



JOINT STATEMENT

ASEAN MINISTERIAL MEETING ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND POVERTY ERADICATION

Special Meeting on Reducing Poverty and Building Resilience: Towards COVID-19 Recovery

WE, the ASEAN Ministers responsible for rural development and poverty eradication gathered for the virtual *Special Meeting on Reducing Poverty and Building Resilience: Towards Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Recovery* on 19 August 2020;

RECALL the Chairman's Statement of the 36th ASEAN Summit wherein the ASEAN Leaders emphasised the importance of undertaking responsive and timely measures to address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on vulnerable sectors, including the poor, women, children, youth, the elderly, and persons with disabilities, as well as to strengthen their capacities to respond to the adverse effect of the pandemic;

EXPRESS our support to ASEAN's efforts on COVID-19 recovery through the development of a comprehensive recovery framework that is robust, holistic, inclusive, gender-responsive and science-based in taking the region through the reopening and recovery stages, towards longer-term resilience, preparedness and competitiveness;

NOTE the Statement of the ASEAN Economic Ministers on *Strengthening ASEAN's Economic Resilience in Response to the Outbreak of the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)*, issued on 10 March 2020, indicating the resolve to leverage on technologies and digital trade to allow businesses especially micro-, small-, and medium-enterprises (MSEMs) to continue operations amidst the outbreak, and strengthen long-term supply chain resilience and sustainability, among others;

ACKNOWLEDGE the Statement of the 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*, urging to make every effort to keep the gears of food supply chains moving, and pursue the implementation of measures to meet the immediate food needs of ASEAN populations, particularly vulnerable groups in society and boost ASEAN Member State's social protection programmes and support all stakeholders to increase food production and ensure food security in the region;

EXPRESS grave concern that the economic cost of the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in inevitable recession and significant decrease in global GDP. The pandemic is pushing more than 100 million people into extreme poverty worldwide and makes the poor even more vulnerable particularly to chronic hunger and deprivation and undermines the progress that ASEAN Member States have made in attaining the Sustainable Development Goals especially SDG 1 on ending poverty in all forms everywhere.

UNDERScore that in the ASEAN region, the poor primarily reside in rural areas where access to health services, social protection, education, infrastructure is limited while the poor

in urban settings mostly live in congested informal settlements with precarious socio-economic conditions and limited protection.

EXPRESS concern that pre-existing inequalities will be exacerbated and become more pervasive due to increase in poverty incidence and that progress in sustainable development will be reversed, causing additional damages to local economies, economic opportunities, natural resources and overall livelihoods and resilience especially in rural areas where most people depend on agriculture for their subsistence.

MINDFUL that while rural women play crucial role in rural economy and transformation, women are disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Likewise, the potentials of rural youth are being compromised as access to education, skills development, entrepreneurship and viable employment options are rendered volatile during the pandemic.

To alleviate poverty and strengthen resilience towards inclusive, equitable, and sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, **we resolve to:**

1. **Protect the poor and vulnerable from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.** Identify the needs and contexts of affected populations living in poverty, both in rural and urban settings. Pursue the implementation of social protection measures including the expansion of coverage, conditional and unconditional cash and in kind transfers, , as well as social assistance for formal, informal workers, and enhance access to employment opportunities and income diversification.
2. **Invigorate rural livelihoods and ensure that local rural economies and the food systems is moving without disruption.** Support and strengthen the capacities of the rural poor and rural people's organisations for agricultural productivity, food production as well as access to resources and market in order to withstand risk-induced poverty, and to strengthen their resilience. Engage rural communities in inclusive and consultative decision-making processes, and enable them to identify and manage risks and challenges.
3. **Ensure a pro-poor, inclusive, gender-, and climate-responsive approach to recovery.** Recovery initiatives need to be based on timely and robust data and evidence, and address underlying drivers of poverty and inequalities. Increase investments to boost capacities and resilience of rural households and communities in the areas of agricultural production, food supply chains, livelihoods diversification and climate adaptation.
4. **Address the specific constraints faced by rural women and rural youth and unleash their potentials** by providing human capital assets, ensuring equal access to and control over productive resources and services and fostering enabling environment for decision-making and leadership. Recovery efforts and social protection interventions need to adopt targeted approach for rural women and rural youth to improve their livelihood systems and be the driving force of development.
5. **Promote investment in rural infrastructure including physical and economic infrastructure and human development** through connectivity, technology and digital inclusion, provision of extension services as well as health, education, nutrition and sanitation. Narrow spatial and regional disparities by bolstering rural-urban linkages and optimising the strengths of its interface and networks.
6. **Strengthen integrated policy frameworks to address governance gaps in the rural-urban continuum at all levels, as well as cross-sectoral and inter-sectoral cooperation at the ASEAN level.** Engage local governments and authorities in designing, implementing and monitoring poverty alleviation policies, strategies and programmes.

Promote synergies between Governments, development partners, private sector and civil society organisations to accelerate progress in poverty eradication and rural development.

WE stay united and work together to intensify regional cooperation to support actions at all levels within ASEAN that place the poor and vulnerable groups at the centre of all COVID-19 response and recovery measures.

WE look forward to working closely with other ASEAN Ministerial bodies in fully addressing the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic through poverty alleviation initiatives, and ensuring the development of a robust, holistic, and inclusive recovery framework and action plan.
