

World AIDS Day 2022 Message from ASEAN Health Cluster 2 – Equalize and Address Inequalities to End the HIV and AIDS Pandemic

1. On World AIDS Day, the ASEAN Member States stand with the global community in recognising that the goal of ending AIDS is within our reach. We are committed through our united action to end the HIV and AIDS pandemic as a public health threat by 2030.
2. Together with people living with HIV, key populations and stakeholders, we recognise and strive to uphold this year's UNAIDS theme *“Equalize”* which is a call to action to address the inequalities that serve as barriers to ending AIDS. These include the following UNAIDS actions to (i) increase availability, quality and suitability of services, for HIV treatment, testing and prevention for everyone (ii) reform laws, policies and practices to tackle the stigma and exclusion faced by people living with HIV, (iii) share technology to enable equal access to the best HIV science for all, and (iv) empower communities to highlight the inequalities they face and take action to address them. Without bold action against the inequalities which perpetuate the HIV and AIDS pandemic, we risk missing the targets to end AIDS by 2030.
3. The past few years have been especially challenging for sustaining the progress made in the global and regional HIV and AIDS response. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has inevitably led to interruptions in HIV programmes, and a redirection of scarce resources to meet its demands. In addition, the impact of geopolitical changes on economies, human migration and access to care have also slowed or, in some cases, reversed the hard-earned gains of the past decade in the fight against HIV and AIDS, particularly by further deepening the inequalities faced by people living with, or affected by HIV and AIDS. These changes have compounded the need to address inequalities and inequities in access to HIV and AIDS care. Despite these challenges, the ASEAN Member States remain unwavering in our commitment to Ending inequalities - to *‘Equalize’* – and get back on track to end AIDS in ASEAN by 2030.
4. Building on the regional progress in ending HIV and AIDS, the ASEAN Member States adopted the *‘ASEAN Leaders’ Declaration on Ending Inequalities and Getting on Track to End AIDS by 2030’* on 11 November 2022 in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. The declaration reaffirms ASEAN's long-standing and political commitment to end AIDS by 2030 and align the ASEAN Health Sector's programmes and activities with the Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS, *‘Ending Inequalities and Getting on Track to End AIDS by 2030’* that was adopted at the United Nations General Assembly High-Level Meeting on HIV and AIDS in June 2021. This timely commitment highlights the continued prioritisation of HIV and AIDS as a public health priority among ASEAN Member States.
5. To this end, the ASEAN Member States will continue to work with local and regional partners and stakeholders to plan and implement programmes in accordance with

national legislations, development priorities and goals, supported by locally relevant evidence and resources. These strategies will be guided by the UNAIDS *'Global AIDS Strategy 2021 – 2026: End Inequalities. End AIDS'* and the three interlinked strategic priorities of (i) maximising equitable and equal access to HIV services and solutions; (ii) breaking down barriers to achieving HIV outcomes; and (iii) fully resource and sustain efficient HIV responses and integrate them into systems for health, social protection, humanitarian settings and pandemic responses. As ASEAN Member States, we reaffirm our commitment to reduce the inequalities that drive the AIDS epidemic and put people at the centre to get the world on-track to end AIDS as a public health threat by 2030.

6. In addition, ASEAN Member States will continue to maximise the ASEAN Health Sector forum to catalyse and accelerate improvements in the sharing of knowledge, technology and best practices on innovations in service delivery and community engagement. The COVID-19 pandemic has also challenged us to adapt and accelerate innovative solutions for HIV and AIDS. These include the adoption of new care models such as community-based and key population-led HIV services, telehealth and an increased focus on person and patient-centred medical, mental health and psychosocial care for people living with HIV and AIDS.
7. While we have made remarkable progress in the four decades of our HIV response, inequalities still persist. With strong leadership and political will of the ASEAN Member States at the forefront, ASEAN remains steadfast in our efforts to *'Equalize'* and address inequalities to end the HIV and AIDS epidemic. Together, as one ASEAN Community, we aim to accelerate progress towards the UNAIDS shared vision of zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related deaths. We are confident that the ASEAN community will be able to rally as a strong, united and resilient coalition working towards future where HIV and AIDS is no longer a public health threat for our region.

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