

ASEAN highlights good practices in addressing HIV and AIDS in cities

Written by Administrator

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NEW YORK, 14 June 2016 – “We must remain vigilant of the threat while at the same time continue to develop creative and implementable actions to achieve Zero New Infection, Zero AIDS Related Death and Zero Stigma and Discrimination,” said H.E. Prof. Dr. Nila Djuwita Farid Moeloek, Minister of Health of Indonesia.

The minister spoke on 8 June at the United Nations in New York where ASEAN Member States (AMS) discussed the good practices, experiences and innovative approaches to addressing HIV and AIDS in the cities with stakeholders. The round table forum was a side event held during the recent UN High Level Meeting on Ending AIDS. This meeting provided a platform for the Cities Getting to Zeros project of the ASEAN. UN entities and Secretariat, Permanent Missions to the UN, government representatives, academe, civil society groups, development partners and participants of the UN High Level Meeting attended.

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As ASEAN Task Force on AIDS (ATFOA) Chair, the Union Minister for Health and Sports of Myanmar opened the meeting followed by remarks from ASEAN Secretariat and UNAIDS. Jan Beagle, Deputy Executive Director of UNAIDS, underscored policy changes that have led to decreasing HIV prevalence in ASEAN and congratulated the community for the vision and commitment in putting Three Zeros to concrete action and results at the cities level. She emphasized that “cities approach is so important—local government can be the catalyst for building new partnerships between the private sector, civil society and government.” In addition, she emphasized that “investing in HIV is about investing in people, not a disease. HIV is so much more than a health issue—it is a development, rights and gender issue. Returns on investment are manifold – a healthy workforce increases, national productivity, and inclusion build more resilient societies.”

The call to reaffirm the ASEAN Community’s commitment in moving towards the Three Zeros by 2030 was highlighted. As H.E. Vongthep Arthakaivalvatee, Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN for ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community, mentioned in his speech that “ASEAN must work hand-in-hand to sustain the progress made in addressing HIV and AIDS in the region; and fast-track a greater and appropriate response by key communities of ASEAN Member States within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals and achieve targets by 2030.”

The round table discussion also featured the launch of a special issue of the ASEAN E-Bulletin on Cities Getting to Zeros. This special issue contained the good practices and key messages of ASEAN Member States in getting to zeros including the updated situation of HIV and AIDS in the region. The good practices and experiences in getting to zeros from the cities in Malaysia, Thailand and Philippines were also presented in the round table discussion. The presentation highlighted the progress of implementation and achievements, mobilization of resources for sustaining and replication of effective programme models as well as innovative approaches to prevention, treatment and management of HIV and AIDS. Open discussions pointed out the need to monitor progress of the Cities Getting to Zeros project and to continue the documentation of project outcomes at regional level.

In concluding the forum, the Minister of Health of Lao PDR, as ASEAN Chair, delivered key messages on the implementation of Cities Getting to Zeros towards sustaining HIV and AIDS responses in ASEAN. The purpose of these messages was to impart lessons and challenges in the implementation of the project. The vital messages focused on six thematic areas, namely, on scaling up and strengthening service delivery, creating a supportive environment to reduce stigma and discrimination, developing strategic information, enhancing multi-sector coordination, strengthening community participation and sustaining effective programmes.

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