

LAST AMENDED 3 SEP 17, 09 00 HRS

**OPENING REMARKS OF THE MINISTER OF HEALTH
BRUNEI DARUSSALAM AT THE 7TH ASEAN PLUS THREE
HEALTH MINISTERS MEETING**

BY

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH
BRUNEI DARUSSALAM

Delivered during the

7th September 2017, Bandar Seri Begawan



- Your Excellencies, Fellow Ministers and Heads of Delegates
 - Your Excellency Mr Vongthep Arthakaivavatee, Deputy Secretary General
 - Distinguished delegates and invited guests
 - Ladies and Gentlemen
- 1.

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته

and Good Morning

1. Selamat Datang and welcome to Brunei Darussalam. It is our great honour and privilege to be host country and the Co-Chair of the 7th ASEAN Plus Three Health Ministers Meeting. In particular, I would like to extend a special welcome to the delegations from our Plus Three partner countries. I wish everyone here present, a safe and enjoyable stay in Bandar Seri Begawan.

2. Our region is a diverse one. However, this diversity has not been an obstacle for countries to come together and collaborate in areas of mutual interest. Since the establishment of ASEAN Plus Three Health Cooperation, we have gone through challenges together, particularly in tackling issues arising from emerging infectious diseases such as pandemic influenza, MERS-CoV, and recently, the Zika Virus outbreak. We have grown stronger together and in the process, we have developed resilience.

3. As we come together once again, it is timely to take stock of some of our activities over the years. We have made significant progress in areas such as ageing, disaster health management, universal health coverage, and pandemic preparedness and response. These areas have already been translated into successful programmes such as the ASEAN Plus Three Field Epidemiology Training Network and the ASEAN Plus Three Partnership Laboratories.

4. Since we last met in Viet Nam, our leaders endorsed the the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. For health, the striking difference in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) appears to be a shift away from disease-specific vertical programs, or interventions targeted solely at specific groups. The SDGs move us towards an emerging understanding of a holistic model for health where each and every person represents a unique asset. Therefore, as health system leaders, we must focus our approach towards one where we use every opportunity for health improvement and disease prevention starting from pre-conception right the way through to later life. In light of this, I call upon colleagues around the table to use today's meeting as an opportunity to re-evaluate and discuss how best to shape our ASEAN Plus Three health partnership in order to more effectively meet our SDG aspirations.

5. One particular area that I am sure is of interest to many, concerns how we meet the health needs of our increasingly aging population. In this regard, I would like to stress that population aging is a positive development because it means more people are now living longer than ever before. Of course, we recognize that an ageing population presents challenges but we must reject the framing of aging as solely a problem that will incur huge costs for government expenditure. Our older people are a valuable resource and indeed all our ASEAN Plus Three Countries have a tradition of respect for the elderly. I look forward to discussion on how we can enable our older generation to retain their health and ensure that they continue to be assets in our communities.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

6. Our strength as an ASEAN Plus Three partnership has been demonstrated through active collaboration and personal engagement in collective responses to health challenges, particularly those that are multi-dimensional and require flexible responses. With our changing demography and disease patterns, and the need to build on a more comprehensive understanding of health, we now face another challenge of promoting health at all stages of life. I am confident that our meeting today will see us rise to this challenge and agree on concrete steps that will bring us closer towards our aspirations for human health and wellbeing.

On this note, I declare the 7th ASEAN Plus Three Health Ministers Meeting officially open.

Thank you.