

2021 JOINT STATEMENT ON THE SPECIAL VIDEO CONFERENCE OF THE ASEAN HEALTH MINISTERS ON ASEAN COVID-19 RESPONSE AFTER ONE YEAR

Issued on 22 July 2021

The 2021 Special Video Conference of the ASEAN Health Ministers on ASEAN COVID-19 Response After One Year was hosted by Indonesia on 22 July 2021.

RECOGNISING that after a year, the ASEAN Member States, together and individually, have made significant progress in the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) response across the region in pandemic control and COVID-19 vaccination rollout;

FURTHER RECOGNISING the continuously evolving outbreak of COVID-19 globally indicated by the continuous surge of COVID-19 cases even after the initial rollout of vaccination and the new emerging threats posed by the frequent detection of potential Variant of Interests (VOIs) and Variant of Concerns (VOCs) of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2);

NOTING the importance of strengthening multisectoral cooperation and partnership to overcome the growing pandemic fatigue within the global communities caused by uncertainty of the pandemic situation, fake news and misinformation, and reduced trust in government responses;

ACKNOWLEDGING ASEAN's cross-sectoral joint efforts to respond to COVID-19 which emphasized on strengthening the capacity of ASEAN and existing regional mechanisms on public health and emergency response, as well as promoting regional comprehensive recovery, in line with the Chairman's Statement of 37th ASEAN Summit in Hanoi on 12 November 2020;

WELCOMING Brunei Darussalam Chairmanship 2021 under the theme of "We Care, We Prepare, We Prosper" for ASEAN's collective commitment to care for its people and prepare for future challenges and opportunities, with the goal of ensuring sustainable prosperity for the whole ASEAN community, among others through joint efforts in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic including its effect on mental health;

RECALLING the Joint Statements of the Special Video Conferences of the ASEAN Health Ministers and the ASEAN Plus Three Health Ministers in Enhancing Cooperation on COVID-19 adopted on 7 April 2020; the Special Video Conference of Health Ministers of ASEAN and the United States in Enhancing Cooperation on COVID-19 Response adopted on 30 April 2020; and the outcomes of the Special Video Meeting of the SOMHD in Synergizing COVID-19 Response on 22-23 July 2020;

AFFIRMING our commitment to control the current pandemic and to prepare for future public health emergencies, among others, through timely and equitable access to affordable, safe and effective vaccines, and treatment, as well as the ongoing development of ASEAN Health Protocol, while also promoting sustainable development in the region towards achieving a healthy ASEAN community;

The Meeting agrees collectively in:

1. Enhancing laboratory capacity across the region and reinforcing genomic surveillance of SARS-CoV-2 to be able to swiftly detect and share information of potential Variant of Interests (VOIs) and Variant of Concerns (VOCs) of SARS-CoV-2 and determine the Public Health and Social Measures (PHSMs) and infection control measures;

2. Further strengthening engagement with all relevant stakeholders using a whole-of- government and a whole-of-society approach to foster greater understanding and implementation of health protocols in the adaptation of the New Normal and vaccine uptake; and to further averting misinformation and fake news;
3. Guiding the ongoing ASEAN health initiatives, among others, the establishment of ASEAN Centre for Public Health Emergencies and Emerging Diseases (ACPHEED) as well as the development of ASEAN Public Health Emergency Coordination System (APHECS), in order to advance the region's preparedness and response to future public health emergencies;
4. Providing guidance and support on the vaccine rollout in all ASEAN Member States and on the swift operationalization of ongoing and upcoming regional mechanisms in COVID-19 response, such as COVID-19 ASEAN Response Fund, ASEAN Regional Reserve for Medical Supplies (RRMS), ASEAN Travel Corridor Arrangement Framework (ATCAF), and ASEAN Strategic Framework on Public Health Emergencies (ASF-PHE);
5. Supporting the operationalization of the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework (ACRF) and its implementation plan particularly under the Broad Strategy 1 in Enhancing Health Systems which reflects the importance of cross sectoral coordination and cross pillar collaboration towards achieving post COVID-19 recovery and resilience in ASEAN; and,
6. Welcoming support from ASEAN's Dialogue Partners, other External Partners and various stakeholders in the implementation and operationalization of COVID-19 response initiatives, including addressing other health related impacts such as on mental health, while preserving ASEAN Centrality.