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SPECIAL ASEAN SUMMIT ON COVID-19

YAB Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin Prime Minister of Malaysia

Putrajaya, 14 April 2020

Your Excellency Nguyen Xuan Phuc, Prime Minister of Vietnam; Your Majesty, Excellencies,

Let me first and foremost express my sincere thanks to all my colleagues and Heads of Governments of ASEAN for your congratulatory messages on my assumption to the office of Prime Minister of Malaysia.

Our meeting today could not be at a more crucial time. Nations across the globe are facing an unprecedented pandemic and we in ASEAN are not excluded from the dangers of COVID-19. As governments, we are confronting a combination of a health and economic crisis head-on.

For people around the world, more than a quarter have been confined to their homes due to various levels of movement restrictions imposed by their Governments. Borders and airports are closed, businesses are shut, and schools have been cancelled. This is a new normal we must get used to. These are extraordinary times, and we need to think out of the box for a solution that will get us through these uncharted waters. A coherent, multi-

sectoral, multi- stakeholder, whole-of-ASEAN approach is critical in ensuring our timely and effective response to this pandemic.

This is a war against an invisible enemy and the aftermath will result in a new global landscape. The world will never be the same again and we in ASEAN must acclimatize ourselves with what is going to be the new global order, simply put – the new normal.

Your Majesty, Excellencies,

Malaysia is deeply concerned with the rising number of COVID-19 cases in our region as ASEAN has witnessed a rapid escalation of infections in the past few weeks. Globally, the situation is just as bad, if not worse. There is an urgent need for us to curb the spread of the virus and break the chain of infections.

Undeniably, Malaysia is not spared from the ravages of COVID-19. In our efforts to fight against the coronavirus, we have put in place several key strategies to address critical health, economic and social issues brought about by the pandemic.

Just one month ago on the 16th of March, my Government decided to impose a Movement Control Order (MCO) which directed the closure of non-essential Government and private sectors; a prohibition on mass movements and gatherings and a strong advice for Malaysians to stay at home. Fundamentally, it is a strict enforcement of social distancing on our citizens to prevent unnecessary human contact and break the chain of transmission of COVID-19. In addition, Malaysia has also mandated all our citizens returning from abroad to undergo compulsory quarantine for two weeks.

As a stricter measure, we have also enforced Enhanced MCOs (EMCOs) in specific areas with a high infection rate. These EMCO areas are completely closed off for entry and exit of residents and visitors; and every individual in the area will be screened and treated if infected.

On the health component, we are aggressively increasing our capacities to conduct even more tests per million capita, rigorous contact tracing, and treatments to all patients, regardless of their level of symptoms and illnesses. I understand, that more tests may result

in higher reported infections, but this is needed to ensure we swiftly detect and treat those infected. As of yesterday; our mortality rate stands at 1.6% as compared to the global average of 6.1%.

This pandemic is about saving lives and making sure our Malaysians who are infected get the appropriate treatment and recover fully. On that note, we have provided much needed support to our Ministry of Health by approving RM 1.5 Billion for them to increase their capacity in screening, and further intensify treatment for those infected.

The much-needed financial boost to the Ministry will help in obtaining more test kits, ventilators and personal protective equipment (PPEs).

On behalf of Malaysia, I would also like to thank our friends in ASEAN who have contributed test kits and medical equipment in our time of need. It is times like these that we truly appreciate how valuable all the assistance and support rendered by our ASEAN friends and this is what makes us different than other regional groups around the world.

Your Majesty, Excellencies,

Initially, our urgency focused on saving lives but now we have reached a stage to overcome our economic issues. The livelihoods of our citizens depend greatly on commerce and we understand that our people are going through tough times.

In this regard, Malaysia announced three (3) stimulus packages worth RM 260 Billion (USD 64.6 Billion) to cushion the impact of COVID-19 on our people and businesses. These stimulus packages have a face value of 18.1% of our nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) which includes loan repayment deferments, wage subsidies, cash handouts and even free Internet for our people for the next few months. However, these strategies will only assist Malaysia in getting through this period of fighting COVID-19. There needs to be a regional post-pandemic recovery plan and Malaysia cannot do this alone.

Your Majesty, Excellencies,

In every crisis lies an opportunity and Malaysia foresees that ASEAN as a regional block must work together post COVID-19. All our nations are facing similar complications and we must work together to ensure no one is left behind. Looking ahead, Malaysia would like to propose that our Economic Ministers have an immediate discussion to begin shaping an ASEAN Economic Recovery Plan which focuses not just on the financial aspect of our economies, but also on social welfare safety nets, food security, and education for our peoples.

The ASEAN Economic Recovery Plan must include measures we as a region will undertake to address issues directly faced by our more than 600 million citizens to

preserve supply chain connectivity; the smooth flow of essential medical, food and essential supplies; and ensure critical infrastructure for trade and trading routes via air, land and sea are preserved and remain open.

We must also guard againt imposition of unnecessary restrictions on the flow of medical, food and essential supplies.

As a region, Malaysia urges our ASEAN Member States to reinforce ourselves in facing a new landscape in our region. We must not allow ASEAN to revert back to our comfort zone – but make ASEAN emerge as a new growth centre, a new power-house; not just for our 600 million people, but for the world.

Your Majesty, Excellencies,

Malaysia also expresses its support for the establishment of the COVID-19 ASEAN Response Fund to expand the scale of our existing emergency stockpiles for any future pandemics we may face as a region. We must further develop our regional reserves of medical supplies, as well as utilize relevant ASEAN reserve warehouses to support the needs of ASEAN Member States in public health emergencies.

The various ASEAN mechanisms and structures; platforms led by, or hosted by Malaysia – such as the ASEAN Emergency Operation Centre Network for Public Health Emergencies (ASEAN EOC Network) and ASEAN Risk Assessment and Risk Communication Centre

(ARARC) have proven that we are able to work swiftly in finding solutions to this crisis. Let me assure your Majesty and Excellencies, that Malaysia stands ready and resolute with ASEAN to combat this pandemic together.

I am confident that with solidarity, vision and leadership we can unite and get through these dark times together. As a region we have faced multiple crises before this and I believe, we will once again overcome this and emerge stronger than ever. God-Willing.

Insya-Allah. Thank you

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