**SUMMARY:** Representatives from APEC’s member economies met in Putrajaya, Malaysia on February 7-8th, 2020 for the first Health Working Group (HWG) meeting of 2020 on the margins of the first APEC Senior Officials Meeting (SOM1). The outbreak of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), formerly 2019-nCoV, had significant implications for both the content and procedure of the HWG meetings, with many member economy’s top health officials and APEC representatives implicated in domestic responses. For the first time in recent years, the HWG offered remote participation, which allowed 15 economies to participate in the meeting and for the HWG to reach quorum (14 of 21 economies). Australia, Canada, Chile, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, the Philippines, Russia, Chinese Taipei, Thailand, and the U.S. participated in person. China, Singapore, Viet Nam, and Hong Kong, China participated remotely.

As a government forum, HWG member economies discussed key health challenges with the purpose of improving the health and well-being of the people of the Asia-Pacific region as a means to strengthen trade, security, and development. The HWG meeting was jointly moderated by HWG Co-Chairs, Mr. Michael Pearson (Canada) and Dato’ Dr. Chong Chee Kheong (Malaysia). HWG Vice-Chair, Dr. Paula Daza (Chile), was unable to attend the meeting. Other meeting participants included representatives from the Life Sciences Innovation Forum (LSIF), the APEC Digital Hub for Mental Health, the Human Resources Development Working Group (HRDWG) forum, and the APEC Secretariat. The World Health Organization (WHO) Western Pacific Regional Office attended as an invited guest. Notably, the meetings for the Life Sciences Innovation Forum (LSIF), a key HWG partner, were cancelled due to many participants being implicated in the COVID-19 pandemic response and were slated to be rescheduled intersessionally.[[1]](#footnote-1)

The following key items and deliverables were endorsed:

* 2020 APEC Health Working Group Work Plan[[2]](#footnote-2);
* Vaccination Program of Work 2020-2021;
* The formation of Digital Health and Healthy Ageing sub-working groups;
* Inclusion of APEC Infectious Disease Update in all HWG meetings; and,
* The development of a HWG Statement on COVID-19, to be negotiated intersessionally.

Looking ahead, the following are key upcoming deliverables for 2020:

* Strategic Plan 2021-2025;
* North Star – A Healthy Asia-Pacific;
* Path Forward for Mental Health, post-2020 Roadmap;
* Dementia Spotlight Report; and,
* Vaccination Spotlight Report.

The APEC HWG looks forward to second HWG Meeting (September 21st 2020) and the 10th APEC High Level Meeting on Health and the Economy, “Building a Resilient Asia-Pacific in a COVID-19 World”, to be held virtually*.*

**DAY ONE**

*Friday, February 7th, 2020*

1. **OPENING SESSION**
   1. **Welcome Remarks by the Secretary General of Malaysia’s Ministry of Health, the Honourable Dato’ Seri Dr. Chen Chaw Min**

Dato’ Dr. Chong Chee Kheong (Malaysia Co-Chair) opened Day 1 of the HWG meetings and introduced himself as the Malaysian HWG Co-Chair, joined by Mr. Michael Pearson (Canada Co-Chair), for a two-year term from 2020-2021. The Honourable Dato’ Seri Dr. Chen Chaw Min, Secretary General of Malaysia’s Ministry of Health, then took the floor to provide opening remarks and welcomed all member economy representatives to Putrajaya, Malaysia.The Secretary General noted his appreciation for the efforts member economies had made to attend both in person and virtually in spite of the outbreak of COVID-19 and emphasized the importance of the HWG’s efforts, particularly in light of the increasing demand to address health issues such as global pandemics that threaten human security and economic well-being.

* 1. **Introductory Remarks by HWG Co-Chairs**

Dato’ Dr. Chong highlighted that the HWG is a unique venue to discuss and advance health-related issues that are inextricably linked to the economic growth of all APEC economies in a consensus-based manner. Mr. Michael Pearson then took the floor to introduce himself as the Branch Head of the Office of International Affairs for Canada’s Health Portfolio. Mr. Pearson thanked Malaysia as the host of APEC 2020 and expressed appreciation to Team Chile and Dr. Paula Daza (HWG Vice-Chair) for the hard work during their APEC 2019 host year.

The Canada Co-Chair underscored that the HWG was originally established following the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak to focus on emerging infectious diseases in the region that threatened economies’ trade and security. Mr. Pearson noted that while the mandate has since expanded, the HWG is valuable for facilitating coordinated action on cross-border health threats such as COVID-19. In light of COVID-19, the Canada Co-Chair proposed the idea of a HWG Statement on the issue to be drafted and endorsed prior to the Senior Officials’ Meeting on February 20th-21st.[[3]](#footnote-3) China intervened in support of a Statement and indicated their interest in providing language and input to the APEC Secretariat and Co-Chair’s Office to support that process.

Following a roundtable of introductions of member economy representatives in attendance, Mr. Pearson noted the importance of attaining quorum for this meeting in light of the current situation with the COVID-19 outbreak. Mr. Johnny Lin, Program Director of the HWG in the APEC Secretariat, noted that for the first time in recent meetings of the HWG, the APEC Secretariat and the host economy, Malaysia, had offered remote participation. Johnny noted that should 14 economies or more, including those participating remotely, be able to join during the two-day meetings then quorum would be considered achieved. Australia, Canada, Chile, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, the Philippines, Russia, Chinese Taipei, Thailand, and the United States (U.S.) participated in person. China, Singapore, Hong Kong, China, and Viet Nam participated remotely. This brought the participation total to 15 economies and thus, the HWG achieved quorum for these meetings.

* 1. **Adoption of SOM1 2020 HWG Meeting Agenda**

As is customary at HWG meetings, Dr. Chong opened the floor to any comments of the draft HWG SOM1 2020 Meeting Agenda and hearing no comments, the Agenda was adopted unanimously.

1. **APEC 2020 THEMES** 
   1. **APEC Malaysia 2020 Theme and Priorities**

Ms. Asmidar Abdul Rahman from the Malaysian Ministry of International Trade and Industry spoke about Malaysia’s APEC 2020 priorities under the 2020 theme of “*Optimizing Human Potential towards a Future of Shared Prosperity”.* The priorities include: 1) improving the narrative of trade and investment; 2) inclusive economic participation through digital economy and technology; and, 3) driving innovative sustainability. Ms. Rahman emphasized Malaysia’s goal to build on Chile’s great work and increase the focus on “humanizing APEC”, promoting efforts to address inequalities and ensuring shared prosperity across the APEC region. She urged the HWG to consider how our Work Plan contributes to the Malaysia 2020 goal of advancing shared prosperity in the region.

* 1. **HWG 2020 Theme**

Dato’ Dr. Chong, noting the influence that health has on economic well-being at individual, community, and population levels, outlined thatthe HWG’s theme for 2020 is “*Healthy Economies towards a Future of Shared Prosperity*”. This theme, which complements the APEC 2020 theme “*Optimizing Human Potential towards a Future of Shared Prosperity*”, reflects the important role of health as a key driver for economic growth, which leads to boosts in productivity and reduces inequality of opportunity and income.

1. **APEC MANAGEMENT UPDATE** 
   1. **Presentation**

Mr. Johnny Lin, APEC HWG Program Director, provided an update from the APEC Secretariat for 2020, beginning with administrative and governance reminders:

* The Sunset Clause in the 2018 HWG Terms of Reference mandates a four-year term for the HWG that expires in 2021 and the HWG will need to review and revise the document during New Zealand’s host year.
* As the 1994 Bogor Goals expire this year, Malaysia is leading discussions on the APEC Post-2020 Vision which will serve as a comprehensive guideline for all APEC activities. Mr. Lin committed to keeping the HWG apprised of progress on the post-2020 process and encouraged member economies to remember the HWG’s founding focus on pandemics and cross-border health threats as the HWG feeds into the post-2020 process.
* The term of the current Vice-Chair of the HWG, Ms. Paula Daza (Undersecretary of Health) from Chile, will end after SOM3 in August 2020. Nominations will open following the SOM1 meeting for a member economy to fill the post beginning in 2021.

Mr. Lin drew attention to the APEC Secretariat’s work in hosting the HWG website and called on member economies and the Co-Chair’s Office to provide critical information updates to the Secretariat so that they can ensure the latest is reflected on the website. Mr. Lin also provided an update on HWG projects, noting that during project session 2 in 2019, the HWG submitted fifteen concept notes and two were approved: the APEC Conference on Urbanization, Population Aging, and Technology Innovation (Chinese Taipei); and the Symposium about Early Hearing Damage Prevention in Young People (Chile) - both to be implemented this year.

* 1. **Presentation on the *La Serena Roadmap on Women and Inclusive Growth***

Chile (Ms. Patricia Zamora) then provided a presentation on the *La Serena Roadmap on Women and Inclusive Growth (La Serena Roadmap).* Under Chile’s priority of “Women, Small and Medium Enterprises, and Inclusive Growth” during their 2019 host year, the *La Serena Roadmap* was agreed upon by the Policy Partnership on Women and the Economy (PPWE) at the 2019 Women and Economy Forum and was later endorsed at the 2019 APEC Concluding Senior Officials’ Meeting. The La Serena Roadmap seeks to provide guidance and catalyze policy actions by outlining key action areas and targets to ensure the greater integration and empowerment of women in the Asia-Pacific region. In the upcoming year, the PPWE plans to develop a Roadmap Implementation Plan, with a view to establishing processes for monitoring, reviewing, and reporting progress. Chile, on behalf of the PPWE, encouraged economies to identify possible methods for collaboration and urged sub-fora to consider how their work can contribute to the implementation of the Roadmap.

1. **REVIEW GUIDELINES ON MANAGING COOPERATION WITH NON-MEMBERS** 
   1. **Terms of Outgoing Participation for APEC Fora Representative**

Mr. Lin provided a refresher of the APEC Guidelines on Managing Cooperation with Non-Members. This presentation was in response to a request from the APEC Executive Director, Dr. Rebecca Sta Maria, for Program Directors to review these guidelines with all sub-fora in light of increasing engagements with non-APEC members and activities. In 2000, APEC Leaders set out the principles and procedures for guiding cooperation between APEC and non-member entities and individuals. These operational guidelines outline procedures for approving non-member participants (NMPs) in three different categories:

* Type A includes non-member participants that participate in APEC events. Typical procedure involves the circulation of a list of NMPs in advance of the APEC event or meeting.
* Type B includes APEC outgoing participation in non-APEC activities, organized by non-members (e.g. APEC members participating in WHO events).
* Type C includes APEC holding joint activities with non-members (e.g. hosting experts from other international organizations).

For Type B and C, Mr. Lin emphasized three key principles: 1) APEC fora’s outgoing participation will be considered by the concerned fora based on consensus; 2) that APEC members attend non-member events as the APEC forum representative, rather than their own economy; and, 3) that APEC members must follow the Terms of Outgoing Participation for APEC Fora’s Representative and report on the outcomes of the activities.

1. **REVIEW APEC 2019 HEALTH DELIVERABLES**

Mr. Pearson began the review of APEC 2019 health deliverables by noting that health, particularly the health of our aging populations, was explicitly recognized in the 2019 Host Economy Leader’s Statement. The Canada Co-Chair commended Chile and all the HWG member economies for raising this important issue to the highest level.

* 1. **Joint Statement and Joint Activities – 9th High Level Meeting on Health and the Economy**

Mr. Pearson presented highlights of the HWG’s and LSIF’s Joint Statement and Joint Activities from the 9th High-Level Meeting on Health and the Economy (HLM9) which centered on the theme “*Healthy Economies in an Aging World*”. The Joint Statement and Joint Activities recognized that optimizing opportunities for good health at all stages of life is necessary to facilitate healthy aging, promote the health and well-being of older people, and ensure economic growth across society for all citizens. This is the first year that two separate documents have been released following the HLM, with the more concise Joint Statement focusing on the fora’s efforts to promote healthy aging in the region, while the Joint Activities document outlined efforts by the HWG and LSIF in a variety of work streams that contributed to supporting health across the life course.

Mr. Pearson thanked all member economies who provided input on the Joint Statement and Joint Activities and specially thanked LSIF colleagues for their support in organizing the meeting.

* 1. **APEC HWG Statement to the UN High-Level Meeting (HLM) on Universal Health Coverage (UHC)**

Mr. Pearson commended the HWG for their work in developing the APEC HWG Statement to the UN HLM on UHC, highlighting the important role vaccination plays in achieving UHC. The Canada Co-Chair expressed gratitude for the intersessional work led by China, in cooperation with Australia, Canada, Chile, Japan, the Philippines, Russia, Singapore, Thailand, and Viet Nam to draft the statement. The regional statement, “Promoting Universal Health Coverage: Sharing a Prosperous and Healthy Future” was then presented by China on September 23rd, 2019 in the first-ever UN HLM on UHC: Moving Together to Build a Healthier World.

1. **2020 HWG WORK PLAN**

The 2020 Work Plan is a tool that outlines the HWG’s key deliverables and outcomes for 2020 and requires endorsement from all HWG member economies.

* 1. **Review Draft 2020 HWG Work Plan**

Mr. Pearson outlined the draft 2020 HWG Work Plan, highlighting the HWG’s theme of “*Healthy Economies towards a Future of Shared Prosperity”*. The Canada Co-Chair noted that the 2020 Work Plan reflects the HWG’s focus on implementing substantive policy-oriented discussions to ensure that the HWG is a strategic forum to advance global health priorities. Mr. Pearson emphasized the importance of continuity from year to year for the HWG’s policy work and underscored that the 2020 Work Plan builds on the work accomplished in 2019 on key works streams such as vaccination, dementia and healthy aging, mental health, and nutrition.

In the 2020 Work Plan, the HWG’s mandate will be actualized through activities focused on three thematic areas: Strengthening Health Systems to Improve Equity, Accessibility, and Quality of Care; Enhanced Health Literacy and Digital Health; and, Addressing Dynamic Health Needs across the Life Course. Within these thematic areas, the HWG’s work will span a variety of governance, policy, and technical deliverables.

Mr. Pearson opened the floor for questions and comments on the 2020 Work Plan. Canada intervened to request the addition of the two activities that were added to the agenda in light of the COVID-19 outbreak: the *APEC Infectious Disease Update* and the *Special Discussion on Surveillance Strategic and Management of 2019-nCoV*. China intervened to support this proposal and, as no adverse comments were noted, member economies agreed to this addition.

* 1. **Discussion of Proposed Sub-Working Groups based on HWG 2020 Work Plan**

The establishment of sub-working groups allows HWG member economies to continue working on the policy/technical deliverables established in the Work Plan on an intersessional basis, ensuring that the important work of the HWG continues between the SOM1 and SOM3 set of meetings. Mr. Pearson outlined the four ongoing HWG sub-working groups:

1. Mental Health;
2. Post-2020 Strategic Documents (formerly HWG Strategic Plan, post-2020);
3. Vaccination; and,
4. Childhood Nutrition (formerly Childhood Obesity)

The Canada Co-Chair noted that two new sub-working groups had been proposed. Chile was first invited to present on their proposed Healthy Aging sub-working group, but deferred their presentation on this proposal to the update on the “*Policy Dialogue on Health Across the Life Course Next Steps*” later in Day 1. Chinese Taipei then presented on their proposed Digital Health sub-working group, highlighting the group’s goal to increase the focus on the digital economy and technology in promoting health and smart living for aging populations. The importance of executing on the mandate of HLM9 to ensure healthy economies in an aging world, and the role of digital technologies, was emphasized. Chinese Taipei also noted that they would be pleased to lead the sub-working group and welcomed participation from other member economies.

Economies had the opportunity to indicate their interest in joining a sub-working group at this time. Mr. Pearson also noted that member economies could reach out to the HWG Co-Chair’s Office or the APEC Program Director, Mr. Johnny Lin, to indicate their interest and that an official invitation for member economies to join a sub-working group would be circulated following the SOM1 meetings.

* 1. **Adoption of the 2020 HWG Work Plan**

Dato’ Dr. Chong noted that APEC member economies agreed to endorse the 2020 HWG Work Plan, pending the addition of the COVID-19 items[[4]](#footnote-4). The Malaysia Co-Chair thanked all the economies who contributed to the development of the 2020 Work Plan for their efforts.

1. **BRIEFING ON HWG CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2020**

This agenda item provided an opportunity for Malaysia to discuss the calendar of events for the 2020 APEC health-related meetings.

* 1. **HWG Meetings (SOM1 & SOM3)**

As the HWG typically meets during the SOM3 cluster of meetings, Dato’ Dr. Chong spoke to the proposed dates for the SOM3 set of meetings. The Malaysia Co-Chair highlighted that SOM3 is proposed to be held from August 1st-15th 2020 in Penang, Malaysia. During SOM3, the HWG Policy Dialogue is scheduled for August 5th, 2020, followed by the HWG Meeting on August 6-7th 2020.

* 1. **10th High-Level Meeting on Health and the Economy**

Following the HWG Meeting is the 10th High-Level Meeting (HLM) on Health and the Economy on August 7-8th 2020 in Penang, Malaysia. The theme of the 10th HLM will be “*Healthy Economies towards a Future of Shared Prosperity”.* Noting the vital importance in addressing various social, economic, and health inequalities to improve the well-being of economies’ citizens and ensure economic progress, HLM10 will aim to demonstrate how economies can address social and economic determinants of health and illustrate the subsequent return on investment for sustainable economic growth when health and equity are promoted. HLM10 will also provide an opportunity to collaborate with global institutions, including monetary institutions like the International Monetary Fund, that are placing increased emphasis on the importance of health in achieving sustainable growth and investing in health to boost productivity and reduce inequalities in opportunity.

* 1. **2020 Policy Dialogues**

Policy Dialogues are a key aspect of the Health Working Group’s engagement in discussing relevant policy issues that affect HWG member economies. Policy Dialogues typically take place on the margins of the HLM during SOM3 and the topics of the Policy Dialogues are usually set by the host economy. Dato’ Dr. Chong presented on the proposed policy dialogue ‘*Healthcare Financing System’*, which would focus on the sharing of best practices, challenges, and mechanisms for transforming national health financing systems into sustainable and efficient health financing systems that allow economies to reach Universal Health Coverage.

1. **HWG Strategic Plan, Post-2020** 
   1. **Review of 2016-2020 Strategic Plan Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for consideration during 2020 year**

Prior to beginning conversations on the post-2020 Strategic Plan, Mr. Pearson provided a refresher of the KPIs outlined in the current *Strategic Plan 2016-2020* and highlighted the HWG’s progress to date. The Canada Co-Chair noted positive progress on many of the KPIs thus far as a result of the policy-focused and collaborative work slated for the 2020 year. Approaches to HWG external communications, including our website, was identified as an area for improvement and Mr. Pearson called for member economies in partnership with the APEC Secretariat to consider how to remedy this issue, particularly as much of APEC’s work is focused on information exchange and knowledge sharing.

One of the KPIs under *Strategic Plan 2016-2020* outlines that a discussion on the KPIs be included on the HWG agenda for every meeting. This was the first time such a discussion had been held in the HWG.

* 1. **Discussion of Draft Strategic Plan 2021-2025**

Mr. Pearson then shifted the discussion to post-2020 efforts and the draft *Strategic Plan 2021-2025,* noting that Canada had held the pen on drafting as the lead economy for the sub-working group on Post-2020 Strategic Documents[[5]](#footnote-5)*.* The Canada Co-Chair provided an overview of the proposed draft, which at the time of the meeting had only been circulated amongst the member economies in the sub-working group for review and feedback. It was noted that the purpose of the renewed Strategic Plan was to set medium-term strategic objectives to ensure that the HWG’s yearly efforts are contributing to the achievement of the HWG’s broader mandate, mission, and vision, and that we have a mechanism by which to evaluate and measure this progress. The HWG’s mandate, mission, and vision in the new Strategic Plan were proposed to be maintained. However, the HWG’s objectives and the health topics that guide the HWG’s work were updated to reflect additional priorities that have arisen for the HWG since the drafting of *Strategic Plan 2016-2020*, including communicable disease, universal health coverage, digital health, environmental determinants of health, healthy aging, and health investment/sustainable health financing.

Mr. Pearson also presented on the new Strategic Framework proposed by the sub-working group. The new framework groups the HWG’s activities into three pillars of work: 1) Policy and Project Development; 2) Communication, Collaboration, and Cooperation; and, 3) Governance. Under each of these three pillars of work are four critical success factors (CSFs), or elements that are necessary for the HWG to be successful in achieving its goals under that pillar of work. Lastly, there are specific and measurable KPIs under each of the CSFs that the HWG will report on at the end of each year to facilitate measurement of progress.

Next steps include working intersessionally, first within the sub-working group and then with the broader HWG, to have a draft ready for endorsement by SOM3. Before opening the floor to comments, Mr. Pearson noted that the Co-Chair’s Office had received China’s comments prior to meeting and that they would be incorporated in the next circulation of the draft Strategic Plan 2021-2025 for negotiation amongst the sub-working group. Indonesia intervened in support of the new Strategic Framework for the upcoming Strategic Plan and felt that the proposed approach was more structured and clearer than previous plans. Russia also intervened to suggest that climate change be considered as a topic area under the new Strategic Plan in light of its significant health and economic implications. Canada emphasized that they look forward to working collaboratively with member economies following SOM1 to ensure there is a strong *Strategic Plan 2021-2025* for economies to endorse before the end of the year.

1. **REVIEW HEALTHY ASIA-PACIFIC (HAP) 2020**

The HAP 2020 Initiative (the “Initiative”) is a shared strategic document between the HWG and LSIF, endorsed by Ministers at the 26th APEC Ministerial Meeting in 2014. Aiming to provide a longer-term vision than the fora’s’ strategic plans and yearly work plans, the goal of the Initiative was to promote people’s health and well-being across their life-course by means of whole-of-government, whole-of-society, and whole-of-region approach to promote health security, growth, and development in the Asia-Pacific region. Implementation was supported by the HAP2020 Roadmap (the “Roadmap”) and Reporting Requirements document, which outlined indicators for member economies to report on progress in six different priority areas[[6]](#footnote-6). This agenda item allowed for a discussion on the HAP2020 Reporting Requirements, led by Australia, and a discussion of next steps following the expiration of the Initiative at the end of 2020.

* 1. **Update on HAP 2020 Reporting Requirements**

Mr. Paolo Kraushaar (Australia) provided an overview of reporting requirements for evaluation of the implementation of the HAP2020 Initiative. Australia emphasized that to implement the Roadmap, a series of reporting requirements under six priority areas were agreed upon in 2018, with achievements to be measured via the collection of baseline data in 2018 and subsequent data collection in 2021 (allowing 2020 data to be captured). Mr. Kraushaar reminded economies that when providing baseline data in 2018, they were required to pick one target area per priority and nominate their own indicator for reporting. Australia noted that in 2021 they would begin the process of collating the data on the identified indicators for each member economy. These data would be analysed alongside the baseline data provided and a report developed outlining the implementation of HAP2020 and the impact of these policy efforts on the selected health indicators.

Australia re-emphasized the below timelines for reporting on the implementation of HAP2020, endorsed at the SOM1 2018 HWG Meeting:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Time** | **Task** | **Responsible** |
| June 2018 | Submission of targets, indicators and baseline | All economies |
| August 2018 | Australia collates all indicator selections and baseline data | Australia |
| SOM3 2018 | Discussion of indicator selection – agenda item at SOM3 | All economies |
| January 2021 | Request for data | Australia |
| June 2021 | Final data submission to AusAPEC@health.gov.au | All economies |
| August 2021 | Draft circulated – final HAP2020 report | Australia |
| SOM3 2021 | Discussion of draft report | All economies |
| December 2021 | Final report circulated | Australia |

As some economies have yet to submit their baseline indicator selection and/or data following the 2018 request, Mr. Kraushaar noted that Australia would send out a formal reminder following SOM1 for economies to provide that information or make updates to a previous submission.[[7]](#footnote-7)

* 1. **Presentation on Next Steps Following Expiration of HAP 2020**

Mr. Pearson and Ms. Rachel Kirkland (Canada Co-Chair’s Advisor), on behalf of the LSIF, provided an overview of next steps following the expiration of HAP2020. The Canada Co-Chair summarized the two major deliverables relating to HAP2020: 1) the indicator reporting and associated implementation report (both discussed by Australia); and, 2) an Official Report to Ministers and Leaders to conclude the HAP2020 Initiative. Mr. Pearson noted that intersessionally economies agreed that the Official Report would focus on the replacement of HAP2020 and lessons learned rather than the implementation process of the Roadmap and Initiative.

The Co-Chair’s Advisor noted that HAP2020 is the sole strategic document linking both the HWG and LSIF and is one of the few strategic documents to have been referenced in APEC Ministerial Meeting statements. Ms. Kirkland reminded member economies that the development of a replacement document, currently being referred to as “The North Star – A Healthy Asia-Pacific”, was endorsed intersessionally and that this would be a concise document that acts as a strategic guide to focus the work of APEC’s two health fora. The drafting of the document was agreed to be added to the responsibilities of the Post-2020 Strategic Documents sub-working group. The *North Star – A Healthy Asia-Pacific* will need to be endorsed before the end of this year so that it is approved prior to the expiration of HAP2020.

* 1. **Discussion**

Mr. Pearson opened the floor for additional questions and comments. The U.S. intervened to voice their support and noted that the LSIF Planning Group Chair, Ms. Erika Elvander, although unable to be present in person, wished to convey that she supports the proposed streamlined approach and focus on core competencies of APEC. Canada intervened to emphasize the value of having a document such as the *North Star – A Healthy Asia-Pacific* that spans both of the APEC health fora, the HWG and LSIF, to foster deep and continued strategic coordination between both groups. Canada noted that they look forward to collaborating with sub-working group economies to develop the *North Star* document intersessionally. The APEC Secretariat (Mr. Johnny Lin) also intervened to note that while member economies often introduce new initiatives, there is little precedence for wrapping up initiatives in APEC. Mr. Lin underscored that the APEC Secretariat strongly supports these efforts to wrap up and develop next steps on the HAP2020 Initiative.

1. **APEC INFECTIOUS DISEASE UPDATE**

In light of the origins of the HWG, the accelerating COVID-19 outbreak at the time of the SOM1 HWG meetings, and the rise of vaccine preventable diseases (VPDs) in the region, a new item was added to the meeting agenda: the APEC Infectious Disease Update. The goal was to facilitate the exchange of information and best practices on critical infectious disease trends and the associated management and responses in the region. WHO Regional Office representatives whose offices are involved in the APEC region – the Western Pacific Regional Office (WPRO), South-East Asia Regional Office (SEARO), Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO), and Europe Regional Office (EURO)[[8]](#footnote-8) – were also invited. Economies were encouraged to consider all infectious diseases in their economies, not just COVID-19, in light of the more detailed discussion scheduled for Day 2.

* 1. **Presentation on critical trends in infectious diseases and current outbreak**

Dr. Lo Ying-Ru, Head of Mission and WHO Representative to Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam, and Singapore, presented on behalf of the WHO Western Pacific Regional Office (WPRO). She began her presentation by providing a timeline of the COVID-19 outbreak in the region. As of February 5 2020, there were 31,477 cases globally with 638 deaths, with global proportion of fatal cases remaining at 2%. Just prior to the HWG meeting on January 30th, the WHO declared COVID-19 as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC); Dr. Lo highlighted what that meant and what WHO was focusing on, including establishing international cooperation, providing an authoritative source of epidemiology analytical analysis, and scaling country readiness and response operations. The fact that WHO does not recommend any travel or trade restrictions based on the current information available at the time was highlighted and the importance of the International Health Regulations (IHR) underscored. Dr. Lo strongly emphasized the importance of sharing information and flagged that WHO was very pleased that the APEC HWG was having this discussion.

Dr. Lo also highlighted the significant resurgence of polio being seen in the Asia-Pacific, highlighting that seven new countries have reported outbreaks, including Malaysia and the Philippines, in the APEC region. Dr. Lo noted that there are vaccine-derived polioviruses circulating in four WHO regions – the Eastern Mediterranean, Africa, Southeast Asia, and Western Pacific Regions. It was also highlighted that the 22nd IHR Emergency Committee in September 2019 had unanimously agreed that the risk of international spread of poliovirus remains a PHEIC and recommended the extension of Temporary Recommendations for a further three months. Dr. Lo underscored that 2019 shows what can happen when the pressure on the polio virus diminishes – it comes back quickly if vaccination coverage is inadequate.

* 1. **Comment period for member economies**

Mr. Pearson thanked Dr. Lo for her presentation and opened the floor for member economies to share their own experiences on infectious disease trends and management, noting that a more extensive conversation regarding COVID-19 actions would be taking place on Day 2.

China intervened to note the impact of COVID-19 on the region and the world, highlighting China’s strict, timely, and multi-sectoral response since the outbreak began. China underscored the importance of transparency and the sharing of information with WHO and relevant partners, and noted both the potential negative impact of travel bans on people’s willingness to report cases and the fact that these bans are not in line with WHO recommendations. The intervention concluded with China thanking the many APEC economies that have expressed support and sent supplies, noting that they look forward to continued cooperation with all economies.

Canada then intervened to note the value of these discussions given the cross-border nature of infectious disease threats and the impacts that they can have on both health and the economy. Canada recommended that this discussion be added to future HWG meeting agendas and the Co-Chairs noted the suggestion. Chinese Taipei also intervened to highlight their independent health and transportation systems and underscored the importance of direct communication and reporting in the APEC region.

The Co-Chairs then engaged more substantially in a discussion with Dr. Lo. Mr. Pearson requested clarification on three key items regarding COVID-19: 1) timing for moving from containment to mitigation; 2) difference in COVID-19 impacts by age; and, 3) when the shift in language occurs from pandemic to epidemic. Dr. Lo highlighted that the criteria for moving from containment to mitigation was being discussed, but that sustained community transmission plays a significant role in triggering that decision. Dr. Lo also noted that while clinical symptoms were still not fully clear, that comorbidities played a strong role in increasing risks for older individuals. Dato’ Dr. Chong followed up on Mr. Pearson’s third inquiry, flagging that the movement of the outbreak to more than one continent is often the criteria used to define a pandemic. The Canada Co-Chair also inquired about the status of the WHO-China Joint Mission and Dr. Lo promised to follow up with further details on Day 2 should she be able to share.

Mr. Pearson suggested that the HWG keep this discussion as a standing agenda item for future meetings in light of the cross-border threat. Hearing no objections, this approach was endorsed for upcoming HWG meetings and the APEC Infectious Disease Update will be featured on the SOM3 HWG Meeting agenda.

1. **CHILDHOOD NUTRITION**
   1. **Presentation and Discussion - A Double Burden: Childhood Obesity and Undernutrition**

Ms. Patricia Zamora (Chile) provided the update for the sub-working group on Childhood Obesity. Chile noted the HWG Workshop on Prevention and Promotion Policies for Child Obesity was held during SOM1 2019 in Santiago, Chile and convened 80 representatives from APEC economies, academia, civil society, private sector, and international organizations (e.g. OECD, WHO). Chile highlighted that the presentations and best practices discussed in this workshop have now been formalized in the “Document of Systematization of the Workshop on Policies Against Child Obesity” which was circulated to member economies in advance of the SOM1 meeting.

Building on the Workshop, Chile noted that the Childhood Obesity sub-working group[[9]](#footnote-9) is now working on developing the “Document of Best Practices in Public Policies in Child Obesity” to collate best practices to tackle this issue in the APEC region. A data collection document was circulated and at the time of the meeting, Chile had received input from Canada, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Peru, the United States, and Chinese Taipei. A first draft was circulated in advance of the meeting and Chile provided a brief review of some preliminary results of the analysis thus far. Notably, they identified four key categories of public policies being implemented in APEC economies: information and education, fiscal policy, environmental, and regulatory. Chile welcomed discussion on the first draft; Chinese Taipei noted a deep appreciation for Chile’s work on childhood obesity and provided feedback for the Best Practices document, noting the importance of an increased focus on physical activity. Next steps include the circulation of a second draft following SOM1 for feedback from member economies. The sub-working group plans to present the final report during SOM3 in August 2020.

Ms. Zalma Abdul Razak (Director of Nutrition Division, Malaysia) then provided an overview of the nutrition situation in Malaysia and the challenge of the double burden of malnutrition and obesity that they are facing domestically. Ms. Razak outlined the key nutrition policies in place in Malaysia to address this issue, including the National Nutrition Policy of Malaysia. Malaysia highlighted the importance of multi-sectoral action on these issues and the value of considering how nutrition policies can effectively address both issues of over- and undernutrition.

* 1. **Childhood Nutrition Sub-Working Group Update**

Building on Malaysia’s presentation, Ms. Zamora noted Chile’s intention of expanding the scope of the sub-working group from a sole focus on childhood obesity to include malnutrition more broadly to be more reflective of the current realities across the Asia-Pacific region. Chile’s proposed change to sub-working group was endorsed by the HWG.

The United States intervened to note that they are supportive of the approach to expand the sub-working group efforts to include both undernutrition and child obesity, although they highlighted the limitations of a federated system which could affect how different nutrition policies are implemented.

1. **HEALTHY AGING AND DEMENTIA** 
   1. **Dementia Spotlight Update**

Mr. Pearson noted that as discussed at HLM9, the number of people living with dementia in the Asia-Pacific region is expected to triple between now and 2050 and coordinated action to prevent dementia and enable those living with dementia to live well is critical for ensuring health and economic well-being in the APEC region. Following the HLM, HWG member economies agreed to develop the ‘*Dementia Spotlight: A Compilation of Initiatives to Address Dementia in the Asia-Pacific Region’*, with the goal of sharing successful policies and programs across the region to encourage collaboration between APEC economies, particularly those facing similar contextual challenges in meeting the needs of aging populations. The ‘Dementia Spotlight’ will be a resource published on the APEC HWG website and submitted as a regional resource to the WHO Global Dementia Observatory knowledge exchange platform.

The Canada Co-Chair provided an update on the status of the Dementia Spotlight report, highlighting that the Co-Chair’s office had received submissions of best practices from 18 of the 21 member economies to date. Mr. Pearson noted that the Co-Chair’s Office is in the process of drafting the Report, for review and endorsement prior to SOM3, and encouraged the remaining economies to submit their input.

* 1. **Policy Dialogue on Health Across the Life Course Next Steps**

Ms. Zamora (Chile) returned to provide a debrief of the Policy Dialogue on “Health Across the Life Course” held on the margins of the SOM3 2019 APEC meetings. Chile noted that the objective of the Dialogue was to highlight the importance of reviewing and analyzing policies and programs that address the specific needs and care of older populations to ensure healthy aging within the APEC region. Ms. Zamora provided an overview of the structure of the policy dialogue, which included presentations and panel discussions by experts, as well as presentations from member economies on best practices for healthy aging policies. Similar to the approach for the Childhood Nutrition work, Chile generated the “Report of the APEC Policy Dialogue on Health Across the Life Course”, which summarized the Policy Dialogue and key outcomes. A draft was circulated prior to SOM1 2020; Ms. Zamora thanked Australia and Canada for their feedback and kindly asked other member economies to share their comments.

Next steps following the Dialogue included the creation of a sub-working group on Healthy Aging and collation of best practices for the APEC region. Chile noted that the goal of the sub-working group will be to develop a “Document on Good Practices for Healthy Aging”, which would be drafted intersessionally for final presentation by SOM3 in August 2020. Chile also noted their interest in continuing the work on healthy aging after SOM3 in order to include healthy aging as a key priority moving forward post-2020.

There were no objections to the creation of a sub-working group on Healthy Aging or the timelines proposed by Chile for the release of a best practices document by SOM3 2020. Canada intervened to welcome the sub-working group and emphasized the importance of working in harmony with WHO Decade of Healthy Aging, which is set to begin this year.

1. **CLOSING REMARKS** 
   1. **Housekeeping Items and Plan for Day Two**

Mr. Pearson and Dato’ Dr. Chong briefly summarized the day’s proceedings before closing the meeting.Dato’ Dr. Chong also invited participants to a reception happening that evening at the Meriden hotel.

**END OF DAY ONE**

**DAY TWO**

*Saturday, February 8th, 2020*

**1. RECAP OF DAY ONE**

**1.1. Welcome Remarks**

Dato’ Dr. Chong and Mr. Pearson provided a summary of Day 1 of the meeting in order to officially begin Day 2. The Canada Co-Chair noted the HWG’s agreement on Day 1 to negotiate a HWG Statement on COVID-19.

1. **VACCINATION PROGRAM OF WORK 2020-2021**

Ms. Allison DesRosiers-Rodriguez (Canada) and Ms. Jennifer Seedorff (United States) presented on the Vaccination Program of Work (VPoW) 2020-2021 which had been drafted by the sub-working group on vaccination[[10]](#footnote-10) to coordinate and build on existing efforts on vaccination in the HWG and promote a cohesive, longer-term approach to related initiatives. Ms. Seedorff noted that vaccination as a public health intervention remains one of the most cost-effective available and that the APEC region saw a significant re-emergence of VPDs (including measles and polio) across the APEC region in 2018/2019, triggering a renewed focus on vaccination in the HWG. Ms. DesRosiers-Rodriguez outlined the structure of the VPoW, with planned initiatives on vaccination divided under two streams of work, Demand (led by Canada) and Supply (led by the U.S.), for the APEC 2020 and 2021 years.

Indonesia intervened to thank Canada and the U.S. for their work in drafting the VPoW and welcomed the focus on both the demand and supply side issues in addressing vaccine-preventable diseases in the region. Chile highlighted the importance of considering HPV vaccination in the HWG’s efforts and to promote the integration of a life-course approach to ensure focus on vaccination in older adults as well. China also intervened to express their appreciation for Canada and the U.S.’s drafting of the VPoW and noted interest in the deliverables related to vaccine supply chains. China suggested circulating the VPoW to the LSIF and moving it to cross-fora deliverables in the HWG Work Plan. These changes to the Work Plan were made following the meeting.

Following member economies’ expressions of support for the VPoW, the plan was formally endorsed.

1. **DISCUSSION: SURVEILLANCE STRATEGIES AND MANAGEMENT OF THE OUTBREAK OF NOVEL CORONAVIRUS (2019-nCoV)**

**3.1. Introductory Remarks**

In light of the ongoing coronavirus outbreak, the Co-Chairs facilitated a special discussion on Surveillance Strategies and Management of 2019-nCoV. Mr. Pearson began the session by thanking Russia for their suggestion of including this discussion on the HWG meeting agenda and expressing appreciation to the U.S. for agreeing to postpone their scheduled presentation on the results of their economic analysis of VPDs in the APEC region to accommodate the session. The Canada Co-Chair noted that the U.S. has agreed to present the results from their economic analysis at the SOM3 HWG meetings in August 2020.

**3.2. Discussion Period for Member Economies**

The Canada Co-Chair then opened the floor to allow member economies to provide the latest update on their experiences addressing COVID-19. The special discussion featured interventions and updates from the WHO Western Pacific Regional Office representative, Dr. Lo Ying-Ru and 12 of the 17 member economies.

Dr. Lo first provided brief remarks to follow up on her presentation on Day 1 during the APEC Infectious Disease Update. In response to a question from the Canada Co-Chair on the COVID-19 outbreak, Dr. Lo confirmed that the WHO does not have any strict criteria to indicate when to move from containment to mitigation and noted that this decision should be made domestically based on the latest developments. The WHO’s recommendation is to move to the mitigation phase should community transmission be anticipated. Dr. Lo also emphasized that the outbreak was not yet a pandemic, defined as the outbreak of a new pathogen spreading easily from person-to-person across different regions of the globe, and also confirmed that the WHO’s mission of experts would be leaving for China to provide support sometime next week.

China was the first economy to take the floor and provided a presentation on the CDC’s analysis of the COVID-19 outbreak and the country’s response to the epidemic. An update on the number of suspected and confirmed cases was provided and age distribution noted. It was also noted that 84% of cases outside of Hubei province had been in Wuhan or were exposed to cases in Wuhan. China highlighted that confirmed cases had a spectrum of clinical symptoms, most commonly fever, dry cough, and fatigue, with case severity being much higher in Wuhan. China also flagged that 80% of cases were mild, 15% severe, and 3% critical, with the majority of critical cases having underlying conditions such as hypertension and diabetes. The rapid response was noted, with epidemiological investigations currently requiring completion within 24 hours of identifying a suspected case, and China underscored that their response guidelines are available in both Chinese and English for APEC economies. China closed their presentation with their representatives highlighting China’s transparency, WHO’s support of China’s efforts, and the need for continued collaboration.

Thailand noted that they were the first economy outside of China to report a case (January 8th) and as of February 8th had 15 confirmed cases, with 9 cases having recovered and subsequently discharged. Thailand confirmed that community transmission remains low, but that they have scaled up their Emergency Operating Center (EOC) to level 3 in order to closely monitor the situation. Efforts to increase readiness were highlighted, including the addition of thermal scanners at six international airports and the use of Ministry of Public Health and military medical personnel to support screening 24/7 at all key points of entry. Use of a combination of anti-flu medications and HIV anti-retrovirals was noted, with preliminary results of treatment being satisfactory. Thailand also highlighted their government’s emphasis on addressing fake news and misinformation being posted on social media about COVID-19.

Canada confirmed that as of February 8th, there were 7 confirmed cases and that while the suspected cases continue to grow, the public health risk in Canada remains low. Canada outlined a number of actions which had been taken including: the activation of the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Public Health Response Plan for Biological events to ensure a coordinated response across Canada; the establishment of a special advisory committee to advise Senior Government Health Officials; the development of a real-time reverse transcription-polymerase chain reaction test to diagnose COVID-19; and, enhanced screening and communication measures at 10 airports. Canada emphasized that their Health Minister, Minister Patty Hajdu, and Canada’s Chief Public Health Officer (CPHO), Dr. Theresa Tam, have taken a lead role in managing the crisis. With the spread of misinformation online, Canada highlighted that their CPHO has repeatedly spoken against the growing number of reports of discrimination and stigmatizing comments on social media and has emphasized the importance of evidence-based information including considering the symptomatic nature of the outbreak.

Canada also noted that in recognition of Chinese health authorities and the WHO confirming human-to-human transmission, Canadian health officials are asking travellers who have returned from Hubei province to go into voluntary self-isolation for up to 14 days. As well, Canada highlighted their efforts assisting Canadians abroad, including flying out Canadians in the Wuhan area that had requested consular assistance and supporting a group of Canadians who were flown out on a US-led flight. Canada expressed thanks to Chinese and American colleagues for their support in the departure of Canadians seeking assistance and noted that passengers are spending 14 days in isolation at a Canadian Forces Base in Trenton, Ontario under quarantine in order to ensure no further transmission of the virus in Canada. Canada also noted that emergency evacuation of non-essential Canadian-based staff and their dependents in mainland China was also underway. Lastly, Canada recognized the efforts of China and other economies to combat the spread of the virus and emphasized Canada’s commitment to collaboration and cooperation to address the outbreak.

Russia provided a presentation on their COVID-19 response, noting that following the WHO’s declaration of a PHEIC, the Russian government organized a National Operating Headquarters (NOH) to respond to the outbreak that is currently operating 24/7. The NOH includes several different ministries and agencies include foreign affairs, inner affairs, consumer rights, health, and airlines, with the Ministry of Health leading on the key health activities and responses. A national plan for preparedness and response was established on January 31st and 85 regional operating headquarters, as well as plans, have been developed as well. It was noted that the NOH has developed diagnostic kits and a platform for vaccine development as well. Russia confirmed that as of February 7th, there were two confirmed cases of COVID-19.

Malaysia noted that they currently have 15 confirmed cases of COVID-19, with 476 suspected cases testing negative. They highlighted that their National Crisis Preparedness Response Centre (CPRC) was activated on February 5th and emphasized the importance of collaboration with regional partners. Malaysia noted that in terms of preparedness and response, priority has been given to preparing rapid deployment and assessment teams, and that Malaysia currently has active screening at all national ports of entry.

Chile provided a brief update on COVID-19 in their economy, noting they had not yet had their first case and highlighting the preparedness efforts underway.

Indonesia noted that they had not had any cases of COVID-19, suspected or confirmed, but that they have ramped up their preparations in anticipation. The Ministry of Health has appointed 100 referral hospitals specifically for COVID-19 and a case simulation had been held the prior week to identify strengths and weaknesses in the country’s response capacity.

The United States noted that the US government’s response began immediately after first reports of cases in China in late December. It was noted that the goal of the U.S. public health response is to detect new cases quickly and slow the introduction and impact of COVID-19 on the U.S. As of February 7th, there were currently 12 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the U.S. Over 300 CDC Personnel were deployed or are pending deployment and the IRR is now accepting orders for COVID-19 tests from qualified laboratories. It was highlighted that since January 17th, the U.S. has screened over 17,000 passengers with more than 7,500 of those screenings having occurred since flights were funneled to 11 airports in 10 states starting February 3rd. CDC released an interim guidance document for risk assessment and public health management of persons with potential exposure on February 3rd. The guidance document provides state and local health departments and other partners with a framework for assessing and managing risk of potential exposures to COVID-19 and implementing public health actions based on a person’s risk level and clinical presentation. Dr. MacArthur thanked the Government of China for making the genome of the virus available to the global community.

The U.S. also flagged that their scientists have successfully isolated the virus, and have made the virus available to both domestic and international users through the NIAID established biorepository, BEIResources.org. The US noted that they anticipate being able to share additional samples, when available, through the same mechanism.

Chinese Taipei noted that beginning February 6th, Chinese residents were prohibited from entering Chinese Taipei and, as of January 15th, COVID-19 was listed as a reportable disease. It was noted that they have expanded surveillance efforts and are looking to digital devices and approaches to assist in their preparedness and response efforts. Chinese Taipei emphasized that communications is a high priority for their response, noting that they hold daily press conferences, are fully utilizing social media, and have developed an information database for COVID-19 with common Q&A in order to provide up-to-date and correct information to the public.

Japan confirmed 25 cases as of February 7th, including 21 cases with travel history to China and 4 cases with no recent history to China, which are being considered as indicative of possible transmission in Japan. Recent evacuation efforts were highlighted, with Japan noting that the 4th chartered flight with 198 passengers from Wuhan arrived on February 7th. While laboratory testing is ongoing, 8 symptomatic cases were found during quarantine and have been transferred to hospital. Remaining passengers were asked to self-quarantine at a designated hotel for two weeks. Japan also noted that earlier in the week, the National Institute of Infectious Disease of Japan successfully isolated the novel coronavirus. Japan emphasized the importance of sharing information within and outside APEC in a swift, transparent manner and highlighted their willingness to contribute to global efforts to develop rapid testing, vaccines, and drugs to tackle this global health challenge.

Japan also provided an update on the situation regarding the Diamond Princess cruise ship where 3711 passengers and crews were quarantined in the port of Yokohama near Tokyo since a passenger tested positive in Hong Kong, China. It was noted that there were 273 suspected cases, some of which were symptomatic, with 61 cases testing positive and being transferred to hospital. It was highlighted that the Government of Japan is continuing to support the remaining passengers and crews on board by supplying food and medicinal products, as well as sending more than 40 medical staff.

Australia highlighted that between January 25th and February 7th 2020, they had seen fifteen confirmed cases and all were persons who had travelled from Wuhan, except for one case who had close contact with a confirmed case from Wuhan. It was noted that Australia has six laboratories in each of their mainland states effectively able to test for COVID-19 and that Australia was undertaking testing in Australian laboratories on behalf of Pacific governments when requested. Australia noted new travel restrictions as of February 1st for foreign nationals who had travelled from or transited through mainland China in the prior 14 days and additional enhanced border measures at international airports and seaports. Australia highlighted that they were also supporting Pacific Island governments, New Zealand, and the WHO on regional preparedness and response, and that their Indo-Pacific Centre for Health Security is supporting WHO’s regional outbreak preparedness and response efforts.

The Philippines highlighted that as of February 7th there were 2015 persons under investigation, with 134 admitted as suspected cases and 3 confirmed cases.

Hong Kong, China thanked China’s National Health Commission (NHC) for providing assistance to Hong Kong, China during this outbreak and noted that the Centre for Health Protection at Hong Kong, China’s Department of Health stepped up surveillance beginning December 13th following a notification from the NHC. Hong Kong, China stressed the importance of continuing to share information through informal mechanisms such as the HWG and encouraged regional collaboration.

Following the discussion, Mr. Pearson reminded economies of the agreement to develop a HWG Statement on COVID-19 highlighting the economic and health impacts of the virus in the region.

1. **Policy Discussion: Shifting Focus from Vaccine Hesitancy to Vaccine Acceptance and Uptake**

Dato’ Dr. Chong then introduced the policy discussion on “Shifting Focus from Vaccine Hesitancy to Vaccine Confidence”, the first deliverable under the Demand Side stream of the VPoW. The purpose of the policy discussion was to ensure that the HWG member economies shared a common foundation for approaching vaccine hesitancy and to ensure that the complex and context-specific factors that drive hesitancy are being considered when developing policy and program solutions.

* 1. **Presentation on a proposed HWG approach for demand-side barriers to vaccination**

Ms. Allison DesRosiers-Rodriguez (Canada) began the policy discussion by providing a presentation on the different aspects of vaccine hesitancy to facilitate harmonization of the HWG’s efforts on vaccination with the approaches used in the broader global health landscape. The re-emergence of VPDs was underscored, alongside the rising number of people questioning the safety of vaccines. Defining vaccine hesitancy as individuals’ delayed acceptance or refusal to be vaccinated despite the availability of vaccination services, Ms. DesRosiers-Rodriguez outlined the three categories of factors related to vaccine hesitancy, including confidence, complacency, and convenience. The continuum of hesitancy was also underscored and the importance of catering policy and program solutions to the continuum of vaccine acceptance was emphasized. Lastly, Ms. DesRosiers-Rodriguez outlined how approaches to improve vaccination rates could be more effective by shifting the focus from individual barriers to systemic barriers engrained in public health and social systems and that by enabling pillars of demand (e.g. information environment, local norms, political support, and service quality), economies can more effectively address vaccine hesitancy.

* 1. **Roundtable discussion economies’ experiences with vaccine hesitancy**

Mr. Pearson then moderated a robust roundtable discussion where LSIF representatives and APEC member economies had the opportunity to outline how demand-side barriers to vaccination, including increases in vaccine hesitancy, have affected their economy.

The private sector representative (Chris Colwell, Merck & Co.) from the LSIF provided examples of activities industry has been taking to increase vaccine confidence, including by conducting capacity-building workshops, partnering with governments to triage and address weaknesses in their health system, and conducting multi-stakeholder media campaigns. Russia highlighted domestic vaccination efforts and the importance of social media and community engagement campaigns, rather than official government guidance, to mitigate vaccine hesitancy. Malaysia also intervened to share their domestic experiences with vaccine hesitancy, noting that that they are seeing increasing connections between vaccine hesitancy and the pro-choice movement in Malaysia, whose organizations are often officially registered and able to promote vaccine hesitancy by speaking at official events, garnering followers, and pushing through misinformation via social media. Malaysia also urged consideration of highly mobile non-citizens (e.g. migrant workers) and the impact of their cross-border movement on VPDs.

Both Malaysia and Indonesia noted their domestic populations’ interest in Halal vaccines and the role of this in vaccine hesitancy. Chinese Taipei underscored the importance of establishing communication channels for parents, noting that they have 200,000 followers for a government-led vaccine information page on Facebook where they hold interactive sessions with influencers. Both Indonesia and Chinese Taipei intervened to flag that the HWG is a valuable regional forum for sharing information on common vaccination challenges.

Lastly, China intervened to thank Canada for leading the policy discussion and to share their experience in two areas: information transparency and vaccination promotion at the community level. The Electronic Traceability Platform was highlighted, which integrates the entire vaccination process (production, circulation, delivery) into one system to allow for greater transparency and increase vaccine confidence. China also emphasized their continued efforts to engage with communities to strengthen understanding of the science behind vaccination.

* 1. **Next Steps: Preview of Vaccination Spotlight Report**

Mr. Pearson then outlined next steps on another key deliverable under the Demand Side stream of work that Canada is leading on, the “*Vaccination Spotlight Report: A Compilation of Initiatives to Improve Vaccine Acceptance and Uptake in the APEC Region*”. The Canada Co-Chair noted that Canada would be reaching out after SOM1 to ask that member economies submit summaries of projects or initiatives that have been implemented to improve vaccine confidence in their economy. Canada will collate the submissions to create a compilation of initiatives and projects that will act as a best practices tool for member economies. The Vaccination Spotlight Report will allow the sharing of successful policies and programs that have been implemented across the region and encourage collaboration between APEC economies by facilitating the development of partnerships between economies that may face similar contextual challenges for improving vaccine acceptance and uptake. Mr. Pearson encouraged the LSIF private sector representatives to provide input on the Vaccination Spotlight Report given the innovative approaches highlighted during the previous policy discussion.

1. **Joint HWG – Human Resources Development Working Group (HRWDG) Discussion – Workplace Mental Health and Well-Being with the APEC Digital Hub for Mental Health**

Dr. Raymond Lam (Executive Director) and Dr. Jill Murphy (Director of Strategic Initiatives) from the APEC Digital Hub for Mental Health (the Digital Hub), the coordinating centre for APEC’s work in mental health, led a Joint HWG-HRDWG Discussion on Workplace Mental Health and Well-Being and presented their recently published White Paper on Workplace Mental Health and Safety. The White Paper was developed by the Hub’s Workplace Wellness and Resilience focus area workgroup, led by Ms. Sapna Mahajan (Canada) and Dr. Hiroto Ito (Japan), and seeks to improve knowledge and generate action on workplace mental health and safety across APEC economies. It includes an overview of the public health and economic cost of mental illness, specific considerations for workplace mental health, and barriers and opportunities for implementing workplace mental health and wellness initiatives. It also provides examples of model programmes from several APEC economies and a call-to-action for leaders across sectors.

Dr. Lam and Dr. Murphy were joined in this discussion by three representatives of the HRDWG: Professor Dong Sun Park (HRDWG Lead Shepherd – Republic of Korea); Dr. Zaki Zakaria (Labour and Social Protection Network Coordinator [LSPN], HRDWG – Malaysia); and, Ms. Wan Maisarah (LSPN, HRWDG – Malaysia). Professor Park noted the importance of considering stigma when examining mental health in the workplace and noted his interest in continuing to work with the HWG on this topic.

Following the Digital Hub’s presentation, China intervened to note a 2018 initiative that collected stories about mental health that were integrated into a campaign via social media. Canada intervened to thank the Digital Hub for its work on developing the White Paper and highlighted that as Canada’s biggest employer, the Government of Canada has made addressing mental health in the workplace a top priority. Canada also expressed appreciation that other Canadian sectors demonstrating leadership on mental health were showcased in the White Paper, including the Mental Health Commission of Canada which developed the National Standard for Psychosocial Health and Safety in the Workplace in collaboration with domestic partners. Indonesia noted the importance of considering policy approaches that promote the mental health and well-being of migrant workers. Malaysia intervened to highlight that domestically there is an emphasis that the Ministry of Health addresses health, but that mental health is everyone’s business. Malaysia also emphasized the importance of considering digital interventions to promote workplace mental health as they often have the ability to reach a larger number of individuals with less stigma than some other traditional measures. Chinese Taipei underscored that they had doubled their budget on mental health over the last three years and that all mental health services are now free. The topic of mental health has been elevated as a priority at the highest levels and a key priority now is to promote mental health literacy and reduce stigmatization of mental health challenges.

The Hub also announced plans to table another White Paper with the HWG at SOM3 in August 2020 on the Integration of Mental Health into Primary Care and Community-Based Settings in the Asia Pacific, with an emphasis on digital technologies.

1. **Review Implementation of New HWG Concept Note Operating Protocols**

The new HWG Concept Note Operating Protocols, endorsed at the SOM3 2019 HWG Meeting, were scheduled to be implemented for the next Project Session (Project Session 1 2020 – PS1 2020). Mr. Johnny Lin provided an update on the more detailed timelines and requirements for the 2020 concept note project cycle in line with these new Protocols.

1. **Progress Report on Approved and On-Going HWG Projects**

Dato’ Dr. Chong moderated presentations on the progress for approved and on-going HWG Projects. Six concept notes were presented on; Viet Nam was unable to present due to technical difficulties on their project (Workshop on Nutrition Care for Aging Population to Prevent Non-Communicable Chronic Diseases).

* 1. Workshop on Nutrition Care for Aging Population to Prevent Non-Communicable Chronic Diseases *(Viet Nam)*
  2. Symposium about Early Hearing Damage Prevention in Young People (*Chile*)
  3. APEC Conference on Urbanization, Population Aging and Technology Innovation (*Chinese Taipei*)
  4. Increasing Pandemic Preparedness and Prevention in the Asia-Pacific Region *(USA)*
  5. Workshop on building the new-leadership of infectious disease prevention and control among APEC economies (Phase II) (China)
  6. Workshop on Promoting Universal Health Coverage of International Migration in the APEC Region: Challenges and the Strategy (China)
  7. APEC Conference on Cooperation Initiatives for NCDs Prevention and Control *(Russia)*

1. **Document Classification**

Mr. Johnny Lin gave a short presentation on the HWG documents where member economies were able to identify if the documents they submitted for meeting materials could be moved from restricted to open access.

1. **Closing Remarks and Feedback**

Dato’ Dr. Chong and Mr. Pearson concluded the meeting by thanking participants for their participation. Mr. Pearson highlighted next steps on the HWG work to address COVID-19, including the HWG Statement on COVID-19 that was to begin intersessional negotiations following the meeting. After thanking participants, the HWG Co-Chair adjourned the meeting.

**END OF DAY TWO**

**2020 APEC STEERING COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION (SCE) COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE (COW) MEETING**

*February 18th, 2020*

**INTRODUCTION**

The APEC Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) Steering Committee on Economic and Technical Cooperation (SCE) coordinates and manages the APEC members' economic and technical cooperation (ECOTECH) agenda. The objectives of the SCE are to support the implementation of APEC's ECOTECH activities by prioritizing work based on the commitments made by Leaders and Ministers, and overseeing the work of APEC fora, providing policy guidance on ways to contribute to APEC's ECOTECH goals, and coordinating ECOTECH objectives and priorities between the APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting and the APEC ministerial meetings.

**SCE-COW MEETING**

*February 18th, 2020*

During the SCE-COW meeting, each of the seventeen sub-fora under the SCE presented on their key 2020 deliverables as they align with the 2020 APEC priorities.

The HWG was represented by Mr. Fabian Bigar (Undersecretary, Policy and International Relations Division, Ministry of Health Malaysia), on behalf of both the Canada and Malaysia Co-Chairs who were unable to attend. Mr. Bigar highlighted that the COVID-19 pandemic had emphasized how health issues are interlinked with the well-being of APEC economies and that there is an explicit link between successful economic growth and the health of an economy’s population. He further suggested that APEC's wide-ranging economic work program makes it uniquely positioned to address the multi-sectoral impact of today's health threats, and that the 2020 Work Plan reflects the HWG’s continued focus on implementing substantive policy-oriented discussions to ensure that the HWG remains a strategic forum to advance global health priorities.

Mr. Bigar noted that the key forum deliverables for 2020 include:

1. Governance:
   1. HWG Strategic Plan 2021-2025 endorsement
   2. “The North Star – A Healthy Asia-Pacific” Strategic Document endorsement
2. Policy/Technical:
   1. HWG Statement on COVID-19
   2. APEC Infectious Disease Update
   3. Novel Coronavirus Discussion
   4. Publication of Dementia Spotlight Report
   5. Policy Dialogue on Health Financing Systems

Mr. Bigar also noted the extensive cross-fora deliverables planned for 2020, including: the endorsement of the Vaccination Program of Work 2020-2021 and the chairing of the 10th High-level Meeting on Health and the Economy with the LSIF; the Joint Discussion on Workplace Mental Health and Well-Being with the HRDWG; and, the planned Joint Policy Dialogue on Health Systems Resilience in Post-Disaster Settings with the Emergency Preparedness Working Group (EPWG). During the SCE-COW meeting, other sub-fora representatives noted interest in collaborating with the HWG. The Telecommunications and Information Working Group indicated interest in promoting collaboration with HWG on smart silver innovation project to solve issue on ageing society by ICT with Japan. The Transport Working Group (TWG) expressed interest in working with the HWG on infectious disease and areas of cooperation in mitigating the impact of COVID-19 on the tourism industry and local community.

The U.S. inquired about the timing of the HWG’s proposed HWG Statement on COVID-19. Mr. Bigar that the proposed HWG Statement in COVID-19 summarizes the discussions at the SOM1 HWG Meeting on COVID-19 and that further work on the pandemic, including an economic analysis, would be prepared for discussion at the HWG SOM3 meeting to support raising pandemic preparedness and response as a priority for consideration by APEC Ministers and Leaders.

Thailand commended the HWG on the Work Plan and encouraged cross-fora collaboration with the EPWG and TWG on the recommendations concerning the effect of COVID-19 on tourism in the region. China also commended the substantial HWG work plan, noting the timeliness of the special discussion on COVID-19. China re-affirmed their commitment to preventing COVID-19 and protecting public health, emphasizing that the HWG should continue to work pragmatically to support efforts to address COVID-19. China committed to working closely with HWG Co-Chairs and member economies to send a strong and clear message using the HWG Statement on COVID-19 to promote consideration at higher levels in APEC and to express the support and solidarity in efforts to combat the disease.

1. In light of increased public health measures and travel restrictions, the LSIF postponed their meeting until SOM3 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Fully endorsed following the addition of COVID-19 activities at SOM1 that were made immediately following the meeting. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Significant negotiation of the Statement text prevented endorsement in advance of the Senior Officials Meeting. However, the HWG Statement on COVID-19 was successfully endorsed by HWG member economies on March 11th 2020 and by SCE/SOM on March 19th 2020. The Statement was posted to the [APEC website](https://www.apec.org/Press/News-Releases/2020/0323_HWG) on March 23rd 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The COVID-19 additions were made immediately following the meeting and formally endorsed by all economies on February 17th, prior to Malaysia’s presentation on the HWG’s Work Plan to the SCE Committee of the Whole that same day. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Member economies in this sub-working group at the time of the meeting included Australia, Canada (lead economy), People’s Republic of China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Chinese Taipei, Thailand, and the Life Sciences Innovation Forum. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The six priority areas include: Universal Health Coverage; Non-communicable Disease Prevention and Control Across the Life Course (NCDs); Maternal and Child Health (MCH); Health Emergencies in Case of Natural Disasters and Pandemic Events; Promoting Human Capacity Building in Health/Investing in Human Capital; and, Emerging Diseases. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. This reminder has since been postponed in light of economies’ ongoing work responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Only WPRO was able to send a representative to participate in the meeting. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. At the time of the meeting, the sub-working group included Canada, Chile, Indonesia, Malaysia, Russia, Chinese Taipei and USA. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. The member economies on the vaccination sub-working group during the drafting of the VPoW include Canada (co-lead); the United States (co-lead); Australia; People’s Republic of China; Hong Kong, China; the Life Sciences Innovation Forum; Malaysia; Russian Federation; and Chinese Taipei. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)