

## ASEAN DECLARATION AND STATEMENTS ON COVID-19

The following communication, dated 30 April 2020, is being circulated at the request of the delegation of Viet Nam.

### I. DECLARATION OF THE SPECIAL ASEAN SUMMIT ON CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 (COVID-19)

1. We, the Heads of State/Government of the Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) held the Special ASEAN Summit via video conference on 14 April 2020. The Summit was chaired by H.E. Nguyen Xuan Phuc, Prime Minister of Viet Nam, in his capacity as Chair of ASEAN.
2. We expressed our serious concerns about the spread of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), which the World Health Organization (WHO) declared as a pandemic on 11 March 2020, and its negative effects on the well-being of the people and global socio-economic developments.
3. We were deeply saddened by the loss of life and the suffering caused by the pandemic. We also commended our medical professionals, healthcare workers and other frontline personnel.
4. Recalling the Chairman's Statement on ASEAN Collective Response to the Outbreak of Coronavirus Disease 2019 of 14 February 2020, we reaffirmed our determination and commitment, in the spirit of a Cohesive and Responsive ASEAN, to remain united, and to act jointly and decisively to control the spread of the disease while mitigating its adverse impact on our people's livelihood, our societies and economies.
5. We appreciated the extensive measures undertaken by each ASEAN Member State and the timely efforts by the ASEAN Health Sector and other sectoral bodies of ASEAN, in collaboration with ASEAN's external partners and the international community, to prevent, detect, control and respond to the spread of COVID-19 and address its severe and multi-faceted challenges.
6. Recognising our interconnectedness and vulnerabilities in the face of COVID-19, we emphasised the critical importance of a coherent, multi-sectoral, multi-stakeholder and whole-of-ASEAN Community approach in ensuring ASEAN's timely and effective response to the pandemic.
7. We recognised the important role of the WHO and committed to working closely with the WHO, relevant organisations and the international community towards enhancing our collective pandemic preparedness and response. We underscored the value of regular and timely exchange of information and sharing of best practices among ASEAN Member States and with ASEAN's external partners in effectively responding to COVID-19.
8. We called for further enhancement of a caring and sharing ASEAN Community where ASEAN Member States help each other in this challenging time.
9. Building upon existing efforts by individual ASEAN Member State and that of the ASEAN Community, we hereby resolve to:

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- i. Further strengthen public health cooperation measures to contain the pandemic and protect the people, including, *inter alia*, through timely and transparent exchange of information on real time situation and pandemic response measures taken by Member States, sharing of experience and best practices in epidemiological research and development, clinical treatment, joint research and development of vaccines and anti-viral medicines, enhancing capacity for the public health systems of ASEAN Member States while protecting and ensuring the safety of public health workers.
    - In this regard, we commend the efforts to enhance practical cooperation among ASEAN defence establishments to organise information and best practice sharing activities, and with our external partners, bilaterally or multilaterally, including the holding of a tabletop exercise on public health emergencies response by the ASEAN Center of Military Medicine (ACMM); and the Network of ASEAN Chemical, Biological and Radiological Defence Experts in promoting scientific cooperation and enhancing professional linkages, as agreed by the ASEAN Defence Ministers in their Joint Statement on Defence Cooperation against Disease Outbreak of 19 February 2020.
    - Intensify cooperation for adequate provision of medicines, essential medical supplies and equipment, including, but not limited to diagnostic tools, personal protective equipment etc. and encourage the development of regional reserves of medical supplies as well as utilising relevant ASEAN reserve warehouses to support the needs of ASEAN Member States in public health emergencies.
    - Strengthen the implementation of the WHO International Health Regulations (IHR) (2005) and consider formulating an ASEAN standard operating procedure (SOP) for public health emergencies.
    - Bolster national and regional epidemic preparedness and response, including through the possible setting up of a network of experts on public health emergencies for future need, strengthening the capacity of existing ASEAN's emergencies response network namely the ASEAN Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) Network, the ASEAN Risk Assessment and Risk Communication Centre, the ASEAN BioDiaspora Virtual Center (ABVC) and the ASEAN Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre) for future public health emergencies.
  - ii. Prioritise the well-being of our peoples in ASEAN's collective fight against COVID-19, and provide appropriate assistance and support to the nationals of ASEAN Member States affected by the pandemic in each other's country or in third countries.
    - Encourage the effective operationalisation of the ASEAN Guidelines on the Provision of Emergency Assistance by ASEAN Mission in Third Countries to Nationals of ASEAN Member Countries in Crisis Situations.
  - iii. Enhance effective and transparent public communication involving multiple forms of media including timely updates of relevant government policies, public health and safety information, clarifications on misinformation, and efforts to reduce stigmatisation and discrimination. Encourage the ASEAN information sector to strengthen cooperation in countering misinformation and fake news, as well as to develop a set of guidelines and a possible common platform to facilitate timely sharing of information in ASEAN.
  - iv. Reaffirm our commitment to take collective action and coordinate policies in mitigating the economic and social impact from the pandemic, safeguarding the people's well-being and maintaining socio-economic stability.
    - Task our ministers and officials to implement the ASEAN Economic Ministers' Joint Statement on Strengthening ASEAN's Economic Resilience in Response to the Outbreak of COVID-19 of 10 March 2020, including, *inter alia*:

- Remain committed to keeping ASEAN's markets open for trade and investment, and enhance cooperation among ASEAN Member States and also with ASEAN's external partners with a view to ensuring food security, such as the utilisation of the ASEAN Plus Three Emergency Rice Reserve (APTERR), and strengthening the resiliency and sustainability of regional supply chains, especially for food, commodities, medicines, medical and essential supplies.
  - Implement appropriate measures to boost confidence and improve stability of the regional economy, including through policy stimulus, assist people and businesses suffering from the impact of COVID-19, especially the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and vulnerable groups.
  - Cooperate in ensuring social safety net for our peoples, preventing social disruption and instability as a consequence of negative impact of the pandemic, continue efforts to design and implement risk-informed and shock-responsive social protection systems to reduce the vulnerabilities of at-risk populations and improve their overall resilience.
  - Encourage the development of a post-pandemic recovery plan to share lessons learned, restore ASEAN's connectivity, tourism, normal business and social activities, prevent potential economic downturns.
  - v. Stress the importance of a multi-stakeholder, multi-sectoral, and comprehensive approach by ASEAN to effectively respond to COVID-19 and future public health emergencies. Commend the active role of the ASEAN Coordinating Council (ACC) and the good work of the ASEAN Coordinating Council Working Group on Public Health Emergencies (ACCWG-PHE) and other relevant sectoral bodies of ASEAN. Instruct the ACCWG-PHE to assist the ACC serving as the main platform that coordinates ASEAN's overall response to public health emergencies situations.
  - vi. Task our Economic Ministers and Senior Economic Officials to explore an arrangement to preserve supply chain connectivity, particularly amongst ASEAN Member States, that provides for trade to continue for the smooth flow of essential goods, including medical, food and essential supplies; ensures our critical infrastructure for trade and trading routes via air, land and sea ports remain open; and refrain from imposing unnecessary restrictions on the flow of medical, food and essential supplies, in accordance with the rights and obligations under the World Trade Organization (WTO) covered agreements, the ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA) and principles of international law.
  - vii. Support reallocating existing available funds and encourage technical and financial support from ASEAN's partners to facilitate cooperation against COVID-19, including the proposed establishment of the COVID-19 ASEAN Response Fund.
  - We tasked the ACC, supported by the ACCWG-PHE to oversee ASEAN's coordinated efforts in responding to COVID-19 and addressing its socio-economic challenges, regularly report to the ASEAN Leaders with appropriate recommendations for further guidance and instructions. In this regard, we call on all relevant sectoral bodies of ASEAN to fully and closely cooperate with ACC in realising the commitments and agreements by the Leaders set forth in this Declaration.
  - We pledge to remain united and vigilant against COVID-19 and commit to work closely with the WHO, ASEAN's external partners and the international community to suppress the spread of the pandemic, protect people's lives and livelihoods, maintain socio-economic stability while sustaining ASEAN Community building momentum for sustainable development, inclusive growth and leaving no one behind.
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## II. STRENGTHENING ASEAN'S ECONOMIC RESILIENCE IN RESPONSE TO THE OUTBREAK OF THE CORONAVIRUS DISEASE (COVID-19)

**WE**, the ASEAN Economic Ministers (AEM), gathered in Da Nang, Viet Nam, on 10 March 2020 for the 26<sup>th</sup> AEM Retreat:

**EXPRESS** our deep concern over the outbreak of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), which has affected the lives of peoples as well as economies around the world;

**CONVEY** our sympathies to those countries, ASEAN and non-ASEAN alike, that have been affected by this disease;

**RECALL** the *Chairman's Statement on ASEAN Collective Response to the Outbreak of Coronavirus Disease 2019*, which emphasised the "importance of ASEAN solidarity and the spirit of a Cohesive and Responsive ASEAN Community in facing the outbreak of COVID-19 and similar challenges";

**ACKNOWLEDGE** on-going efforts by individual ASEAN Member States, ASEAN sectoral bodies as well as other economies in controlling the spread of the virus and in the impact of COVID-19;

**COMMEND** the significant contribution of health and non-health personnel helping those affected by COVID-19;

**RECOGNISE** the adverse impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak on the economy, particularly including but not limited to the travel and tourism, manufacturing, retail and other services sectors as well as the disruption of supply chains and the financial markets;

**EMPHASISE** the urgent need for concerted efforts to avoid further adverse impacts in the global economy brought about by the COVID-19 outbreak;

**NOTED** the Chairman's Press Statement on COVID-19 released by the ASEAN Coordinating Council (ACC) in Vientiane, Lao PDR on 20 February 2020, which reaffirmed the region's commitment to maintaining ASEAN's open economic and integration policies and fostering regional resilience, while standing ready to explore cooperation with ASEAN's external partners and the international community to enhance readiness and response measures to mitigate and eliminate the impact of the COVID-19;

**AGREE** that counter-measure restrictions on cross-border movements should be based on public health considerations, and should not unnecessarily restrict trade within the region; and

**AGREE** to take a collective course of action to mitigate the economic impact of COVID-19, and **RESOLVE** to:

- remain committed in keeping the ASEAN market open for trade and investment;
- strengthen regional information sharing and coordination and collaboration efforts in responding to the economic challenges brought about by the COVID-19 outbreak;
- work closely with industry stakeholders to instil confidence in Southeast Asia as a trade and investment hub, and tourism destination in the region;
- leverage on technologies and digital trade to allow businesses, especially the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) to continue operations amidst the COVID-19 outbreak;
- strengthen a long-term supply chain resilience and sustainability, including through better transparency, agility, diversification and, in particular, the implementation of the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC) 2025;
- enhance ASEAN economic cooperation with external and development partners to include initiatives aimed at strengthening regional supply chains to make them more resilient and less vulnerable to internal and external shocks;
- build on existing trade facilitating platforms in ASEAN, such as the ASEAN Single Window (ASW), to promote and support supply chain connectivity;

- refrain from actions that can create unnecessary inflationary pressures or adversely impact on food security in the region, and endeavour to ensure the availability of basic goods and commodities; and
  - continue addressing non-tariff barriers, particularly those that impede the smooth flow of goods and services in supply chains, and refrain from imposing new and unnecessary non-tariff measures.
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### **III. STATEMENT OF ASEAN MINISTERS ON AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY IN RESPONSE TO THE OUTBREAK OF THE CORONAVIRUS DISEASE (COVID-19) TO ENSURE FOOD SECURITY, FOOD SAFETY AND NUTRITION IN ASEAN**

**We**, the ASEAN Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry (AMAF) express our deep concern over the outbreak of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), which has affected the lives of people and economies, including food, agriculture and forestry sectors in ASEAN and globally.

**We** emphasise the importance of the food, agriculture and forestry sector, and urge to ensure that essential, safe and nutritious produce can continue to reach ASEAN markets during the outbreak of COVID-19.

**We** note with concern the potential impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on ASEAN cooperation in food, agriculture and forestry as well as disruption to the food supply chain in the region.

**We** note the FAO Policy Brief on *COVID-19 and the risk to food supply chains: How to respond?* and agree that as countries combat the COVID-19 pandemic, they must also make every effort to keep the gears of their food supply chains moving.

**We** note the ASEAN Chairman's Statement on ASEAN Collective Response to the Outbreak of the Coronavirus Disease 2019, which expresses the solidarity and unity of ASEAN in their efforts to address the COVID-19 pandemic.

**We** recall the ASEAN Economic Ministers (AEM) Statement on *Strengthening ASEAN's Economic Resilience in Response to the Outbreak of the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)*, which resolved to remain committed in keeping the ASEAN market open for trade and investment.

**We** note that the COVID-19 outbreak has drawn our attention on the immediate danger of food shortage and its adverse effect on nutrition, given a sudden spike in demand and disruption in supply chains, ASEAN needs to also continue its efforts to ensure stable and sustainable food sources.

**We** acknowledge on-going efforts by individual ASEAN Member States and ASEAN Sectoral Bodies in monitoring and mitigating the spread of the COVID-19, as well as its social and economic impact.

In order to contribute to overcoming the challenges posed by the COVID-19 outbreak, and to ensure sustainable supply of sufficient, affordable, safe and nutritious foods that meet the dietary requirements of the ASEAN populations, we agree to:

- a. Reaffirm our commitments in the implementation of the Statement of ASEAN Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry on Food Security and Nutrition to improve storage, preservation, transport and distribution technologies and infrastructure to reduce food insecurity, food nutrient loss and waste;
- b. Minimise disruptions in regional food supply chains by working closely together to ensure that markets are kept open and transportation of agricultural and food products are facilitated, and that quarantine or other non-tariff measures do not impede or slow down the free flow of agricultural and food products in the region;
- c. Ensure that trade lines remain open, including via air, sea and land freight, to facilitate the flow of agricultural and food products, and that critical infrastructure such as our air and seaports remain open to support the viability and integrity of supply chains;
- d. In accordance with the rights and obligations under the World Trade Organization (WTO) covered agreements and the ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA), refrain from imposing new export control, restrictions and prohibitions, tariffs and non- tariff barriers;

- e. Strive to reduce excessive price volatility particularly price spikes, ensure adequate emergency food and reserves and provide timely and accurate market information through the effective implementation of the ASEAN Food Security Information System (AFSIS) and ASEAN Plus Three Rice Emergency Rice Reserve (APTERR);
- f. Continue efforts to the implementation of the ASEAN Guidelines on Promoting Responsible Investment in Food, Agriculture and Forestry to increase resilience to, and contribute to the mitigation of and adaptation to climate change, natural disasters and other shocks;
- g. Strengthen AMAF's joint efforts in advocating, facilitating and implementing the ASEAN Food Safety Policy (AFSP) and the ASEAN Food Safety Regulatory Framework (AFSRF) to provide direction to relevant ASEAN Sectoral Bodies and ASEAN Member States with the goal of protecting the health of ASEAN consumers, ensuring fair practices in food trade and facilitating the free movement of safe food products in ASEAN;
- h. Reaffirm support towards ensuring food safety by working together in the region, recognising the importance of risk assessment in developing evidence-based food safety measures, which are coordinated with relevant sectors;
- i. Work towards sustaining nutrition security with other relevant sectors to maintain access and utilisation of adequate supply of nutrients to ensure healthy living;
- j. Strengthen the role of the ASEAN Food Security Reserve Board (AFSRB) to promptly provide periodic exchanges of information on national food and agricultural policies and stocking policies as well as production, consumption and storage programmes pertaining to basic food commodities among ASEAN Member States;
- k. Undertake a periodic evaluation of the food situation and prospects in the ASEAN region as well as worldwide, including trade, prices, quality and stocks of basic food commodities (such as rice, maize and sugar) through the ASEAN Food Security Reserve Board (AFSRB) as focal point, as well as AFSIS and APTERR in coordinating with relevant Working Groups (food, crops, livestock, fisheries and forestry) under SOM AMAF.

**We** look forward to further exchange of views and collaboration in food, agriculture and forestry development with other sectors and partners to address the adverse impacts of COVID-19. We will strive to keep ASEAN food, agriculture and forestry strong during the COVID-19 outbreak by continuously maintaining production, supporting value chains and ensuring access to workforce.

**We** urge ASEAN Member States to implement necessary measures, projects and programmes at the national level to meet the immediate food needs of ASEAN populations, particularly vulnerable groups in society, boost ASEAN Member States' social protection programmes and support all stakeholders, including smallholder farmers, and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), to increase food production and ensure food security in the region.

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