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Report on APEC HTF Functioning Economies in Times of Pandemic Symposium

Purpose: Information
Submitted by: Australia



**Health Task Force Meeting
Da Nang, Viet Nam
14 – 15 September 2006**

APEC HTF Functioning Economies in Times of Pandemic Symposium
Da Nang, 10-11 September 2006
Report to HTF Chair

Project Background

The Australian led project 'Functioning Economies in Times of Pandemic' was approved by the Health Taskforce in 2005 and is co-sponsored by Canada and Vietnam.

The aim of the project is to develop general protocols and systems of cooperation that will help APEC member economies to function in the event of a pandemic or other incident involving mass casualties.

Many economies have developed pandemic preparedness plans. These plans appropriately focus on the health impact of a potential epidemic and the importance of preventing the spread of a pandemic influenza virus. This project considers the potential economic impact of a pandemic and focuses on incorporating other sectors into pandemic preparedness. It also seeks to build on individual economies own plans of action to facilitate ongoing economic activity in the wake of a pandemic and considers how collaboration and coordination may occur across relevant sectors or APEC economies.

The project consists of three phases: development of a Discussion Paper; a consultation phase including a Symposium with member economies to discuss issues highlighted in the Paper; and development of protocols/guidelines to guide economies in pandemic preparedness.

A Discussion Paper was circulated to APEC Senior Officials on 27 July 2006 for consideration within their economies. It identified seven key themes which are pivotal to maintaining functioning economies in times of pandemic.

Symposium

A Symposium was held in the margins of the APEC Senior Officials Meeting in Da Nang, Vietnam, on 10 – 11 September 2006.

The aim of the Symposium was to raise awareness of the issues which need to be considered by economies in order to prepare for a pandemic, and foster a discussion around the seven themes identified in the Discussion Paper. The Symposium provided presenters and participants with an opportunity to discuss issues both from the perspectives of their own economies and in terms of relevance for the APEC region as a whole.

The Symposium was chaired by Dr Lily Chiu, Cluster Chief Executive, Kwai Chung and Princess Margaret Hospital, Hong Kong, and participants were welcomed by Associate Professor Dr Nguyen Huy Nga, Director General, Department of Preventive Medicine, Vietnamese Ministry of Health.

The two days were structured around the following seven key themes identified in the Discussion Paper (as outlined in the attached Symposium Paper):

1. Integrated Planning and Preparedness
2. Coordination and Cooperation
3. Leadership and Governance
4. Communication and Information

5. Essential Services and Vital Supplies
6. Financial Systems
7. Movement Between and Within Economies

Each session included a number of highly qualified speakers and a general discussion, with participants providing input and sharing experiences. In addition, the consultant to the Australian Government responsible for the research informing the project was available to provide comments.

Representatives from APEC member economies, ABAC and international and regional organisations attended.

There was general agreement that the seven themes identified in the Discussion Paper identified the important aspects in preparing for the economic impacts of a major disaster.

Under the seven broad themes participants raised some of the challenges facing economies:

1. There is a lot good working going on but there is a need to go beyond health in order to fully prepare for the wider economic impact of a pandemic.
2. There is a need for economies to continue planning and learning to further develop the detail and scope of pandemic plans.
3. Effective planning will involve government leadership to engage the private sector.
4. There is a need for multi-sectoral integrated planning that involves both government and business.
5. National frameworks and tools are very important but economies need to include planning for SMEs and local level implementation.
6. There is a need to identify what is essential for ongoing economic activity, and recognise that this may vary between economies.
7. Business continuity will be enhanced by clear communication from government in the planning, response and recovery phases.
8. The population will expect government to assure continuity of food and cash supplies.
9. Supply of basic goods relies on various providers, many of whom are interdependent.
10. Continued trade is important, but may be impacted by a pandemic.

Participants agreed that the Symposium was a valuable forum to discuss these issues and acknowledged the value of APEC in addressing these challenges.

Next Steps

The next phase of the project is development of draft protocols/guidelines ie best practice guidelines for consideration by APEC economies in the coming months. These protocols/guidelines will take into consideration issues identified in the Discussion Paper and those raised during the Symposium.

Given that preparation for the economic impact of a pandemic needs to be taken up across government and business it will be important for APEC economies to consult across government and with the private sector.

It is anticipated that the protocols/guidelines will be agreed and launched in the first part of 2007.

11 September 2007