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STATEMENT BY THE ASEAN SECRETARIAT

**By Dr Bounpheng Philavong
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Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to address the Committee. My name is Bounpheng Philavong. I am Head of Health and Communicable Diseases Division of the ASEAN Secretariat based in Jakarta, Indonesia.

I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific for significant success and achievements made in the past year.

I would like to share with you on what ASEAN has been doing in regional cooperation in combating communicable diseases and in pandemic preparedness and response.

ASEAN has significant achievements made in implementing the ASEAN Plus Three (China, Japan and Republic of Korea) Emerging Infectious diseases (EID) Programme, which has greatly contributed to strengthening regional networking among decision makers, senior officials and experts in the health and other relevant sectors in the ASEAN Plus Three countries. It has enhanced regional preparedness and capacity through integrated approaches to prevention, surveillance and timely response to emerging infectious diseases. The Programme has also supported the implementation of International Health Regulations (IHR) and Asia Pacific Strategy on Emerging Diseases (APSED).

I would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere thanks and gratitude to the Australian Government for supporting this programme, and WHO, FAO, OIE and other partners for technical assistance.

I also wish to inform you that under this programme, we have implemented the ASEAN Plus Three Communication and Integration Strategy, developed regional risk communication training modules, strengthened collaboration between animal and human health sectors, conducted research to support mainstreaming of gender and social issues in the prevention and control of emerging infectious diseases.

We have just finished the assessment on ASEAN healthy tourism in 10 destination cities in all 10 Member States. The Minimum Standards on Multi-Sectoral Joint-Outbreak Investigation and

Response will be finalized next week in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, which also includes minimum standards on logistical and administrative arrangements required in times of an outbreak.

Last week in Singapore, we conducted a Regional Meeting on the ASEAN Plus Three Partnership Laboratories, which comprises national reference laboratories of the ASEAN Plus Three countries. We wish to thank Japan, especially National Institute of Infectious diseases of Japan for supporting ASEAN in laboratory capacity building, including a recent training in Tokyo on H1N1 laboratory diagnosis and for providing the test kits to ASEAN Member States, and WHO/WPRO for technical assistance.

The ASEAN Plus Three Laboratory Partnership will support the regional laboratory-based surveillance, enhance the sharing of information and expertise among the ASEAN Plus Three countries and build laboratory capacity through twinning system to narrow the development gaps. With this mechanism, Malaysia has already twinned with Viet Nam, and Thailand with Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar. We are encouraging other countries to also twin with each other.

Last year ASEAN has initiated a Call for Action Towards Elimination of Rabies in the ASEAN Member States and the Plus Three Countries by 2020, followed by the development of a regional strategic framework for prevention and control of rabies in the ASEAN Plus Three region in accordance and in support of guidelines of WHO and international standards for disease control and surveillance of World Organization for Animal Health (OIE).

Last July the ASEAN Technical Working Group on Pandemic Preparedness and Response (ATWG-PPR) comprising of representatives of public health, agriculture and disaster management sector, convened its second meeting in Bangkok to discuss multi-sectoral collaboration in pandemic preparedness and response at regional and national level. We have completed a pilot assessment on multi-sectoral pandemic preparedness and response last June in Indonesia. The assessment at country level is under preparation. The ASEAN regional workshop on Incident Command System for Pandemic will be conducted in the Philippines in November this year and the Regional Workshop on business continuity and contingency plan is also under preparation. These activities are supported by USAID through ASEAN-US Technical Assistance and Training Facility.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the government of Japan for supporting ASEAN in Regional Stockpiling of Antivirals and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and for providing additional antivirals and part of PPE for stockpiling in all 10 ASEAN Member States. We thank WHO WPRO for providing technical support to this project and for conducting a series of training on "Outbreak Response Logistics" for the ASEAN Member States.

Both WHO and ASEAN have value-add in facilitating and coordinating regional follow-up on health development issues of concern. ASEAN-WHO collaboration is based on the comparative advantage of both organizations, and has helped tremendously ASEAN in realizing priorities identified by ASEAN Health Ministers and their senior officials to realize a Healthy ASEAN by 2020.

We are pleased to inform you that ASEAN and WHO are now in process of preparing the signing of a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the two organizations for 2009-2013, to replace the one that was implemented from 1997 to 2007. The new MOU will signify renewed and intensified collaboration between the two organizations.

In conclusion, I would like to take this opportunity again to express our sincere thanks and gratitude to WHO for cooperation, kind support, and technical assistance. ASEAN is looking forward to continued cooperation, collaboration and partnership with WHO in addressing issues relevant to mandates of both organizations, and beneficial to the ASEAN Member States.