



POST-EVENT PRESS RELEASE

Inaugural ASEAN-EU Health Summit Discusses Transformative Solutions and Emerging Trends in the Healthcare Industry

- **The EU-ASEAN Business Council held its first ever Health Summit at the Fairmont Hotel Singapore on 15th September**
- **The Summit brought together high-level officials from across Southeast Asia and Europe, as well as business leaders, members of the diplomatic corps, and academics**
- **Speakers and panellists exchanged views on strengthening healthcare capabilities on all levels, which is crucial as the COVID-19 crisis has proven**

Singapore – 15 September 2021: The EU-ASEAN Business Council (EU-ABC), the primary voice for European business interests in ASEAN, held its inaugural health summit today. The ASEAN-EU Health Summit was organised in place of the EU-ABC’s annual flagship Business Summit, given the unprecedented circumstances posed by the global health crisis.

The COVID-19 pandemic has cast a spotlight on our health and highlighted critical gaps in healthcare systems. Taking advantage of this momentum, the Summit’s theme of “Health Solutions Post-Pandemic: Innovation, Inclusion & Immunisations in ASEAN and Beyond” deep dived into emerging trends and transformative solutions in the healthcare industry, as part of efforts to refocus much-needed attention on our health and healthcare systems.

Against the backdrop of global pandemic recovery, the Health Summit critically looked at how countries, not just in ASEAN but across the globe, could implement strategies to ensure that economies and societies can remain resilient and endure future shocks. Singapore’s Minister for Health H.E. Ong Ye Kung said the pandemic has made us more prepared for future pandemics – particularly to Singapore, the country has built up an “arsenal” of measures like rolling out a national vaccination programme, widespread testing and surveillance, and implementing a multi-tier system of medical care.

Minister Ong candidly shared that he had no answers on what the best battleplan is against COVID-19. He added that Singapore is embarking on a journey to transit to a resilient nation that can live with COVID-19. “But the path we take will not be straight forward, but full of unexpected twists and turns. More importantly, Singapore is trail blazing a road that others have not trampled on. This is because we know that to live with COVID-19, there must come a time when we will have to ride through at least one big wave of transmission in the community,” Minister Ong said.

Meanwhile, European Commission’s Director-General for Health and Food Safety H.E. Sandra Gallina said, “the level of health security globally is only as high as the weakest link; so coordination, solidarity, are needed to secure adequate resources and exchange knowledge to protect us all.” Ms Gallina added that the current political momentum provides a window of opportunity for the development of a legally-binding international agreement, which would, among other things, address gaps in existing regulatory frameworks, and promote national and regional preparedness and response mechanisms.

Such a collaborative effort was echoed by Indonesia’s Minister for Health H.E. Budi Gunadi Sadikin, who underscored the need to develop a global protocol for public health, social, and infection control measures, including one for the ASEAN region to support post-COVID-19 recovery. “This will ensure safe and standardised cross-border interconnectivity, be it according to one’s vaccination status, testing results, or health status in general.” Mr Budi added that there is a need for a global policy and instrument on pooling of resources that can be rapidly disbursed to countries in need, shall there be another emerging health crisis.



But health goes beyond COVID-19. Other issues discussed at length at the Health Summit is Southeast Asia's rapidly ageing demographic, which threatens to put pressure on the working age population and health systems. The region risks missing out on dividends that can be harnessed by ensuring a healthier, more productive older working population. Isabelle Deschamps, Head of Global Vaccines, Public Affairs at Sanofi said the pandemic has shown how vaccines have played a key role in protecting vulnerable populations. "However, the role of vaccines is not just limited to pandemics and outbreaks – they are critical in healthy ageing too. With the world's population, including ASEAN, transitioning to an ageing society, vaccination is one of the most impactful and effective public health interventions. To protect against vaccine-preventable diseases, all economies must prioritize the funding of preventative care to include immunisation in addition to the self-care and health screening campaigns."

The Summit also highlighted the importance of public-private partnership and collaboration in advancing solutions to boost overall well-being, particularly in leveraging digital tools in healthcare and improving public access to medicines. Andrew Wong, Chief Health Officer at Prudential Corporation Asia said, "Consumer appetite towards the digitisation of health is strong and continues to grow. In a survey that we conducted on Asians' attitude towards the use of digital health, seven in 10 said they will rely on technology even more heavily to improve their personal health and wellbeing over the next three years. Making digital healthcare accessible to more people across Asia and Africa is an integral part of Prudential's purpose. This is brought to life by our Pulse by Prudential app which we have developed to prevent and postpone the onset of diseases so people can live well for longer."

This is the EU-ABC's first Health Summit, following previous iterations of the ASEAN-EU Business Summits held across Southeast Asia. The last Summit was held in Singapore. Further details about the Health Summit can be found at asean-eu-summit.org.



About the EU-ASEAN Business Council

The EU-ASEAN Business Council (EU-ABC) is the primary and sole voice for European business covering all of the ASEAN region.

It is recognised by the European Commission and the ASEAN Secretariat and is an accredited entity under Annex 2 of the ASEAN Charter. Independent of both bodies, the Council has been established to help promote the interests of European businesses operating within ASEAN and to advocate for changes in policies and regulations which would help promote trade and investment between Europe and the ASEAN region. The Council works on a sectorial and cross-industry basis to help improve the investment and trading conditions for European Businesses in the ASEAN region through influencing policy and decision makers throughout the region and in the EU, as well as acting as a platform for the exchange of information and ideas amongst its members and regional players within the ASEAN region.

The EU-ABC's membership consists of large European Multi-National Corporations and the nine European Chambers of Commerce from around Southeast Asia. The EU-ABC represents a diverse range of European industries cutting across almost every commercial sphere from car manufacturing through to financial services and including Fast Moving Consumer Goods and high-end electronics and communications. Our members all have a common interest in enhancing trade, commerce and investment between Europe and ASEAN.

The Executive Director of the EU-ASEAN Business Council is Mr Chris Humphrey, and its Chairman is Mr Donald Kanak. The Council is led by an elected Board consisting of corporate leaders representing a range of important industry sectors and representatives of the European Chambers of Commerce.

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