN to effectively respond to COVID-19 and future public health emergencies. Commend the active role of the ASEAN Coordinating Council (ACC) and the good work of the ASEAN Coordinating Council Working Group on Public Health Emergencies (ACCWG-PHE) and other relevant sectoral bodies of ASEAN. Instruct the ACCWG-PHE to assist the ACC serving as the main platform that coordinates ASEAN's overall response to public health emergencies situations.
- (vi) Task our Economic Ministers and Senior Economic Officials to explore an arrangement to preserve supply chain connectivity, particularly amongst ASEAN Member States, that provides for trade to continue for the smooth flow of essential goods, including medical, food and essential supplies; ensures our critical infrastructure for trade and trading routes via air, land and sea ports remain open; and refrain from imposing unnecessary restrictions on the flow of medical, food and essential supplies, in accordance with the rights and obligations under the World Trade Organization (WTO) covered agreements, the ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA) and principles of international law.
- (vii) Support reallocating existing available funds and encourage technical and financial support from ASEAN's partners to facilitate cooperation against COVID-19, including the proposed establishment of the COVID-19 ASEAN Response Fund.

We tasked the ACC, supported by the ACCWG-PHE to oversee ASEAN's coordinated efforts in responding to COVID-19 and addressing its socio-economic challenges, regularly report to the ASEAN Leaders with appropriate recommendations for further guidance and instructions. In this regard, we call on all relevant sectoral bodies of ASEAN to fully and closely cooperate with ACC in realising the commitments and agreements by the Leaders set forth in this Declaration.

We pledge to remain united and vigilant against COVID-19 and commit to work closely with the WHO, ASEAN's external partners and the international community to suppress the spread of the pandemic, protect people's lives and livelihoods, maintain socio-economic stability while sustaining ASEAN Community building momentum for sustainable development, inclusive growth and leaving no one behind.