

Insights from Mr. Ferdinal Fernando, Director and Head of Health Division, ASEAN*

Questions:

- (i) What are the emerging challenges with respect to pandemic response and priority areas for multi-country cooperation that the ASEAN community has identified and what role is envisaged for the ASEAN Center for Public Health Emergencies and Emerging Diseases (ACPHEED) in addressing these priorities?
 - (ii) What is the current status of the ACPHEED and how can national health systems of GMS countries link to, and collaborate with, the Centre one operational?
- The over-all direction of the ASEAN Health Sector in the context of the theme and topics and corresponding deliverables from the Joint Statements of the 15th ASEAN Health Ministers Meeting (AHMM) and Related Meetings in May 2022, under the AHMM Chairmanship of MoH Indonesia, include the following:
 - Advancing the Achievements of the ASEAN Health Development
 - Building Regional Health System Resilience and Accelerating COVID-19 Recovery
 - Optimizing the Mobilization of Essential Health Resources in Responding to Public Health Crisis
 - Promoting One Health Approach to Prepare and Respond to Pandemics
 - Strengthening Health System for Sustainable Universal Health Coverage
 - Strengthening Health Security for Resilient Health Systems
 - Relevant to this direction, the ASEAN Post 2015 Health Development Agenda 2021-2025 will be the basis of the general direction of the ASEAN Health Sector in responding to the common health gaps and needs of the ASEAN region including the narrowing of the development gap of the ASEAN Member States under the Initiative of ASEAN Integration (ie. Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Viet Nam), and the mitigation of the impact of COVID-19. These are operationalized through the collective and regional initiatives in the Work Programmes on promoting healthy lifestyle; responding to all hazards and emerging threats; strengthening health system and access to care; and ensuring food safety. Included in these initiatives are scaling-up and synergizing of 25 health-related activities by AMS with external partners on COVID-19 response. These activities include, among others, the operation of ACPHEED for Preparedness and Prevention under Viet Nam; ACPHEED for Detection and Risk Assessment under Indonesia; and, ACPHEED for Response under Thailand, with the support of the ACPHEED Secretariat based in Thailand. The regional mechanism for collective coordination and cooperation for public health emergencies by all relevant stakeholders in the region will be through the ASEAN Public Health Emergency Coordination System (APHECS) wherein ACPHEED has a critical coordination role. This system is based on the endorsed ASEAN Strategic Framework for PHE, as adopted by the 2020 ASEAN Summit. In moving towards post pandemic scenario, the ASEAN region is implementing the collective efforts of realizing the deliverables of the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework which has five broad strategies including the implementation of the strategy on Enhancing Health System.

*Mr. Fernando was unable to join the meeting virtually due to internet connection issues