**APEC Health Working Group Statement on COVID-19**

*Reflecting the discussions of the Health Working Group which met at the 1st APEC Senior Officials Meeting, February 7-8, 2020, Putrajaya, Malaysia*

*Issued by the APEC Health Working Group*

*Putrajaya, Malaysia, 20 March 2020*

We, the member economies of the APEC Health Working Group (HWG), held a special discussion on the coronavirus (COVID-19) epidemic, which has affected many APEC members, as part of our two-day meeting during the first Senior Officials’ Meeting in Malaysia. We express our sincere condolences to the families of those who have lost their lives in this epidemic. We reaffirm the central importance of collaboration at all levels to combat this infectious disease and commit to working together to bring this epidemic under control as fast as possible. Lessons learned from past epidemics like SARS, 2009 H1N1 and Ebola have strengthened and improved the resiliency of the global public health system. These improvements in global health security are credit to the efforts of many people, including those in the health ministries and public health infrastructures of APEC economies.

We, the APEC Health Working Group, recognize the major efforts and actions undertaken by all affected APEC economies to control the spread of COVID-19, in parallel with continual efforts to learn more about the virus, and defeat this common enemy. This entails working in close collaboration with all stakeholders and public health officials both across the APEC region and worldwide, noting the trans-boundary nature of disease. We appreciate all member economies’ efforts on transparency and recognize the importance of the role played by all APEC member economies to share information to increase the likelihood of success of collaborative efforts to fight the epidemic. The APEC Health Working Group also stresses the importance of working with established mechanisms, such as the World Health Organization’s International Health Regulations (2005), which play a key role in supporting the global response.

We, the APEC Health Working Group, also acknowledge that the current epidemic is having other effects on APEC economies, including travel and trade. Major threats to health security can impose an extra burden on health systems and increase costs. Therefore and in line with the HWG’s recent efforts to strengthen our policy-focus and contributions on issues of health and the economy, the APEC Health Working Group sees merit in exchanging views on the public health implications of efforts to respond and control this outbreak using an economic lens. These efforts will be in harmony with the work of other international fora and allow the APEC Health Working Group to amplify regional perspectives without duplicating work done elsewhere. In particular, the APEC Health Working Group will consider best practices that were utilized by APEC member economies during the COVID-19 epidemic to support the health needs of APEC member populations, with this knowledge-exchange aiming to promote resilient health systems and further strengthen rapid emergency response capacities in the APEC region. This work is closely aligned with existing APEC Health Working Group work streams and the APEC Health Working Group will review and discuss at its meeting in August 2020 during the 3rd Senior Officials’ Meeting. At that time, the APEC Health Working Group can consider

advice and recommendations it may wish to advance to APEC Ministers and Leaders. The APEC Health Working Group will also consider how the Group’s efforts can encourage economies to take action to further enhance the resilience, scalability and sustainability of health systems to promote healthy economies and people.

# # #