Statement by

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At the Plenary of the High-level Meeting on
“Non-communicable Diseases: Prevention and Control”
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Mr. President,

First of all, on behalf of ASEAN, let me present our regional perspective on the matter at hand.

For ASEAN Member States, non-communicable diseases are a major challenge that compounds the deadly impact of communicable diseases.

A 2010 WHO Report showed that non-communicable diseases caused some 36.1 million deaths in 2008. Eighty percent of these deaths are caused by four main non-communicable diseases. And low to middle income families suffered 80 percent of these deaths.

According to the WHO, NCDs-related deaths will increase by 17 percent over the next decade. And among ASEAN communities, deaths due to NCDs can increase from its current 2.6 million to 4.2 million people.

A scenario the region is not ready to address at this point.
At the global level, NCDs are affecting mostly working-age adults—thereby eroding the most productive generation in the world today. And thus reducing the gross domestic product of low to middle-income countries by as much as five percent.

This is one reason why poverty is so wide-spread. And why many countries suffered in backwardness.

Hence, we in ASEAN are working hard and in concert to address this grave challenge.

In our view, prevention is the key to resolving it.

Prevention is and will always be our priority.

We are therefore carrying out four major prevention strategies.

First and foremost, we in ASEAN are strengthening our health systems and infrastructures.

This includes mainstreaming NCD prevention and control alongside infectious disease prevention and control in national development programmes, and enhancing operations in health facilities from the lowest to the highest levels.

It includes raising the capabilities of human resources for medical care and developing effective referral systems.

We are also improving our surveillance systems on the diseases and the modifiable risk factors.

We are working toward universal health coverage and providing service packages that cater to the needs of people with chronic NCDs.

In brief, we must have a comprehensive health system and infrastructure for addressing NCDs.
This is not an option. It is an imperative.

**Second, we are strengthening our national health policies and accelerating programmes for tobacco control.**

We will not be content with passing laws that heavily tax cigarettes. We will use the revenues derived from sin taxes to support NCDs prevention.

We will continue to promote a smoke-free environment in order to protect our people from secondary smoke.

We are aligning national policies on agriculture, trade, industry and transport to improve diets, encourage physical exercise and reduce harmful alcohol use.

We are implementing community based intervention for early detection of factors of major NCDs.

**Third, we are strengthening partnerships for health.**

The need for international cooperation for public health cannot be overemphasized.

Although the Millennium Development Goals do not include targets for the reduction of NCDs, individual efforts by ASEAN Member States warrant complementary coordinated support from our partners.

We appeal to our international partners to fund and align the prevention and control of NCDs with their other development programmes such as those of the MDGs and Climate Change.

We urge our development partners to fund researches on the unique public health problems of our region.

We call upon the international community to help us ensure that essential pharmaceutical products and medical devices are available to the region. This will help avert the devastating socioeconomic impact of NCDs on our societies.
In short, the partnership among countries is a must. Among developed and developing countries. At the global, regional and bilateral levels.

Last but not least, we are ensuring the involvement of all stakeholders.

To effectively respond to the challenges posed by NCDs, we must enlist the participation of all stakeholders. ASEAN is therefore committed to implementing a whole-of-government people-centered approach involving civil society, the private sector and community organizations.

By taking these steps, we in ASEAN are confident that we will be able to contribute significantly to the global reduction of NCD death rate in this decade.

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