

JOINT STATEMENT

ASEAN + 3 MINISTERS OF HEALTH SPECIAL MEETING ON SARS

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

26 April 2003

We, the Ministers of Health or our representatives from Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, the Philippines, Thailand, People's Republic of China, Japan and the Republic of Korea gathered in Kuala Lumpur for the ASEAN + 3 Ministers of Health Special Meeting on Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS);

Applaud the ASEAN Leaders for convening a Special Summit on SARS on 29 April 2003 in Bangkok thus showing their will and support to combat the SARS epidemic and protect their populations,

Affirm that we, in ASEAN and in China, Japan and Korea, with rich diversity that has provided the strength and inspiration to help one another and the responsibility of ensuring peace and protecting the public and prosperity of our region and of our neighbours. Therefore, we commit ourselves to controlling the SARS, which now presents a global threat;

Deeply concerned that the SARS has threatened the well-being and livelihood of the people and the economic development of this region;

Aware of the formidable challenge posed by the spread of SARS which is becoming a major health and economic problem and that our immediate priority is to ensure that our health care system is fully prepared to contain this threat;

Recognise that the number of victims of SARS globally is on the increase;

Encouraged to note that some of the affected countries have already put in place effective measures to contain the spread of SARS;

Convinced that we could tackle the challenges posed by this deadly virus only by strengthening our collective efforts regionally as well as internationally;

Aware of the fact that even one single infectious case can lead to a serious outbreak unless rigorous measures are taken;

Recognise the importance of professional and public awareness, particularly in our efforts to identify suspected cases and their contacts promptly, and, to implement stringent isolation and infection control measures;

Convinced of the effectiveness of screening of passengers before they leave affected areas in preventing the spread of SARS;

Mindful that the global movement of peoples has played a major role in the worldwide spread of the disease.

Fully aware that many health care workers have come down with this disease, thus undermining the capacity of health care systems, and that they continue to be at high risk of contracting the disease and that they need to be protected;

Concerned that the outbreak of SARS has caused negative social and economic impacts in many countries;

Acknowledge that a cross border and or international comprehensive approach is required to contain and prevent the spread of the disease;

Encourage the sharing of experience and best practices between countries; and

Acknowledge that the control of SARS requires additional human and financial resources and multi-sectoral approaches; therefore, the Ministries of Health need the support and commitment from our Heads of Governments of ASEAN + 3.

In pursuance, thereof, we agreed to undertake the following practical measures, taking into consideration domestic situation, laws and health systems;

Urge the Heads of Governments of ASEAN + 3 to provide adequate resources for their Health Ministries to respond effectively to the epidemic. We also call on other countries outside ASEAN to show similar resolve and commitment in eradicating SARS and other infectious diseases.

Establish, if not yet done, a national multi-sectoral Task Force with real power of enforcement, matched by necessary resources;

Enhance the exchange of information on best practices in preventive and control measures;

Appoint a contact point in every country for the routine exchange of information and to set up a "hotline" to facilitate communication in an emergency;

Ensure prompt exchange of relevant information on SARS cases and/or their contacts, which have significant epidemiological linkage with that country using the template which is attached as **Annexes A and B**;

Follow the WHO recommended measures for persons undertaking international travel from areas affected by SARS;

Advocate an active campaign for non-discrimination towards people coming from affected areas or people with symptoms of SARS, regardless of nationality and social status;

Call for relevant authorities at airport, seaport, river port and land entry points to collaborate with health care workers to undertake stringent pre-departure screening of passengers for international travel;

Ensure that persons suspected of SARS should not be allowed to travel;

Make it mandatory for travelers from affected countries to fill up SARS health declaration forms;

Institute in-flight management of suspected SARS cases who develop symptoms while on board;

Refer persons suspected of SARS promptly to health care facilities;

Surveillance of persons who have been in contact with a suspected case;

Disinfect aircrafts as outlined in the WHO Disinfection of Aircraft Guidelines;

Undertake coordinated measures with other sectors to ensure that travelers from affected areas are screened for SARS, where countries share common borders or sea-lanes;

Request WHO to conduct a review of the classification of “affected” countries, and review and update guidelines on travel, and expedite the development of test kits and vaccines; and

Request WHO to formulate and provide further technical guidelines on intervention of SARS.

Recognising the urgency of taking follow-up action, we urge ASEAN + 3 Member Countries to immediately implement the above measures and also agreed on the following:

- a. request the ASEAN Expert Group on Communicable Diseases (under the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Health Development), in collaboration with focal points from China, Japan and the Republic of Korea, to develop a work plan for regional cooperation to support and monitor the implementation of the Joint Statement and explore collaboration with relevant centers of excellence under the WHO and with other partner countries, as well as evaluate the setting up of an ASEAN center of excellence for disease control;
- b. request Indonesia, as coordinator of the ASEAN Disease Surveillance Net, to look into using the website to support the exchange of information among the ASEAN and the +3 Countries;
- c. request Thailand, as the coordinator of the ASEAN Epidemiologic Network to strengthen capacity building for epidemiological surveillance; and
- d. request Malaysia to implement the ASEAN project on Strengthening Laboratory Capacity and Quality Assurance for Disease Surveillance.

We, the ASEAN Health Ministers of Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, the Philippines and Thailand, and the Ministers of Health of the People’s Republic of China, Japan and the Republic of Korea hereby pledge our commitment to fully implement these measures for the well being of our peoples and for the peace, prosperity and stability of our region.

Adopted at Kuala Lumpur on 26 April, 2003.