

10th APEC High-Level Meeting on Health and Economy Joint Statement

“Building a Resilient Asia-Pacific in a COVID-19 World”
23 September 2020 | Virtual Meeting (APEC Malaysia)

The 10th APEC High-Level Meeting on Health and the Economy (HLM10) convened virtually under the theme, “Building a Resilient Asia-Pacific in a COVID-19 World”. We discussed policy responses to the dual economic and health crisis of COVID-19, the importance of strengthening the resiliency of health systems and supply chains, and the important role that digital health should play moving forward.

The crisis has severely impacted economies across the globe, damaging lives and livelihoods while undermining economic growth and global trade. We express our sincere condolences to the families of those who have lost their lives in this pandemic and to those whose lives and livelihoods have been affected by the pandemic. We reaffirm the importance of collaboration of policymakers, health workers, scientists, and other stakeholders to address COVID-19.

Building a Resilient Asia-Pacific in a COVID-19 World

HLM10 recognized the diverse impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, including economic impacts. An APEC-wide GDP contraction of 3.7% has been forecasted for 2020 and the region’s micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) will likely experience heightened vulnerability. We also noted with great interest a new APEC Policy Support Unit report^[1], which concluded that, for many economies, years of health system underfunding had created significant capacity constraints in responding to the pandemic.

HLM10 affirmed that investments in health and a continued focus on evidence-based interventions can help to prevent, detect and respond to new waves of COVID-19 infection. This in turn enables economic recovery, minimizes the negative effects on livelihoods, and reduces the possibility of future pandemics. To support these efforts, HLM10 welcomed continued collaboration with the APEC Finance Ministers Process and the APEC Business Advisory Council (ABAC) to explore the use of innovative and alternative financing models to expand access to pharmaceutical products, medical devices, and medical products and services.

HLM10 recognized that APEC economies will need to continue to support actions to improve health system efficiencies and foster an enabling local environment for stakeholders in health-related industries. This may include greater investment in the certification of laboratories for vaccines and pharmaceutical products and medical devices by international accreditation organizations, as well as accelerated research and development for valid diagnostic tests, treatments and vaccines. HLM10 welcomed continued efforts and the contribution of additional resources from across APEC to combat the pandemic and support workers and sectors through the economic recovery process.

HLM10 acknowledged that trade policy and resilient global supply chains are vital to enabling stakeholders in health-related industries to continue to invest in the research and development of new products, including those that detect, diagnose, treat, and prevent COVID-19. Given the value that global supply chains have created for economies, HLM10 noted the importance of ensuring open, stable and secure supply chains. HLM10 noted the recommendations of the ***APEC Virtual Ministers Responsible for Trade (MRT) Statement*** recognizing the importance of adopting digital solutions to

strengthen supply chain resilience and enable cross-border business, as well as the value of cooperation in facilitating the flow of data and strengthening consumer and business trust in digital transactions to harness the opportunities of the digital economy.

HLM10 acknowledged the importance of providing safe, quality, effective, and affordable medical products, especially those essential to the COVID-19 response. HLM10 welcomed continued efforts to advance regulatory convergence for medical products in the region.

HLM10 highlighted the importance of providing safe, quality and effective vaccines across the region, and the value of cooperation among APEC economies and partnership with stakeholders to improve the affordability, availability, accessibility, and use of such vaccines, particularly for developing economies. HLM10 welcomed the efforts to enhance cooperation in immunization in the coming months and years as we address the current COVID-19 pandemic.

HLM10 recognized the importance of shared information in combatting COVID-19. Accordingly, HLM10 discussed the need for measures to facilitate interoperability between privacy and regulatory regimes in order to enable the secure sharing of health-related data. HLM10 also highlighted the leadership APEC economies have demonstrated in using digital technology and health innovations to respond to COVID-19 and the importance of sharing best practices to strengthen the region's ability to address COVID-19 and future health challenges.

HLM10 acknowledged that pandemics and outbreaks of infectious diseases may have differential impacts based on gender and other social and economic factors. The COVID-19 pandemic will likely exacerbate inequalities and reverse development gains, in particular for women and children who already experience poverty, exclusion and marginalization more acutely. HLM10 welcomes continued work on the APEC ***Healthy Women, Healthy Economies*** initiative to facilitate cross-sector collaboration in support of incorporating gender considerations into programming and policymaking, as appropriate, to curb the epidemic and reduce inequality.

Looking Ahead

HLM10 welcomed the ongoing work undertaken by member economies to mitigate the impact of the pandemic and accelerate the economic recovery, and looks forward to continued regional cooperation to increase the effectiveness of pandemic response and planning. HLM10 reaffirmed the importance of continued partnership and collaboration among multilateral fora, civil society, the private sector, government ministries, and other partners in developing and implementing health policies for a resilient and prosperous future, using the One Health approach as appropriate.

HLM10 highlighted that “there is no wealth without health”, and that the exchange of international and APEC region experiences and best practices helps to shape and inform policies that can address COVID-19 while improving health systems in the long run, and in doing so enable a return to strong economic growth. HLM10 stressed the importance of APEC's health agenda in improving people's health and well-being, promoting trade and security, and ensuring resilient, sustainable, and inclusive growth in the region. HLM10 looks forward to continued pragmatic collaboration among economies on other health issues of regional importance, such as tuberculosis, antimicrobial resistance, mental health, healthy aging, cervical cancer, lung cancer, emerging zoonotic diseases, and rare diseases.

Furthermore, HLM10 looks forward to the establishment of a new strategic vision for the Health Working Group, the Life Sciences Innovation Forum, and other APEC fora in their joint work advancing regional health and biomedical life sciences cooperation over the next decade.

[1] [APEC in the Epicenter for COVID-19](#), APEC Policy Support Unit, April 2020