

The Statement by the Secretary-General of ASEAN on the Outbreak of Swine Influenza
ASEAN Secretariat, 27 April 2009

Over the weekend, governments and health authorities worldwide went on the alert brought about by outbreaks of Swine Influenza in humans. With several human deaths confirmed in Mexico and a number of confirmed cases in the United States, the World Health Organization declared this situation a Public Health Emergency of International Concern.

ASEAN Member States are now intensifying surveillance, coordinating and collaborating in the sharing of pertinent information, raising public awareness and taking necessary precautionary public health measures.

ASEAN Member States are better prepared now following the experience from recent SARS and avian influenza outbreaks. ASEAN has the existing mechanisms and networks for strengthening preparedness and response to a possible pandemic. Key initiatives such as the establishment of the ASEAN Technical Working Group on Pandemic Preparedness and Response, ASEAN Communication and Integration Strategy, Minimum Standards for Joint Outbreak Investigation and Response, and the Non-Health Indicators for Pandemic Preparedness and Response will be contributory to addressing the current threats of an influenza pandemic.

Currently, ASEAN has a stockpile of antiviral agents and Personal Protective Equipment that are readily available for the ASEAN Member States for rapid response and containment of outbreaks that may occur in the region. **ASEAN has 500,000 courses of antivirals stockpiled in Singapore and an additional 500,000 courses have been distributed to ASEAN Member States. ASEAN's one million courses of antivirals is a reassuring fact and further efforts will be exerted to mobilise other sources of antivirals if needed.**

Expressing concern over the potential social, economic and public health impact of the Swine Influenza outbreak, the Secretary-General of ASEAN directed his officials to convene this morning the ASEAN Secretariat Working Group for ONE Health to monitor and assess the current situation and plan for immediate actions.

The ASEAN Secretariat will closely monitor the situation and work closely with the ASEAN Member States and partner organisations to take appropriate measures including the effective sharing of information and strengthening of cross border collaboration.

The Secretary-General of ASEAN has also directed the ASEAN Secretariat Working Group for ONE Health to provide regular updates and guidance to the ASEAN Secretariat staff in protecting themselves and their families from Swine Influenza.

The ASEAN Member States and the ASEAN Secretariat will remain vigilant and on alert for any developments, and will continue to strengthen the pandemic preparedness and response.