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PRESS RELEASE

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## PRESS CONFERENCE

### THE 13<sup>th</sup> ASEAN HEALTH MINISTERS MEETING (AHMM) AND OTHER RELATED MEETINGS Bandar Seri Begawan, 3-7 September 2017

**Theme: Together Towards A Healthy ASEAN**

Thursday, 7th September 2017, a press conference was hosted by the Ministry of Health, Brunei Darussalam in conjunction with the 13<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Health Ministers Meeting (AHMM) and Other Related Meetings that was held at International Convention Centre (ICC), Berakas from 3rd September 2017.

The Minister of Health Brunei Darussalam, Yang Berhormat Dato Seri Setia Dr Hj Zulkarnain bin Haji Hanafi, as the Chairman of the 13th AHMM opened the press conference session, followed by the other panellists, the Secretary of State for Health of Cambodia and Vice-Chairman of the 13th AHMM, His Excellency Professor Huot Eng; His Excellency Mr. Vongthep Arthakaivalvatee, Deputy Secretary General of ASEAN for the Socio-Cultural Community; Dr Takeshi Kasai, the Director of Programme Management of Western Pacific Regional Office of the World Health Organisation; and the Deputy Permanent Secretary (Technical), Ministry of Health Brunei Darussalam, Datin Paduka Dr Hjh Maslina Binti Haji Mohsin, as the Chair of the Senior Officials Meeting of Health Development.

Representing the ASEAN Health Ministers, Yang Berhormat Dato Seri Setia Dr Hj Zulkarnain bin Haji Hanafi introduced the theme of the meeting as “Together Towards a Healthy ASEAN.” He noted that this theme is especially pertinent as health outcomes are increasingly dependent on a combination of factors including social, environmental and economic factors. Tackling

these are not necessarily the purview of ministries of health alone, but needs community empowerment and engagement along with cross-sectoral collaboration to realise the ambition of better health and wellbeing for the people. To this end, the ASEAN Health Ministers Meeting agreed on a number of work plans on promoting healthy lifestyle, responding to all hazards and emerging threats, strengthening health systems and access to care, and ensuring food safety. Yang Berhormat Dato Seri Setia Dr Hj Zulkarnain bin Haji Hanafi noted that in order to implement these work plans effectively, the Ministers agreed to intensify ASEAN cooperation in health development based on a whole-of-society approach with emphasis on strong and effective multi-sectoral collaboration.

The Secretary of State for Health of Cambodia and Vice-Chairman of the 13th AHMM, His Excellency Professor Huot Eng congratulate Ministers of Health and the Government of Brunei Darussalam for successfully chairing and hosting the 13<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Health Ministers Meeting and Related Meetings in Brunei Darussalam. He also expressed his deep appreciations to the Government of Brunei Darussalam for its warmest welcome and hospitality provided to all delegation from ASEAN countries, China, Japan, and Korea that has allowed all delegates to experience a memorable meeting. His Excellency also announced that Cambodia will host the next 14<sup>th</sup> AHMM meeting with the theme “Accelerating Health for All in ASEAN” in 2019 at the Land of Angkor, Kingdom of Cambodia.

His Excellency Deputy Secretary General of ASEAN for the Socio-Cultural Community highlighted the importance of fostering a ‘Culture of Prevention’ that promotes ASEAN’s shared values of tolerance, mutual understanding, respect for life, as well as to ingrain a ‘Culture of Prevention’ mindset in the consciousness of our people, particularly our

children and youth. His Excellency also emphasized that it is not only the health activities being implemented that needs to be highlighted but more importantly, it is the inculcation of the culture of health that needs to be made as a priority including strong advocacy for a prevention to combat health risks.

The Director of Programme Management of Western Pacific Regional Office of the World Health Organisation (WHO), Dr Takeshi Kasai emphasised that it is WHO's joint interest to coordinate and collectively support all ASEAN Member States. ASEAN and WHO's collaboration includes health security; non-communicable diseases (NCDs) including tobacco control and social determinants of health; and health systems, including access to medicines and technologies. Dr Kasai also highlighted that strong national health systems guided by strong leadership are needed, in order to combat the health risks including infectious diseases; harmful and illegal products; food of low nutritional value; and environmental risks. Dr Kasai added that all the Ministers at the 13<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Health Ministers Meeting and Other Related Meetings clearly recognised the importance and nature of the issues and a number of ways to address them were proposed.

The 13<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Health Ministers Meeting (AHMM) and Other Related Meetings will conclude today, 7th September 2017.

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Date : 7 September 2017 / 16 Zulhijjah 1438

Reference : KK/PR/3

