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Agenda Item: VI

Health Task Force Workplan 2006-2007

Purpose: Information
Submitted by: Chair



Health Task Force Meeting
Da Nang, Viet Nam
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APEC HEALTH TASK FORCE WORKPLAN 2006-2007

Priority: Enhancing avian and human pandemic influenza preparedness and response

Rationale:

Events of the past three years have highlighted the need to remain vigilant against the threat of emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases that have the potential to impact severely on both human lives and economic productivity. Currently, the H5N1 avian influenza virus is the greatest known emerging infectious disease threat that is facing the global community.

Recognizing the economic and health consequences of a potential pandemic in the APEC region, APEC Leaders endorsed the *APEC Initiative on Preparing for and Mitigating an Influenza Pandemic* at the APEC Economic Leaders Meeting on November 19, 2005 in Korea. The *Initiative* identifies eleven areas for collective work by APEC economies to complement and support those of international organizations such as the WHO, FAO and OIE. Focusing on these directions, the HTF will work to build regional and members capacity to strengthen pandemic influenza preparedness and response by pursuing activities in the following areas:

Objectives:	Activities/Deliverables	Project lead	Timeframe	Links with other Committees
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for a successful APEC Ministerial Meeting on Avian and Influenza Pandemics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide guidance and support to Vietnam in developing agenda and desired outcomes 	<i>HTF members</i>	May 4-5, 2006 in Vietnam	
Objectives:	Activities/Deliverables	Project lead	Timeframe	Links with other Committees

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Risk communications and public awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expert workshop in pandemic risk communications to be held on the margin of the APEC Ministerial Meeting on Avian and Pandemic Influenza in Vietnam. Present outcomes and recommendations of workshop at the APEC Ministerial Meeting 	<i>Pandemic Preparedness Communications Workshop, Canada</i>	May 2-3, 2006 in Vietnam	Link with APEC TF on Emergency Preparedness - desk top simulation exercise to test communications networks (early 2006)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rapid regional response 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a list of available regional experts in public health and disaster management to assist and complement regional response 	<i>List of Experts for Rapid Response, Singapore/ United States</i>	Early 2006	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business continuity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion paper recommending protocols covering communications, logistics, business operation and government arrangements Consult with health, trade and business using the discussion paper Hold a symposium in Vietnam in 2006 Launch final protocols in Australia in 2007 	<i>Functioning Economies in Times of Pandemic, Australia</i>	November 2005-2007	Link with APEC TF on Emergency Preparedness and ABAC

Objectives:	Activities/Deliverables	Project lead	Timeframe	Links with other Committees
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity building in preventing and controlling a pandemic of avian origin at its source 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Symposium to promote cooperation among APEC members and facilitate the establishment of a technical assistance and information-sharing mechanism Seminar on building capacity to fight avian influenza in order to secure trade and facilitate trade in poultry 	<p><i>APEC Symposium on Emerging Infectious Diseases, China</i></p> <p><i>APEC Capacity Building Seminar on Avian Influenza, Japan</i></p>	<p>April 4-5, 2006 in China</p> <p>September 2006 in Vietnam</p>	<p>ABAC</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessments of pandemic preparedness efforts and impacts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional, APEC-wide seminar on testing domestic pandemic preparedness plans 	<p><i>Enhancing Influenza Surveillance, and Pandemic Planning and Preparedness, United States</i></p>	<p>By June 2006 in Singapore</p>	

APEC HEALTH TASK FORCE WORKPLAN 2006-2007

Priority: Fighting against HIV/AIDS in the APEC region

Rationale:

In the 2004 APEC Initiative “Fighting Against AIDS in APEC” Leaders pledged their political commitment to the fight against HIV/AIDS in the region. UNAIDS estimated that approximately 40.3 million people worldwide were living with HIV/AIDS in 2005. In Asia an estimated 1.1 million people were newly infected with HIV with the total number of people living with HIV estimated to be 8.3 million.

The potential impact of HIV/AIDS on economic growth, development, and the social fabric of APEC economies is daunting. Affecting people in the prime of their working lives, HIV/AIDS has critical implications for business and economies, as well as for individuals and their families. Direct costs to the public and private sectors include increased training costs and increased demand for health and social benefits. Indirect costs include the loss of productive capacity associated with the loss of workers and the loss of their skills, knowledge and experience. A healthy population will be critical for the future economic growth and development of the region. The private sector has a role to play in mitigating the impact of HIV/AIDS and stopping its spread.

Building on the 2004 Leaders Statement, the recommendations from the two HIV/AIDS workshops held in 2005, and APEC’s comparative advantage, the HTF will continue to pursue activities to strengthen APEC economies ability to respond to HIV/AIDS, both among member economies and between the public and private sectors as follows:

Objectives:	Activities/Deliverables	Project lead	Timeframe	Links with other Committees
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve the management of HIV/AIDS in the workplace 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop guidelines for creating an enabling environment for employers to implement effective workplace practices for people living with HIV/AIDS and prevention in workplace settings. In this work, engage HTF members and relevant partners, such as the Joint United Nations Programs on HIV/AIDS, the United Nations Development Programme, the International Labour Organization, the private sector, and business associations. 	<p>Canada</p>	<p>April - December, 2006</p>	<p>APEC Business Advisory Committee (ABAC)</p> <p>Human Resources Development Working Group</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate APEC economies continued commitment to the fight against HIV/AIDS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Release an APEC statement in conjunction with the XVI International AIDS Conference, August 13-18, 2006 in Toronto, Canada 	<p>Canada</p>	<p>March – July 2006</p>	

APEC HEALTH TASK FORCE WORKPLAN 2006-2007

Priority: Improving health outcomes through advances in health information technology

Rationale:

APEC member economies have been working collectively on how advances in information technology can help expand access to health information (electronic health information) and health care services (e.g. telehealth) for their citizens. Great benefits exist for both developing and developed economies in the increased use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to improve the health of individuals and populations worldwide.

At the Brunei APEC Summit, APEC Economic Leaders launched an Action Agenda for the New Economy to demonstrate their resolve to work to create a digital society. Ministers were directed to develop and expand the agenda to enable all APEC economies to maximize the benefits of the emerging New Economy. An e-APEC Task Force was established by Senior Officials to coordinate APEC initiatives to develop and expand the Action Agenda for the New Economy. The e-APEC Task Force developed an e-APEC strategy that identifies the necessary policy environment and specifies appropriate goals and actions, drawing upon the existing efforts and on-going work within APEC. Of particular interest to the HTF is the reference under Cooperation and Information Exchange to “Using IT to enable health networks to extend medical services to a wider community and to address basic health issues.”

Potential benefits include improved health outcomes, lowering of health care service delivery costs, and an increase in global competitiveness of health communication technologies. For instance, by working together, economies and the private sector can drive changes that offer potential for better tracking systems leading to fewer medical errors, and better care for patients globally. In recognition of this, the HTF economies will collaborate on projects/initiatives dealing with Health Information Technology that can improve health outcomes in the Asia Pacific region as follows:

Objectives:	Activities/Deliverables	Project lead	Timeframe	Links with other Committees
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote dialogue and knowledge-sharing between economies on health information technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seminar on APEC e-Health Scope the feasibility and appropriateness to health task force mandate of two deliverables namely: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) development of real-time disease and disaster monitoring systems for APEC portal web-sites (2007) (b) the establishment of an APEC E-health Working Group 	<i>e-Health Initiative Project, Korea</i>	Proposal to BMC March 2006 Proposal to BMC October 2006	E-Commerce Group ABAC
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a communication and information exchange platform for HTF members which could include APEC/HTF priorities, laws and regulations and health policies 	<i>HTF Website, Chinese Taipei</i>	Ongoing	

Objectives:	Activities/Deliverables	Project lead	Timeframe	Links with other Committees
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase joint capacity-building in APEC economies through the development of communication and information management tools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve infectious disease control through improved information management 	<i>Enhanced APEC Health Communications: Collaborative Preparedness in Asia Pacific Region,</i> United States	December, 2006	

APEC Initiative on Preparing for and Mitigating an Influenza Pandemic

An influenza pandemic has the potential to infect hundreds of millions world-wide, threatening global economies, security, and stability. The highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) virus, H5N1, which continues to cross borders, is a possible source of the next pandemic should the virus become easily transmissible between humans. Nine APEC economies¹ have experienced outbreaks in birds and three economies have reported human cases since 2003. The disease has also affected other parts of Asia and, recently, Europe. The disease has already devastated Southeast Asia's poultry industry and strained the economic and veterinary resources of several APEC economies. APEC member economies recognize this threat and are ready to strengthen their efforts to prepare for and mitigate avian and pandemic influenza.

APEC has recognized that addressing infectious diseases is crucial to not only securing the health of its citizens but also to the economic prosperity and stability of the region. In 2001, APEC Ministers endorsed the *APEC Infectious Disease Strategy* that outlined broad areas of work APEC could undertake to complement and support the work of WHO. APEC Leaders put forward both the *SARS Action Plan* and the *Health Security Initiative* in 2003 in response to the SARS crisis and potential bioterrorism threats. With the HIV/AIDS epidemic also threatening the region, Leaders advanced the initiative on *Fighting Against AIDS in APEC* in 2004. A dedicated Health Task Force in APEC was inaugurated in 2004 to specifically advance the health priorities of the Leaders and Ministers. A Task Force on Emergency Preparedness was also established by Senior Officials in 2005 to coordinate APEC work that builds regional capacity in the preparation for and mitigation of the effects of regional emergencies and natural disasters.

APEC economies working individually and collectively will act urgently and in a sustainable manner, consistent with relevant international law and domestic legal authorities, to prepare for, prevent, and respond to an influenza pandemic. APEC economies agree to:

- Commit and work individually to
 - develop, approve, and implement multi-sectoral, domestic influenza pandemic preparedness plans consistent with WHO recommendations by November 2006;
 - collaborate and cooperate in a transparent and open manner, including the timely sharing of epidemiological data, laboratory samples and viral isolates, with international animal and human health organizations on surveillance and monitoring in line with international rules and established practices;
 - provide timely and complete reports of suspected and confirmed animal and human cases of notifiable² avian influenza;
 - strengthen disease surveillance, particularly by enhancing capacity to rapidly identify cases and clusters in rural and remote areas;

¹ People's Republic of China; Hong Kong, China [few limited cases in wild birds]; Indonesia*; Japan; Republic of Korea; Malaysia; Russian Federation; Thailand*; and Vietnam*. (* have reported human cases)

² In accordance with international guidelines.

- respond rapidly to outbreaks in animals and humans to contain and prevent an incipient pandemic;
 - promote transparency in reporting by basing trade and travel restrictions on the science-based recommendations of relevant international organizations;
 - support efforts to advance research on avian influenza viruses, vaccine and antiviral development and production;
 - support the development, as quickly as possible, of mechanisms to increase production capacity, and enhance pharmaceutical delivery, so that there can be equitable access to vaccines and antivirals world-wide;
 - develop, consistent with the recommendations of relevant international organizations, practical and science-based bio-security guidelines for the poultry sector and veterinary policy guidelines on animal husbandry;
 - ensure coordinated action among all stakeholders, from both HPAI-unaffected and HPAI-affected economies and between domestic agencies, particularly between human and animal health authorities; and
 - strive, where appropriate, for the early implementation of the revised International Health Regulations (2005).
- Work collectively to
 - enhance locally appropriate risk communication and public awareness in collaboration with the FAO and WHO pandemic risk communication steering committee and through partnerships with media and other key stakeholders;
 - develop protocols for continuity of essential services, business, and trade during pandemic emergencies;
 - enhance international coordination to establish protocols for efficient and transparent information sharing among economies and international organizations, in support of the objectives of the revised International Health Regulations (2005) and recognizing OIE standards;
 - strengthen interaction with the business community, particularly through the APEC Business Advisory Council (ABAC), such as addressing industry agricultural practices and incorporating pandemic preparedness in addition to disaster preparedness into business continuity strategies;
 - increase coordination of pandemic preparedness and response as part of APEC's natural disaster and emergency preparedness strategy, including through an effective communications system and a register of the avian and pandemic influenza management coordinators for each economy;
 - enhance rapid regional response by developing a list of available and funded regional experts and other capabilities in public health and disaster management and providing that list to APEC economies and expert international organizations in pandemic response;

- exchange information on management of travelers and expatriate business communities, including entry and exit screening procedures and controls as contained in domestic plans for avian and pandemic influenza, to increase transparency and reduce risk to trade and travel;
- encourage testing of multi-sectoral pandemic preparedness, beginning with a regional desktop simulation exercise in early 2006 to test the effectiveness of regional communication networks on avian and pandemic influenza outbreaks;
- promote and conduct assessments of pandemic preparedness, socio-economic impact of avian influenza mitigation and control strategies in birds, and economic consequences for agriculture;
- enhance capacity building in preventing and controlling a pandemic of avian origin at its source, by improving bio-security, monitoring, surveillance and emergency response to transboundary animal diseases, and in assisting economies to minimize the economic, social and other costs of a pandemic; and
- assist and support, to the best of APEC's ability and resources, research and other technical efforts, such as in laboratory testing and early detection, aimed at enhancing the region's preparedness and response.

APEC's collective work should complement and support, not duplicate those of international organizations such as WHO, FAO and OIE and seek to leverage areas of particular APEC value-added such as multi-sectoral participation, private-sector partners, broad regional reach, managing economic impact and high-level political commitment. It should also complement existing APEC health security and disaster response initiatives.

- Welcome and support the International Partnership on Avian and Pandemic Influenza and the statement from the Health Ministerial on Global Pandemic Influenza Readiness held in Ottawa in October 2005.
- Endorse the recommendations of the Health Task Force symposium on *Response to Outbreaks of Avian Influenza and Preparedness for a Human Health Emergency* and the conclusions of the APEC Meeting on *Avian and Pandemic Influenza Preparedness and Response*.
- Adopt strong language in the Leaders' Declaration to commit economies, both individually and collectively, to practical and immediate actions to tackle avian and pandemic influenza.
