

**KEYNOTE SPEECH
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA**

**AT THE HIGH-LEVEL THEMATIC ROUNDTABLE 1:
STRENGTHENING HEALTH RESPONSES AND PREPAREDNESS
DURING THE 78TH SESSION OF UNESCAP**

BANGKOK, 23 MAY 2022

***President of the ECOSOC,
Executive Secretary of ESCAP,
Honorable delegates,***

Nearly 2,5 years into this pandemic, life has gradually returned to normal.

Looking back, however, it is clear that we were unprepared to face the pandemic. Our regional health architecture was not strong enough to effectively respond to COVID-19.

The consequence is alarming. 50% of 5,2 million deaths due to COVID-19 globally were in the Asia-Pacific region.

Today, our road to full recovery continues to face hurdles as huge vaccination gap remain between countries including in Asia-Pacific.

In some countries, vaccination rate is still below 20% due to unequal access, logistical challenges, and misinformation on vaccines.

Colleagues,

Together, we must expedite “vaccines” into “vaccinations” and end this pandemic.

Moving forward, we have no other option but to strengthen our regional health architecture against any future pandemics.

Three things should be our focus.

First, strengthen political will for better health resilience.

Given the multidimensional impacts of this pandemic, we can no longer treat health resilience only as a health issue. This requires strong political will and commitment from the highest level including translating words into actions.

Within a stronger regional health resilience is stronger national health resilience. Robust investment in public health is a must. It's our political responsibility not a burden.

Everyone must have access to essential healthcare services.

Second, strengthen pandemic preparedness.

Being prepared means having a cooperation mechanism to better prevent, detect, and respond to any threat of infectious diseases.

Therefore, we need credible early-warning system and institutionalized information-sharing mechanism.

We must explore ways and means to procure necessary financing, encourage standardizing protocols and enable region-wide responses.

Third, strengthen regional health industries.

They need to be self-sufficient to meet our health demands.

It's urgent to enhance the production capacity of our regional health industries. This requires more substantial financing support, cooperation in research and development and technology transfer.

There is also an urgency to diversify our sources of raw materials, build our intra-regional production networks and eliminate trade barriers in the health sector.

I hope to see our regional health industries become part of global health supply chains.

Indonesia stands ready to be a vaccine production hub in the region.

Colleagues,

There is much to be done as we recover from this pandemic. But improving our health resilience and pandemic preparedness is definitely on top of our list.

Indonesia's G20 Presidency has included this issue as one of its priorities.

I look forward to seeing the UNESCAP facilitate further conversations and actions on this matter.

Let us recover together, recover stronger.

Thank you.

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