

## WHO regional summit - Members favour collective response to COVID-19

By TIOL News Service

**NEW DELHI, SEPT 11, 2020:** AT the conclusion of the 73 rd session of WHO South East Asia Region held under the Chairmanship of Mr. Anutin Charnvirakul, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Health, Thailand, the Health Ministers of the member states agreed to the SEAR Member States' Declaration on the collective response to COVID-19 in South-East Asia Region.

The Members agreed to the following:

- Reaffirm the importance of Universal Health Coverage and Primary Health Care as a safety net for people in accessing quality health services - both COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 – emphasizing the need to prioritize investment in Universal Health Coverage and Primary Health Care to ensure equitable access by all people, including vulnerable populations, to all essential health services, without financial barriers, during the pandemic;
- Strive to sustain essential health services and public health programs, in particular during public health emergencies and to use this opportunity to build back better our health systems;Â
- Prioritize health of the population and saving lives by allocating adequate health budget to sustain uninterrupted health services during and after the pandemic;
- Strengthen health information systems which capture timely reporting of outbreaks by leveraging digital technologies, and sharing information for policy decision;
- Ensure occupational health, safety and wellbeing of health professionals and other related workers, strengthen safety of patients and the people through adequate public health and social measures, and access to different types of quality personal protective devices;
- Strengthen occupational and environmental safety through appropriate medical waste management system ;
- Strengthen biomedical, health policy and systems research on COVID-19 which support national policy decision, and knowledge sharing across SEAR Member States;
- Continue and expand multi-sectoral collaboration, through a whole of government and society approach, to mobilize surge capacity in the society to mitigate the negative consequences of the pandemic; including effective risk communication, community engagement, and management of the infodemic;
- Strengthen regional collaboration to support SEAR Member States in particular strengthening capacity for preparedness, surveillance and rapid response, field epidemiology training, supply chain management of medicines and medical supplies, and regional stockpiling of essential health resources;
- Identify gaps and strengthen core capacities as required by the International Health Regulations 2005;Â
- Fully engage in global discussion on equitable allocation of vaccines, medicines and diagnostics.