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## **Report of the “APEC Health Task Force Seminar on Assessing Pandemic Preparedness”**

Purpose: Information

Submitted by: USA

**Health Task Force Meeting  
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## **Report of the “APEC Health Task Force Seminar on Assessing Pandemic Preparedness”**

### **Executive Summary:**

The APEC HTF Seminar on Assessing Pandemic Assessment was held in Singapore 16-17 August, 2006. The Seminar was organized by the U.S. Department of Health (DHHS) and Human Services, Department of State and Regional Emerging Disease Intervention (REDI) Center, and was hosted at the Singapore Ministry of Health.

Participants from 18 APEC Economies, Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Mongolia, WHO, FAO and UNSIC attended the Seminar. The Seminar was divided into three broad sections and two panel discussions:

- Lecture session divided into two sections:
  1. Describe the types of exercises, what aspects of emergency/pandemic planning the different types of exercises may effectively test or assess, and the relative costs and benefits of each type of exercise.
  2. Describe the exercise “life cycle” or PTEE ((P)olicy Synchronization; (T)raining; (E)xercise; (E)valuation) Cycle of developing an implementing an effective preparedness plan assessment exercise, including the challenges that are often encountered.
- Economy presentations on experiences and lessons learned. Australia, Korea, Singapore, and Chinese Taipei presented their experiences with a variety of different kinds of pandemic preparedness assessment exercises that have been performed in, or are planned for, the APEC region. The presentations focused on the steps required to develop and implement the various exercises and the logistical challenges and solutions. A representative from the WHO also presented on a European Commission/WHO pandemic influenza exercise.
- Participatory example table-top exercise (TTX). Seminar attendees participated in an exercise scenario which based upon a U.S. Cabinet level TTX and moderated by contractors for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. The participants were separated into 8 groups, representing Ministries of a fictional Economy. This session provided all participants to discuss with colleagues from other Economies their own plans for responding to such a scenario. This session was, by most accounts, the highlight of the seminar.

In addition to the main session, described above, there were two panel discussions. In the first, a representative from the FAO explained to the participants the importance of continuing to address the current H5N1 situation as an animal disease at the moment, and ensuring that national plans, and the assessment exercises used to assess the plans take this into account. The representative from the WHO explained the role of the WHO and other international organizations in a global response to a pandemic and urged participants to plan for, and test, this aspect of pandemic response. In the second panel, representatives from the WHO and the U.S. Agency for International Development provided a brief description of some of the assistance and resources that may be available to Economies as they prepare to develop exercises assessing their own domestic response plans.

**Report of the “APEC Health Task Force Seminar on Assessing Pandemic Preparedness”  
16-17 August, 2006  
Singapore**

**1. Summary**

A two day “APEC Seminar on Assessing Pandemic Preparedness” was held in Singapore from 16-17 August, 2006. The Seminar was organized in response to the 2005 APEC Leaders’ initiative on “Preparing for and Mitigating the Effects of an Influenza Pandemic” Leaders directed APEC Member Economies to “encourage testing of multi-sectoral pandemic preparedness...” and to “promote and conduct assessments of pandemic preparedness...”. The Seminar was organized by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and Department of State, and hosted by the Regional Emerging Diseases Intervention (REDI) Center at the Singapore Ministry of Health. The Seminar drew participants from 18 APEC Economies, as well as representatives from affected regional non-APEC Economies including Burma, Cambodia, Laos and Mongolia. Representatives from the World Health Organization (WHO), the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and the U.N. Systems Influenza Coordinator (UNSIC) were also invited to attend and present at the Seminar.

**2. Background**

In the 2005 APEC “Initiative on Preparing for and Mitigating an Influenza Pandemic”, Leaders agreed to work collectively to "encourage testing of multi-sectoral pandemic preparedness" and "promote and conduct assessments of pandemic preparedness."

One of the pillars of fighting a potential influenza pandemic is a sound and effective multi-sectoral pandemic preparedness plan that can be put into action when a pandemic threatens. The World Health Organization (WHO) has developed a global plan, which defines the responsibilities of the WHO as well as domestic authorities in case of an influenza pandemic. The World Health Assembly has passed a resolution calling for all WHO Member States to develop and implement national pandemic preparedness plans. A pandemic preparedness plan is only effective if regularly tested to ensure efficient implementation when needed. As stated in the WHO guidelines on influenza pandemic preparedness planning, "a pandemic plan needs to remain a dynamic document to ensure that it is widely known, even several years after publication...This can only be achieved if the plan is tested and revised regularly."

In 2004, the project, HTF 1/2005: Enhancing Influenza Surveillance, and Pandemic Planning and Preparedness, was approved by the Health Task Force and the Budget and Management Committee. Over the past year, many APEC Economies have developed or are developing and finalizing their preparedness plans, and some have already begun to test their plans using desktop simulation or live exercises. Therefore, the project proponents (U.S.) sought and received Health Task Force approval at the First HTF meeting in Hanoi, 2006, to update and refine the objectives and content of the project to reflect the current pandemic preparedness environment. The project was therefore directed at preparedness plan assessment through validation and exercises.

**2. Objectives for the Seminar**

The seminar provided a framework for assisting Economies in making decisions on how to assess their domestic pandemic preparedness plans, policies and procedures through

validation and exercises. The objectives of the seminar were to familiarize participants with the different options for assessing their plans, policies and procedures and help guide them in the development of their own domestic exercises (although not necessarily to independently develop and run an exercise without assistance). The seminar also allowed Member Economies with experience in running assessment exercises to share their experiences and showcase lessons learned and best practices with all APEC economies.

### **3. Seminar Activities and Participants**

The “APEC Seminar on Assessing Pandemic Preparedness” was organized by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Offices of Public Health and Emergency Preparedness (OPHEP) and Global Health Affairs (OGHA), the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs (EAP) and the REDI Center. The Seminar was held on 16-17 August, at the Singapore Ministry of Health. Participants from 18 APEC Economies, Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Mongolia, WHO, FAO and UNSIC attended the Seminar. The participation of non-APEC members from the region, especially those of the ASEAN member countries demonstrates the utility of APEC-ASEAN coordination with regard to capacity building activities in the region.

Due to good cooperation between Singapore, the U.S. and Australia, the Seminar was conveniently held immediately after the Australia organized “APEC Pandemic Response Exercise Lessons Learnt Workshop” 14-15 August, which reported on and discussed the outcomes from the 7-8 June “APEC Pandemic Response Exercise”.

Dr. Keith Holtermann and Mr. KC Decker of DHHS/OPHEP moderated the Seminar, which was opened with introductory remarks by Dr. Rodney Hoff, Designated Executive Director of the REDI Center. To underscore the great importance of effectively preparing for pandemic influenza, the U.S. Ambassador to Singapore, Patricia Herbold, and Permanent Secretary for the Singapore Ministry of Health, Yong Ying-I, presented additional opening remarks, providing the overarching context of domestic and regional planning for pandemic influenza for the Seminar

The Seminar began with a lecture focused on the logistical requirements for properly designing and implementing an effective Preparedness Plan Assessment Exercise. The different types of Assessment Exercises, including Table-Top Exercises (TTX), Command Post Exercises (CPX) and Communication Exercises, Full Functional Exercises (FFX) and Full Scale Exercises (FSX/FSE) were summarized, describing which dimensions of preparedness planning the various exercises can effectively assess and the resources required for effectively designing and implementing each kind of assessment exercise. Although Full Scale Exercises are most effective at assessing operational readiness, it was noted that FSEs are the most resource intensive exercises and TTXs are the most cost/resource effective methods of assessing the policies of domestic emergency/pandemic preparedness plans.

The “life-cycle” of an exercise was then discussed. The phases of a properly developed exercise were described as the PTEE Cycle, for “(P)olicy Synchronization, (T) raining, (E) xercise, (E) valuation”, and was represented as an iterative cycle, in which the Evaluation of one exercise should then feed into the Policy Synchronization/Planning stage, which begins a new cycle. Critical lessons from this section included the vital importance of “exercising a plan” rather than doing an exercise for the sake of the exercise itself, and the importance of scenario design. A well designed and realistic scenario will reduce the temptation of exercise participants to “fight the scenario”, which if not checked can seriously

impede the effectiveness of an exercise. The importance of a “Hot Wash” or immediate assessment of the exercise was described, as well as the importance of a comprehensive “After Action Report”. For an exercise to be fully effective in the context of emergency preparedness, a full assessment of the gaps and vulnerabilities revealed by the exercise, as well as actual revisions to the policies and procedures of a domestic response plan, must be completed before an “Lessons Learned” can be said to have been achieved.

Following the lecture, presentations on the experiences of APEC Member Economies and the WHO provided participants with examples of a variety of different exercises already performed in the APEC region, the challenges encountered during planning and implementation of these exercises, and plans for future exercises.

Mr. Rob Cameron and Mr. Peter Koob presented on Australia’s Full Scale Exercise, *Exercise Eleusis’05*, which simulated the response to an avian influenza outbreak in Australia. In addition, the presenters introduced the Seminar participants to Australia’s planning for *Exercise Cumpston ’06*, which will also be a Full Scale Exercise, this time to test the response to an outbreak of pandemic influenza in Australia’s population.

Similarly, Dr. Young-Joo Hur presented on Korea’s experience with a Full Scale Exercise, performed in 2005 as well as their preparations for another exercise in 2006. Dr. Hur noted the difficulty of getting appropriate cooperation among colleagues in partner agencies for such an activity and the importance of frequent consultations to ensure full participation.

Dr. Koh Pengkeng presented Singapore’s experiences with *Exercise Sparrowhawk II*, a Full Scale Exercise performed during the summer, 2006. Dr. Koh noted the role of training and TTXs in preparing for the larger exercise. He also discussed the challenges and solutions of including operating hospitals in the exercise in a way that did not distract from their core critical mission of protecting the health and safety of their patients.

Ms. Lili Lee presented on the recent experiences of Chinese Taipei in a number of different exercises. She noted that experts from Chinese Taipei attended training sessions by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, for instance, to learn more about the design and implementation of exercises. Chinese Taipei participated in the APEC Emerging Infections Network (EINet) Virtual Symposium on Pandemic Influenza Preparedness and Response in early 2006. She also noted the participation of Chinese Taipei in the APEC Regional Communication Exercise, organized by Australia on June 7-8, 2006. Ms. Lee then noted that Chinese Taipei had designed and implemented a number of Tabletop (TTX) and Full-Function Exercises in the last two years, including a business continuity exercise for non-health organizations.

Ms. Tamara Curtin of WHO presented on the European Commission’s exercise *Common Ground*, which tested communications mechanisms and interoperability between European Union Member States. She explained that the difficulties experienced in running the exercise, and the steps to address these difficulties, both in real policy changes among Members as well as in preparations for the next exercise were exactly what made the exercise such a success from the WHO’s point of view.

Attendees participated in an example exercise, based upon a TTX designed for US Cabinet Officials to assess US domestic pandemic preparedness and response. Presented by Mr. John Garland and Dr. Steve Landry of EG&G Technical Services, Inc., the fictional scenario allowed Seminar participants to break into eight (8) groups representing different Cabinet

level Ministries of a fictional Asia-Pacific Economy to respond to an escalating pandemic event in the region. Participants worked in teams to determine their groups' roles and responses to the changing scenario, evoking lively discussions both within and between groups before representatives presented their recommendations for response. As the groups were composed of participants from different Economies, discussions often led to useful comparisons of the various domestic plans that currently exist in APEC Economies'. Although not intended to test a particular plan (none exists for the fictional Economy that participants were "representing"), Seminar participants universally applauded the demonstration exercise as a means of introducing them to how a TTX may be run, as well as the opportunity to discuss with colleagues their own Economies' response plans.

In addition to the lectures, presentations and demonstration exercise, two panels were convened to discuss a) the importance of incorporating the multi-sectoral nature of pandemic preparedness into effective planning and b) resources that may be available to Economies who are seeking to refine their own plans and develop effective assessment exercises. Dr. Lawrence Gleeson of the FAO emphasized the animal health nature of the current avian influenza epidemic and Ms. Tamara Curtin of the WHO discussed the importance of coordinating domestic plans with regional and international preparedness activities. Ms. Tamara Curtin and Dr. Lisa Kramer, of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), provided a brief overview of some of the resources that might be available through the WHO and USAID to Economies seeking to develop exercises to assess domestic plans.

#### **4. Participant Evaluation and Feedback**

Based on the comments submitted on the evaluation forms returned to the Project Overseer, participants regarded the Seminar as useful for their own Economies' planning. Recommendations for improvement included a greater balance in the presentation of exercise development to reflect the diversity of resource and institutional capacities in APEC Economies, more presentations from Member Economies on their experiences with preparedness plan assessment exercises, and implementation of follow-up activities. Participants in particular noted the demonstration exercise, as the participatory nature of the activity was extremely effective at eliciting lively discussion by all Seminar participants, revealed the similarities and differences in APEC Economies' domestic preparedness plans, and provided a "hands-on" experience of how a TTX might be performed.

#### **5. Next Steps**

Many economies expressed the desire that the APEC Seminar on Assessing Pandemic Preparedness be followed up with future Seminars on assessment exercises to reflect the experiences of APEC Economies that did not have the opportunity to present. There was also interest in directed activities to assist certain Member Economies in developing and implementing their own preparedness plan assessment exercises. The US, primarily through the activities of USAID, has plans to assist one or more Economies in the APEC or ASEAN region to develop and implement an assessment exercise of their domestic pandemic preparedness plans. It is hoped that in the course of running such an exercise, APEC Member Economies and ASEAN members would have a chance to observe, at least in part, the operation of such an exercise. The US will be in communication with candidate Economies and will report to the Health Task Force as plans become more fully developed.