



A COMMON AGENDA
TO ADVANCE SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT IN ASIA &
THE PACIFIC

23 - 27 May 2022 Bangkok | THAILAND



High-level thematic roundtable on Strengthening health responses and preparedness

Monday 23 May, 14:00-14:30 hours

Background

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated inequities between and within countries and communities in the region with regard to access to vaccines, diagnostics and therapeutics. Many countries, particularly lower income countries are lagging in vaccinating their populations, with less than 20 per cent of the total population fully vaccinated. This vaccine inequity is prolonging the pandemic in both developed and developing countries. The recent emergence of a new strain of the virus (Omicron) capable of spreading faster, threatens to derail recent efforts to open economies and borders. At the same time, there is hope that enhanced cooperation will lead to higher production of vaccines, diagnostics and therapeutics and their equitable distribution, and that 2022 will serve as the watershed year in the battle to end the pandemic and build back better in the context of the 2030 Agenda.

There is an increased momentum and political will for strengthening health systems and providing universal health coverage, with access for all to high quality, comprehensive, and affordable health care, closely aligned with SDG3 on ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages. More agile, adaptive and resilient health systems must be developed. There should be multisectoral action for health that puts primary health care at its center. Synergies with other sectors should be harnessed to advance public health objectives and to increase public health care funding.

The roundtable will build upon the outcomes of the Regional Conversation on “Equitable Access to Vaccines, Diagnostics and Therapeutics” organized by ESCAP on 30 November 2021. As member States commemorate ESCAP’s seventy-fifth anniversary, discussions about strengthening health responses and preparedness are particularly relevant. Good health and wellbeing are pillars of a more resilient, sustainable, prosperous and inclusive future for all in Asia and the Pacific. The roundtable is expected to address the following questions:

- a) What are the actions required to be taken at global, regional and country level to ensure equitable access to vaccines, diagnostics and therapeutics? Has an improvement been made in this regard?



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- b) What investments need to be made in order to build more resilient and agile health systems? how can future pandemics be averted?
- c) What is the role that organizations like ESCAP play in helping the achievement of the above goals?

Objectives

The objectives of the roundtable are as follows:

1. Identify priority actions by countries to achieve equitable access to vaccines and therapeutics;
2. Provide a roadmap for member States on a sustainable way out from the pandemic, including through strengthening pandemic response capacities and health systems; and
3. Identify how regional cooperation and dialogue at regional level can help in the achievement of the above objectives.