



## **PRESS RELEASE**

**For immediate release**

### **Experts call for urgent action in Southeast Asia to accelerate implementation of life-course immunisation as a gateway to healthy ageing**

**Singapore, 29 June 2021** – Today, the EU-ASEAN Business Council, KPMG in Singapore, and Sanofi, with the support of the Western Pacific Pharmaceutical Forum (WPPF), published a new report – “The Decade of Healthy Ageing in ASEAN: Role of Life-Course Immunisation” – unveiling healthy ageing barriers in Southeast Asia and calling for an urgent and greater focus on the implementation of life-course immunisation.

With age, the immune function goes into decline, increasing older people’s susceptibility to infectious diseases such as the flu and pneumonia, which can manifest into other health risks and complications. Vaccination remains one of the most cost-effective interventions available to protect against infectious diseases.

Despite the obvious benefits, Southeast Asia lags the rest of the world when it comes to life-course immunisation – falling significantly short of the 75% immunisation target rate set by the World Health Organisation.

“While the region focuses on COVID-19, and rightly so, we need to also give attention urgently to another pressing issue – ageing societies. As we age, we are more susceptible to health complications. Many diseases that afflict the elderly can be thwarted by immunisation. Yet, the role and value of life-course vaccination or vaccination at every stage of life beyond childhood is not fully realised,” said John Jackson, President of the WPPF. “Today’s report provides a starting point for governments across the region to implement incremental policy changes that can further empower healthy ageing and economies.”

The report’s recommendations, contributed to by experts from across the region, include:

- Recognising life-course immunisation as an important part of healthy ageing and dedicating resources to implementing this as part of healthy-ageing policies
- Engaging the expertise and knowledge of healthcare providers and leveraging their influence to be advocates for life-course immunisation
- Supporting grassroots efforts to share relevant narratives around the efficacy and safety of vaccines, as well as to help bridge the digital gap among the elderly to access information and other matters related to vaccination
- Improving public access to vaccination points, to make sure that people who want to be vaccinated can do so at their convenience – at locations with minimal disruption to their daily routines
- Private sector support through inclusion of annual vaccination in employee benefit programmes and development of insurance products by health insurers that help cover vaccination costs

“While we are living longer, we are not necessarily living healthier,” said Chris Humphrey, Executive Director of the EU-ASEAN Business Council. “This report shows us the dividends that we can harness by better ensuring a healthier, more productive older working population. Southeast Asia needs to start planning now to ensure that we take the right policy action – including preventative care.”



Eric Mansion, General Manager, Asia Zone, Sanofi Pasteur said: “Health is wealth but protecting our older adults goes beyond monetary impact – healthy ageing allows ageing populations to enjoy a good quality of life in their golden years and contribute meaningfully to social situations and beyond. Life-course immunisation should urgently be prioritised as a vital part of healthy ageing policies in Southeast Asia, to lessen the impact of ageing societies and to protect against vaccine-preventable diseases.”

“Although further implementing life-course immunisation programs will be a costly and logistically complex endeavour, but the alternative will be far more expensive and not just in monetary terms,” added Jackson. “Time is running out, and swift, decisive action to address the issues that threaten to undermine having a healthy, ageing population is imperative.”

To download the report, please visit: <https://healthyageingasean.org/>

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**About the “The Decade of Healthy Ageing in ASEAN: Role of Life-Course Immunisation” report**

The EU-ASEAN Business Council, in partnership with KPMG in Singapore and supported by Sanofi and the Western Pacific Pharmaceutical Forum produced this report on the theme of healthy ageing and the role of life-course immunisation with the objective of informing programming and high-level dialogue at a regional and local level. The report covers six countries in Southeast Asia – Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, Philippines and Indonesia – with insights and input from 27 experts in these six countries as well as Switzerland and the United States.

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