



**Joint Statement by ASEAN  
World Health Assembly 74  
Delivered by H.E. Grata Endah Werdaningtyas**

**25 May 2021**

Mr. President,

1. I have the honour to deliver this Statement on behalf of ASEAN Member States.
2. We have been facing this COVID-19 pandemic for over a year now, and fortunately, we have seen the light at the end of the tunnel with the COVID-19 vaccines.
3. We commend WHO on having spear-headed the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) Facility. This is truly an excellent initiative by WHO with the fundamental principle of equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines, so that no country is left behind.
4. We note that vaccine roll-out has started in most countries and we continue to strive for equitable vaccines access.
5. The gap in vaccination rollout between high, middle and low income countries remains large and needs to be addressed urgently to prevent, more, new variants from emerging.
6. From the outset, ASEAN Member States have rallied and worked together to address the COVID-19 pandemic in a holistic, comprehensive, inclusive and practical manner in Southeast Asia and the larger region.
7. A Special ASEAN Summit, and the Special ASEAN-Plus Three Summit, was held in April 2020 to address the severe and multifaceted challenges caused by the pandemic.
8. Learning from our responses to previous crises in the region, ASEAN has strived to fortify its resilience and preparedness to respond to future pandemics and health emergencies.
9. Efforts based on whole of government effort have also been initiated through the ASEAN Coordinating Council Working Group on Public Health Emergencies (ACCWG-PHE), as well as through the relevant sectoral bodies.
10. ASEAN has launched a coordination platform through enhanced cooperation with external partners. To this end, ASEAN has established,

- The COVID-19 ASEAN Response Fund, for which ASEAN is currently working towards its effective operationalisation;
  - The ASEAN Regional Reserve of Medical Supplies for Public Health Emergencies;
  - An ASEAN Strategic Framework on Public Health Emergencies;
11. In dealing with the pandemic, ASEAN has also continued to mobilise existing initiatives and capacity building programme such as
- the ASEAN Emergency Operation Centre (EOC) Network;
  - the ASEAN BioDiaspora Virtual Centre;
  - the ASEAN Risk Assessment and Risk Communication Centre; and
  - the ASEAN Plus Three Field Epidemiology Training Network.
12. In view of creating a greener, healthier and safer Southeast Asia, ASEAN has started its work on a post-COVID-19 recovery. An ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework has been initiated to facilitate regional connectivity and economic recovery. Its implementation is ongoing and includes the following:
- The establishment of an ASEAN Travel Corridor Arrangement Framework (ATCAF), to facilitate the resumption of essential business travel among ASEAN Members, while continuing to ensure strict health protocols; and
  - The operationalization of the ASEAN Centre for Public Health Emergencies and Emerging Diseases (ACPHEED) is to be established soon to enhance regional health security and to sustain ASEAN preparedness and resilience to public health emergencies, particularly on emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases.

Mr. President,

13. COVID-19 pandemic has brought unprecedented challenges to our member states, in the region as well as globally, not just affecting the health sector but has also impacted the economy and social welfare of the people.
14. Considering the current situation, ASEAN reaffirms our commitment to work together to control the COVID-19 pandemic. A Special Video Conference of the ASEAN Health Ministers Meeting has been scheduled later this year. A key item for discussion is enhancing the laboratory's 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 that will be pertinent in and determining the Public Health and Social Measures (PHSMs) and Infection Prevention and Control (IPC).
15. At this juncture, ASEAN calls upon all Member States to work together and intensify regional and multilateral efforts and cooperation to end this pandemic and better prevent, prepare and respond to other public health emergencies.

I thank you

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