



Asia-Pacific
Economic Cooperation

APEC News Release

Issued by the APEC Health Working Group &
APEC Life Sciences Innovation Forum



APEC Calls for Greater Investment in Health Systems

Strengthened health systems, equitable access to vaccines and health innovation are key to recovery and building resiliency

Putrajaya, Malaysia, 24 September 2020– APEC member economies are committed to advancing coordinated actions and aligning initiatives towards strengthening health systems in the region amid the unprecedented impacts brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Meeting under the theme, “Building a Resilient Asia-Pacific in a COVID-19 World”, APEC health ministers, academics, industry leaders and representatives from governmental and international organizations recognized the important role of investments in health systems and economic recovery packages to support the pandemic response and build resilient economies moving forward.

“The effect of this pandemic has highlighted long-standing weaknesses in existing health systems and vulnerabilities in the global health response as the world struggles to reduce the human and economic toll of this pandemic,” Malaysian Health Minister Dato’ Sri Dr Adham Baba said as he opened the 10th APEC High-Level Meeting on Health and the Economy.

Dato’ Sri Dr Adham underscored the importance of strengthening the resiliency of health systems and supply chains to cope with the surge of demand during this pandemic, adding that “the longstanding under-funding and investment in health has impacted the capabilities of economies to cope during a global health crisis.”

The APEC region accounts for over 34 percent of COVID-19 infections and over 36 percent of total deaths globally. The prolonged duration of the pandemic is also causing devastating impacts to the global economy. The APEC region’s economy is expected to contract 3.7 percent in 2020, with a total output loss [estimated at USD2.9 trillion](#).

Focusing on recovery and better health emergency preparedness, members and experts exchanged views on the importance of sustainable vaccination systems, particularly the need to strengthen systems to support equitable access and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines once developed. Members and experts called for a coordinated response to ensure open, secure, stable, and efficient global supply chains that will enhance access and availability of safe, effective and quality medicines, including future COVID-19 vaccines and treatments.

Members also discussed digital innovation and the vital role it plays to assist governments in pandemic management. Many economies have developed their own digital health solutions, including mobile applications to facilitate contact tracing and exposure notification, encourage the use of telemedicine and clinical management, as well as manage quarantine and self-isolation.

“The pandemic has shown us the importance of leveraging digital health technologies and why we need to further encourage innovation and deepen collaboration in this area,” Dato’ Sri Dr Adham said.



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Hosted by Malaysia, the host of APEC 2020, the virtual meeting issued a joint statement reiterating members' commitment to continue regional cooperation to increase the effectiveness of pandemic response and planning.

To read the 10th APEC High-Level Meeting on Health and the Economy Joint Statement, please visit [here](#)

*For more information on the Health Working Group, please visit [here](#).
For more information on the Life Sciences Innovation Forum, please visit [here](#).*

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