

# 2020 EAST ASIA SUMMIT LEADERS' STATEMENT ON STRENGTHENING COLLECTIVE CAPACITY IN EPIDEMICS PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

*Issued on 14 November 2020*

**WE**, the Heads of State/Government of the Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Australia, the People's Republic of China, the Republic of India, Japan, the Republic of Korea, New Zealand, the Russian Federation, and the United States of America, met via videoconference on 14 November 2020, under Viet Nam's 2020 ASEAN Chairmanship, on the occasion of the 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the East Asia Summit;

**EXPRESSING** our sincere condolences and deepest sympathy to the families, relatives and friends affected by the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19);

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

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

**DEEPLY CONCERNED** about the unprecedented and severe challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic to the health, well-being, livelihood and safety of our peoples and its adverse, disproportionate impacts on the socio-economic development and socio-cultural aspects of our respective countries and the world at large;

**REAFFIRMING** the importance of putting people at the centre of a whole of government and whole of society response to the pandemic;

**EMPHASISING** that States should respect their obligations under international human rights law and that there is no place for any form of discrimination, racism, xenophobia, or stigmatisation in preparing for and responding to infectious disease outbreaks;

**RECALLING** the United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/74/306 on Comprehensive and coordinated response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic adopted on 11 September 2020, as well as the Political Declaration of the High-level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage held on 23 September 2019;

**REAFFIRMING** commitment to international cooperation, multilateralism and solidarity at all levels and as the only way for the world to effectively respond to global crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic and their consequences;

**RECOGNISING** the importance of effective epidemic and pandemic preparedness and response, as well as sustainable and resilient national and regional health care systems including universal health coverage (UHC), acknowledging each country has its own national approach, and **STRIVING** to provide equitable access to health and social care and treatment, while preserving incentives for health innovation, promptly assist those disadvantaged and in vulnerable situations, protect livelihoods, and leave no one behind;

**NOTING** the role of the World Health Organisation (WHO), as part of the UN system at the global, regional and local levels, to coordinate control and contain the spread of COVID-19 and other emerging infectious diseases through the WHO's implementation, along with WHO Member States, of the International Health Regulations (2005) in enhancing capacity to prevent, detect and respond to public health threats;

**WELCOMING** the adoption of the Resolution WHA73.1 of 19 May 2020 on the "COVID-19 response" at the 73<sup>rd</sup> session of the World Health Assembly, which includes requesting the Director General of the WHO to initiate, at the earliest appropriate moment, a stepwise process of impartial, independent and comprehensive evaluation to review experience gained and lessons learnt from the WHO-coordinated international health response to COVID-19, and taking note of the subsequent establishment of the Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response (IPPR) and

**ACKNOWLEDGING** the importance of timely and inclusive responses in overall strategies, as appropriate, to address emerging infectious diseases;

**ACKNOWLEDGING** the resolve and current efforts by East Asia Summit participating countries at national, regional and global levels in enhancing the preparedness and response to COVID-19 and the mitigation of its impact on society through, inter alia, adequate supply of vital medicines, medical supplies and equipment, diagnostic tools and therapeutics, as well as support for other countries;

**ACKNOWLEDGING** the important role for global initiatives to facilitate the timely, equitable global distribution of quality, safe, effective and affordable COVID-19 vaccines, without undermining incentives for innovation;

**RECOGNISING** further the strategic role of various regional mechanisms of cooperation and partnership such as the ASEAN Health Ministers Meeting, ASEAN Coordinating Council Working Group on Public Health Emergencies, ASEAN Emergency Operation Centre Network for public health emergencies, ASEAN Plus Three Health Ministers Meeting, ASEAN Plus Three Field Epidemiology Training Network, the EAS Health Experts' Meeting, ASEAN BioDiaspora Virtual Centre, ASEAN Risk Assessment and Risk Communication Centre, and other health security and laboratory networks in supporting the development of integrated cooperation for national and regional outbreak control measures to prevent infectious diseases, including zoonotic diseases;

**ACKNOWLEDGING** the ongoing efforts within ASEAN and its relevant mechanisms in the spirit of a Cohesive and Responsive ASEAN and in accordance with the ASEAN Post-2015 Health Development Agenda in responding to all hazards and emerging threats particularly in mitigating the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic;

**NOTING** ASEAN's efforts in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic through the ASEAN-led platforms and mechanisms and enhanced collaboration with Dialogue Partners, other external partners and the international community in preventing and controlling the spread of the pandemic and mitigating its impacts to economies and societies;

**RECALLING** the 2015 East Asia Summit Statement on Enhancing Regional Health Security relating to Infectious Diseases with Epidemic and Pandemic Potential, which calls for strengthening national and regional capacities to prevent, detect and respond to infectious disease threats;

**RECALLING** the Kuala Lumpur Declaration on the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the East Asia Summit emphasising the need to encourage synergy among the ASEAN-led mechanisms with regard to the implementation of Leaders' decisions;

**NOTING** the outcomes of the EAS Public Health Senior Officials and Experts Meeting on EAS Cooperation in the Field of Communicable Diseases Control and Prevention held in November 2017 in Moscow and the Meeting of the Heads of Agencies and Senior Officials on Strengthening the Preparedness for Infectious Diseases with Pandemic Potential among EAS participating countries held in October 2019 in Bangkok, which emphasised the common position of East Asia Summit participating countries regarding countering infectious diseases and identified the main directions for the effective fight against emerging threats of infections;

**BEING AWARE** of the continuing high risk of the emergence and spread of infections with pandemic potential across the world, including the region of the EAS participating countries;

**REAFFIRMING** the urgent need to strengthen solidarity, enhance cooperation and mutual support to detect, prevent, control and contain the spread of the infectious diseases;

**IN ORDER TO DEEPEN** cooperation among the East Asia Summit participating countries in the field of response to epidemics;

**DO HEREBY DECIDE TO:**

1. **Enhance** the role of the East Asia Summit in the spirit of responsibility, unity and solidarity, cooperation and collective approach in coordinating regional efforts to prevent, detect, control and respond to the spread of communicable and emerging infectious diseases, including COVID-19, and address their severe and multi-faceted challenges;
2. **Contribute** to enhancing global pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response capacity, including by strengthening cooperation in bilateral, regional, and multilateral fora, including through the United Nations Systems, including the WHO, and other international organisations as relevant;
3. **Promote effective** coordination between the East Asia Summit and other relevant ASEAN-led mechanisms in fighting epidemics and mitigating the impacts of epidemics, and further explore cooperation to strengthen epidemic prevention and control, and minimise the risk of transmission of zoonotic diseases;
4. **Encourage** mutual assistance among East Asia Summit participating countries in facilitating timely, global, equitable access to the procurement of safe, affordable, quality and effective vaccines, essential medical supplies and equipment, medicines, diagnostics, therapeutics and other medical measures, without undermining incentives for innovation, in order to enhance response capacity of the region;
5. **Encourage** support from the EAS participating countries in ASEAN's response to and recovery from impacts of COVID-19, including for the COVID-19 ASEAN Response Fund;
6. **Strengthen** national and regional capacities to prevent, detect and respond to infectious diseases with epidemic or pandemic potential in East Asia Summit participating countries in accordance with the International Health Regulations (2005);
7. **Encourage** East Asia Summit participating countries to be guided by science and transparency as we come together to prevent and respond to pandemics;

8. **Increase** scientific capacity of the East Asia Summit participating countries and the conduct of joint collaboration on scientific research and development, on voluntary and mutually agreeable terms, on the creation of diagnostic kits, and safe, quality, effective, accessible and affordable vaccines, anti-viral medicines and treatments, including clinical studies, where possible, and promote both private sector and government-funded research and development on measures necessary to contain and end pandemics, including the COVID-19 pandemic;
9. **Encourage** strengthened cooperation with global initiatives in developing and delivering safe, quality, effective, accessible and affordable vaccines, without undermining incentives for innovation;
10. **Affirm** the East Asia Summit participating countries' readiness to engage in the free, open, transparent and timely exchange of information, experience and best practices, including through the designated national IHR focal points among the participating countries, about infectious diseases outbreaks;
11. **Encourage** constant additional training and skill-improvement, and exchange of best practices and experiences among medical/clinical and laboratory personnel, specialists, and other health personnel of East Asia Summit participating countries on epidemiology, virology, bacteriology, biosecurity, biosafety, and other related fields;
12. **Foster** cooperation at regional level and interagency cooperation in addressing the threats of communicable and emerging infectious diseases and further strengthen regional cooperation in pandemic preparedness and response in support of achieving the relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular bearing in mind the disproportionate effects on the poor and the most vulnerable people;
13. **Facilitate** collaboration between environment, animal and public health sectors on specific activities to prevent, detect and respond to zoonotic diseases, and encourage promoting the OneHealth approach;
14. **Enhance** effective and transparent risk assessment and public communication, including risk communication, involving multiple forms of media including timely updates of relevant government policies, public health and safety information, and counter fake news, disinformation and misinformation on communicable and emerging infectious diseases, and on COVID-19 in particular;
15. **Encourage** joint actions to strengthen regional capacity to address communicable and emerging infectious diseases, to develop measures to minimise negative social and economic consequences of pandemics for regional countries, and to support the long-term resilience in global and regional value and supply chains, especially in medicines, vaccines, medical supplies and equipment, agricultural products and other essentials. This should be built on effective involvement and cross-cutting interaction of health, economic, financial and emergency response sectors of East Asia Summit cooperation; and
16. **Explore** further cooperation, including through training and research, with the involvement of the relevant agencies of East Asia Summit participating countries, to prepare for epidemics in the region;

17. **Encourage** relevant agencies of EAS participating countries to continue dialogue and consider necessary measures to strengthen cooperation and coordination, preparedness and response to emerging infectious diseases, making use of relevant ASEAN-led mechanisms;

**ADOPTED** on the Fourteenth of November in the Year Two Thousand and Twenty.