

Joint Statement of
The Twelfth Tripartite Health Ministers Meeting (THMM)
December 14-15, 2019
Seoul, Korea

We, the Korean, Chinese, and Japanese Health Ministers met in Seoul, Korea on December 15th, 2019, to review the achievements of the THMM since the first meeting and discuss future cooperation among three countries in the area of health. The agenda of the meeting included Universal Health Coverage (UHC), Infectious Disease Preparedness and Response, and Active and Healthy Aging.

1. Achieving UHC through ICT

We support the political declaration adopted at the 2019 UN High-Level Meeting on UHC and reaffirm the right of every human being to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. We welcome the statement of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Health Working - “Promoting Universal Health Coverage: Sharing a Prosperous and Healthy Future” (2019) - presented to the United Nations High-Level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage. We recognize that UHC is fundamental for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and is an action in the health sector to leave no one behind, a core spirit of SDGs. National efforts to strengthen health systems, in accordance with national contexts and priorities, will also help improve preparedness to a variety of health challenges and achieve UHC.

Discussion on how to use ICT and big data to promote health of patients is an important policy issue for the three countries. We share the recognition that efficiency in the overall health system can be enhanced via comprehensive utilization of big data and ICT through, for example predicting individual health status and risks at the primary healthcare stage and promoting adequate medication and self-care by providing customized health information.

We recognize the need to identify people who require healthcare services based on scientific evidence and provide community-based healthcare and welfare services. We will endeavor to provide a wide-range of medical services at a lower cost by sharing good practices of effective and ethical use of personal health data and technologies that can promote utilization of ICT and big data in the healthcare sector. We encourage the study and application of medical health data standards to better serve the health of people in three countries.

2. Infectious Disease Preparedness and Response

Infectious diseases, easily spread across national borders, continue to be a major threat to our region. Given the geographical proximity of the three countries and rising exchange of people and goods, the need for close cooperation at the regional level to respond to the outbreak of infectious diseases is imminent.

Korea, China, Japan have effectively responded to a number of global public health emergencies, including pandemic influenza A (H1N1), avian influenza (H7N9), and Ebola Virus Disease under the Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) and the Joint Action Plan on Joint Response against Pandemic Influenza A (H1N1) and Emerging and Re-emerging Infectious Diseases of Common Concern, which were revised twice, respectively.

We reemphasize the importance of preventive measures against infectious diseases and support strengthening cooperation to improve infectious disease response through the revision of the Joint Action Plan, to emphasize the importance of crisis communication, include cooperation in crisis assessment, and add information on creating a mechanism for trilateral communication through IHR national focal points.

We welcome the convening of the 13th China-Japan-Korea Forum for Communicable Disease Control and Prevention which involved some of ASEAN countries as observers to share information on the topics with common interest.

We will continue to work closely with the WHO Western Pacific Regional Office (WPRO) and the Asia-Pacific countries to further strengthen preparedness and response capacity in the region against infectious diseases through the implementation of the Asia Pacific Strategy for Emerging Diseases and Public Health Emergencies (APSED III). We will continue to improve rapid information sharing among the three countries, monitor public health threats in the region, and promote capacity building to respond to threats resulting from infectious diseases outbreaks.

3. Active and Healthy Aging

The rate of population aging is getting faster and more serious in the three countries than in other nations. In response, a variety of policies are implemented to prepare for population aging, with different policy approaches in line with the national context. Korea aims to reduce the financial burden of elderly citizens by providing health insurance benefits for essential healthcare services while increasing financial sustainability of the health insurance system by improving resource management. Meanwhile, China focuses on advancing its medical sector and strengthening the combination of medical and elderly care services to address health issues of elderly citizens and Japan conducts policies to strengthen community-based integrated care including preventive long-term care activities led by residents in the community and also to promote dementia-inclusive society as well as risk reduction of dementia.

As such, the three countries face the common challenge of population aging and are building respective response measures. We understand that active and healthy aging is a prerequisite to ensuring sustainable growth and strive to ensure high quality of life and independent life for elderly citizens. We recognize the need for taking multi-sectoral approach in policy development, by involving housing, healthcare, and care services departments and endeavor to provide cohesive and comprehensive policies.

We continue our discussion on low birthrate and aging population, which started in 2010 through the platform to share policies, experiences and best practices among the three countries facing the challenge of population aging. We adopted the Joint Declaration on Active and Healthy Ageing Cooperation which will be adopted on the Trilateral Summit on 24 December, 2019 in Chengdu, China, which states that active and healthy aging policies should be a national priority, emphasizes the need for a multi-sectoral approach, and aims to increase independence of elderly citizens by protecting their rights, freedom, and dignity.

4. Next meeting

We reaffirm the common recognition that the Tripartite Health Ministers Meeting will be held on a regular basis with involvement of the Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat (TCS) and that all relevant activities will be conducted on the basis of equality, reciprocity, and mutual benefit. We will coordinate the activities and objectives of other international health institutions, as appropriate, and promote the establishment of inter-agents and individual contact.

The next Tripartite Health Ministers' Meeting will be held in China in 2020.