

ASEAN Commitments on HIV and AIDS

Cebu, Philippines, 13 January 2007

WE, the Heads of State and Government of the Association of South East Asian Nations (hereinafter referred to as ASEAN), gathered in Cebu, Philippines on 13 January 2007, devoting a Special Session during the 12th ASEAN Summit, to review and renew our commitments on HIV and AIDS;

RECOGNISING that the HIV epidemic brought about by factors such as poverty, gender inequality and inequity, illiteracy, stigma and discrimination, conflicts and disasters, affects groups most at risk like sex workers, men having sex with men, transgenders, and drug users including injecting drug users; and vulnerable groups such as migrants and mobile populations, women and girls, children and youth, people in correctional institutions, uniformed services, communities of populations in conflict and disaster-affected areas;

REAFFIRMING our earlier commitments to effectively respond to HIV in the ASEAN region, made at our first Special Session held in conjunction with the 7th ASEAN Summit in November 2001 in Bandar Seri Begawan, and reiterated at the 9th ASEAN Summit in October 2003 in Bali, the 2nd ASEAN-United Nations Summit in September 2005 in New York and the 11th ASEAN Summit in December 2005 in Kuala Lumpur;

RECALLING the commitment to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, in particular Goal No. 6 which specifically refers to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases;

SUPPORTING the 2005 World Summit's call and the Political Declaration made by the United Nations General Assembly at the High Level Meeting on AIDS held on 2 June 2006, to scale up significantly towards universal access to comprehensive prevention, treatment, care and support by 2010 for all those in need, and the reduction of vulnerability of persons living with HIV, especially orphans, vulnerable children and older persons;

REITERATING that the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women in the ASEAN Region promotes and protects women's rights by reducing their vulnerability to HIV and eliminating gender inequalities and gender-based violence by creating an enabling environment for the empowerment of women and strengthening their economic independence;

RECALLING ALSO the Beijing Plus Five process that aimed to undertake further actions and initiatives to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, especially in promoting women's health, including the fight against the HIV and AIDS pandemic, and also to further undertake gender-mainstreaming initiatives that address HIV and AIDS and other diseases;

NOTING the Hanoi Call to Action for Children and HIV/AIDS in East Asia and the Pacific Region of 24 March 2006, which highlights nine urgent actions to scale up response to children who are vulnerable to, infected and affected by HIV and AIDS;

GUIDED by ASEAN's Vision 2020 as a concert of Southeast Asian nations, outward looking, living in peace, stability and prosperity, bonded together in partnership in dynamic development and in a community of caring societies; which reaffirms the social responsibility of all Member Countries to act together in resolving transboundary issues;

GRAVELY CONCERNED that the HIV epidemic continues to threaten our vision, and the lives and future of our peoples, especially the vulnerable populations throughout the region, with socio-economic consequences that pose a formidable challenge to ASEAN Community-building;

SADDENED that whereas HIV once primarily affected men, women now represent half of all people living with HIV and that as youth behaviour changes, rates of HIV among youth are rising at an alarming rate, with young people between 15 to 24, accounting for over fifty percent of new infections in some of our Member Countries;

REALISING that an effective response to HIV requires relentless efforts and continued commitment by all concerned in implementing comprehensive responses to reduce the number of new infections, and to provide treatment, care and support to adults and children living with HIV and AIDS;

AWARE that stigma and discrimination are barriers to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support, as well as serious threats to the quality of life and livelihood of people living with and affected by HIV;

ACKNOWLEDGING that we can achieve an effective response to HIV through strong leadership, country ownership, political foresight and commitment to sustainable financing, multi-sectoral coordination and partnerships with civil society including private sector, particularly people living with HIV, and communities vulnerable and most at risk to HIV, through region-wide and global policies that respect, protect and promote the rights of people living with HIV and groups vulnerable and most at risk to HIV;

EMPHASIZING that ASEAN's Vientiane Action Programme (VAP) highlights the importance of addressing the core issues of poverty reduction, equity and health, and creating an enabling environment for preventing the spread of HIV and for the comprehensive treatment, care and support for people living with HIV in the region;

COMMENDING the untiring efforts of the ASEAN Health Ministers and their Senior Officials, especially the ASEAN Task Force on AIDS, to prevent further transmission of HIV and mitigate its impact through joint actions and policies for improved regional responses, especially recent efforts for more people-centred initiatives;

AFFIRMING that responses to HIV and AIDS require meaningful civil society participation, including greater involvement of people living with HIV; and that in ASEAN, civil society organisations have been actively involved in effective actions for HIV prevention, treatment, care and support and in mitigating its impact;

ENCOURAGED by the ongoing cooperation between ASEAN and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) Secretariat and its co-sponsors, and other key partners in the response to HIV and AIDS;

RECOGNISING that although resources allocated for responding to the HIV epidemic have increased substantially in many Member Countries since our first Special Session in 2001, scaling up access to protection, HIV prevention, treatment and care for majority of the affected population and high-risk communities requires still larger shares of the national budgets towards universal access by 2010, greater assistance from international partners as well as mobilisation of the business and private sector if we are to ensure that our programmes and activities have wide coverage, adequate and sustainable support;

ASSERTING that halting the spread of HIV requires the sustained cooperation and commitment of government at the highest levels, involvement of mass organisations, civil society, and strategic partners in HIV programme planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation, so that vulnerable and most at-risk communities, especially children, are protected from the impact of AIDS;

Do commit ourselves, as we progress towards a caring and sharing ASEAN Community, to:

1. Prioritise and lead the mainstreaming and alignment of HIV policies and programmes with our national development and poverty reduction plans and strategies to involve multi-sectoral responses in harmonised approaches, address the gender dimension of the epidemic, and ensure that all stakeholders at national and local levels are actively and effectively involved;
2. Harmonise programmes, activities, target population on HIV and AIDS, monitoring and evaluation systems from different sources of funding, consistent with the national program priorities, especially in the face of scaling up ART; efforts shall be given to fostering prevention and reduction of new cases and improve the performance of ART program to ensure highest adherence to drug regimens.
3. Ensure that our policies and programmes give ample emphasis to containing the epidemic in vulnerable populations; sharing of lessons, best practices and evidence-informed prevention policies; and moving prevention and education efforts, including public information campaigns, beyond the health sector, and especially address aspirations of children and young people, women, couples and other vulnerable groups to protect themselves against the disease;
4. Undertake to halt the spread of HIV, through not only the setting of ambitious national targets as committed in the 2006 UN General Assembly Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS but also through youth- and women-friendly sexual and reproductive health services, and specific HIV information, education, and communication;
5. Put into place necessary legislation and regulations (including workplace policies and programmes) to ensure that persons living with HIV and affected groups are protected and are not subjected to stigma and discrimination, have equal access to health, social welfare and education services, including continued food security and education for children;
6. Act to remove obstacles in access to quality HIV and AIDS prevention products, medicines, and treatment commodities;
7. Strengthen and facilitate the work of our AIDS coordinating authorities by endeavouring to chair and participate in their activities; expanding their membership to include all relevant key stakeholders involved in responses to HIV; allocating regular funds for their activities; and ensuring their accountability;
8. Strongly support the mobilisation and allocation of technical, financial and human resources to adequately implement, programmes and policies to respond to HIV;

9. Involve persons living with HIV, civil society organisations and the private sector, as equal partners in responses to the HIV epidemic, and ensure that the civil society has sustainable financial means and support to participate actively and meaningfully in our efforts against HIV and AIDS, including at policy and decision-making levels;
10. Strengthen the role of the ASEAN Task Force on AIDS to effectively implement regional responses to HIV, with multi-sector engagement, including that of the private sector; and ensure the meaningful participation of all relevant key stakeholders in efforts consistent with our regional and international commitments;
11. Guide the implementation of the operational work plan of the Third ASEAN Work Programme on HIV (AWPIII) for 2006-2010, which we adopt, and assign the ASEAN Task Force on AIDS to regularly report progress; and
12. Continue working with our Dialogue Partners, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) Secretariat and its co-sponsors, other UN organisations, international partners, civil society organisations and the private sector in realising our commitment to scale up effective responses to HIV and AIDS.

ADOPTED in Cebu, the Philippines this Thirteenth Day of January in the Year Two Thousand and Seven.