



Ministry of Foreign Affairs
of JAPAN

Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) Public Health Network 10th Anniversary Event: High-level Meeting “Universal Health Coverage as a Tool to Combat Infectious Diseases”

30-31 May 2018, Tokyo, Japan

Scope & Purpose

Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) Public Health Network

The Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF)¹, founded in 1997, is an intergovernmental not-for-profit organisation representing the 53 ASEM² Partners: 30 European and 21 Asian countries, plus the European Union and the ASEAN Secretariat. Following the 6th ASEM Summit (ASEM6; 2006; Helsinki, Finland), where the leaders expressed their determination to combat avian influenza and a possible human influenza pandemic, the *ASEM Initiative for the Rapid Containment of Pandemic Influenza*, financially supported by the Government of Japan, was approved in principle at the ASEM Senior Officials Meeting (2008, Ljubljana, Slovenia). It was officially launched at the 9th ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting (ASEM FMM9; 2009; Hanoi, Viet Nam). Since then, the 2 components of the Initiative (*ASEM Stockpiling of Anti-viral Drugs and Personal Protective Equipment*, as well as *ASEF Public Health Network*) have contributed to strengthening ASEM Partners' capacity to manage public health emergencies.

ASEF has decided to build on its success in creating a network and mobilising a regional response to the risk of viral pandemics to tackle another global health challenge: the emergence and spread of bacterial infections that are resistant to antibiotics. These infections are difficult to treat, and they make surgical procedures much riskier. Since resistant organisms can move freely across national borders, national and regional responses are required that involve government and non-government stakeholders. The aim of the meeting in Tokyo will be to support a regional (Asia and Europe) approach for addressing the challenge of antimicrobial resistance (AMR). Although a One-Health Approach is needed that addresses the use of antibiotics for both humans and animals, and also the leakage of antibiotics into the environment, the initial meeting will focus on how global efforts to make progress towards universal coverage for human health can take the challenge of AMR into account.

Universal Health Coverage and Health Security

The threat to the public from possible disease outbreaks persists. In an interdependent world, public health incidents may rapidly affect other countries and even trigger crises in other regions, as seen by the example of the Ebola outbreak in 2014-2015. It is best to contain possible health emergencies locally, and universal health coverage (UHC)³ plays a key role. The Japan Global Health Working Group stated in the *Lancet* that “promoting UHC will help prevent another disease outbreak similar to the recent Ebola outbreak in West Africa, and create robust health systems, capable of withstanding future shocks. Robust health systems, in turn, are the prerequisites for achieving UHC”⁴. Thus, it is important to have a resilient healthcare system for effective pandemic preparedness and response.

¹ <http://www.ASEF.org>

² <http://www.ASEMinfoboard.org/>

³ UHC is “right to health” – regardless of economic status, everyone should receive the quality health care service they need without suffering financial hardship (http://www.who.int/health_financing/UHC_ENvs_BD.PDF)

⁴ [http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(16\)30177-5/abstract](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(16)30177-5/abstract)

The Emergence of Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR)

Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) has become one of the biggest threats to global health, food security and development. It will have a negative impact on the gains of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). AMR occurs when bacteria and other microorganisms develop resistance to medicines after being exposed to antimicrobial agents. Antibiotics are among the most common antimicrobial drugs used in humans and animals. Antibiotic resistance occurs naturally, but high levels of antibiotic use accelerate its development. The world is running out of antibiotics to treat infectious disease, and unless urgent action is taken, decades of advance in health and medicine risk being undone. For instance, routine surgery will become very risky, and illnesses which are currently curable will once again become fatal.

AMR and the SDGs

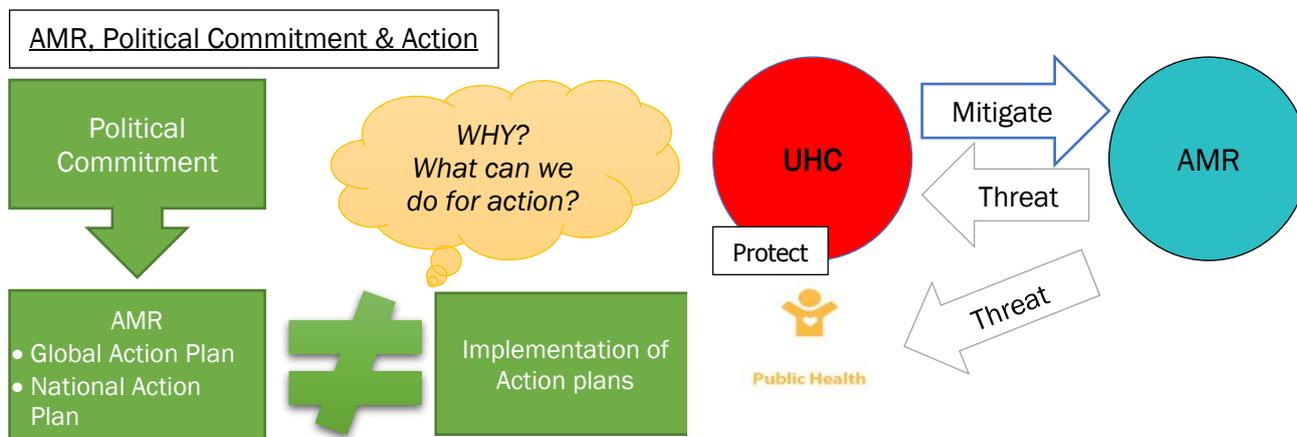


Source: WHO-WPRO

How can UHC help?

In 2016, Global Leaders pledged to fight against AMR at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). It was for the first time that Heads of State committed to a broad, coordinated approach to address the root cause of AMR across multiple sectors, especially in human health, animal health and agriculture. This was only the 4th time that a health issue has been taken up by the UNGA. The high-level UN political declaration provided strong support for the implementation of the Global Action Plan on AMR – since then, many countries have developed National Action Plans (NAPs). While the formulation of a NAP is useful in putting AMR on the policy agenda, implementation of these action plans remains challenging due to the many factors that need to be addressed. AMR is not an agenda any organisation or nation can manage alone. Communities, consumers, healthcare professionals, veterinarians, policymakers and the private sector each have a part to play and therefore must closely work together.

The emergence of AMR presents a threat to UHC as it can lead to increased demand for health services. On the other hand, a strong health system can mitigate the risk of AMR. For instance, where regulation is weak and antibiotics can be obtained without a prescription, people may overuse antibiotics leading to an acceleration in the development of resistance. UHC helps to ensure access to quality, secure and effective antibiotics to treat infections. UHC also helps to tackle the problem from many angles – ensuring financial protection against the high cost of treating drug-resistant infections, strengthening supply systems, and monitoring consumption and use of medications. UHC is a foundation for development, and a key to achieving the concept “no one left behind” from SDGs.



In 2018, ASEF Public Health Network and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan are co-hosting a multi-country, High-level Meeting focusing on UHC in relation to effective management of infectious diseases including possible future pandemic as well as AMR.

Objectives of the High-level Meeting

The overall aim of this High-level Meeting is to facilitate agreement between governments and other stakeholders on practical actions to ensure access to effective treatment of infectious diseases while reducing the risk of the emergence of AMR. The specific objectives are:

- To bring together officials with responsibilities for AMR and UHC and other stakeholders to explore the challenges they face in both ensuring access to antibiotic treatment, when needed, and reducing the risk of AMR;
- To identify practical strategies for integrating a concern for AMR into strategies for making progress towards UHC and for taking UHC strategies into account in NAPs for addressing AMR;
- To agree on priorities for international cooperation between Asia and Europe to support an equitable and sustainable approach for addressing the challenge of infectious diseases.

Target Audience

The High-level Meeting will address 3 target audiences: 1) Senior-level health officials who are working in the area of UHC and/or AMR; 2) Officials whose duty is related to pandemic preparedness and response; 3) Private company representatives who have an involvement in the production, supply and use of antibiotics. More specifically:

- Senior-level officials, advisors, and/or other decision-makers from ASEM Partners' Ministry of Health or equivalent who work in the area of UHC and/or AMR
- Chief/directors of ASEM Partners' national health agencies or equivalent who work in the area of UHC or AMR
- Senior-level from ASEM Partners' Ministries of Finance, and Foreign Affairs
- Representatives of international organisations, NGOs
- Representatives of private sectors whose work is closely related to AMR, such as pharmaceutical industries

Date & Location

This High-level Meeting will take place on 30-31 May 2018 in Tokyo, Japan.

External cooperation for this meeting

The planning of this meeting has been developed in cooperation with the Coordination Office of Measures on Emerging Infectious Diseases, Cabinet Secretariat, the Government of Japan; the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare Japan; and Wellcome Trust.



ASEF's contribution is made possible with the financial support from the Government of Japan.