Pandemic & the Economy: “Investment for the Future"
Wednesday 21 April 2021: 16:00 – 17:30 SGT (90 minutes)

This webinar will look at the balance between public health and the economy under the COVID-19 pandemic. The panelists are expected to discuss how best to communicate with different sectors’ priorities in order to draw the best possible strategies in tackling the pandemic keeping the population safe while minimising the economic damage.

Panellists:
- **Associate Prof Vernon LEE**, Director, Communicable Disease Division, MoH, Singapore
- **Mr SOH Leng Wan**, Senior Director (Industry Division), Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI), Singapore
- **Mr Jouni VARANKA**, Ministerial Adviser, Prime Minister's Office, Finland
- **Dr Angel KUNCHEV**, Chief Health Inspector, MoH Bulgaria
- **Ms Nobuko ICHIKAWA**, Senior Environmental Advisor, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)

Moderator:
- **Ms Riko KIMOTO**, Project Manager, Sustainable Development & Public Health Department, Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF)

Session Coordinator
**Ms Riko KIMOTO**, ASEF

Concept Note
The world is facing an unprecedented scale of pandemic in recent human history. The decisions governments are taking will impact people’s action, life and society, which will eventually shape how the world will look in the future with a “new normal”. Promoting economic activities without sufficiently addressing public health concern would result in worsening the pandemic, which could lead to the re-introduction of the restrictive measures disrupting economic activities for a more extended period. In the field of public health, it is widely acknowledged that it is best to contain disease outbreaks at the early stage to prevent further spreading. The larger the outbreak becomes, the more difficult to contain – this, in turn, means more social and economic damage to society. On the other hand, strategies without addressing economic concerns risk creating poverty as pandemic often deteriorates many households’ financial situation, especially those relying on work in the informal sector and contract-based jobs without compensation. It is estimated that approximately 88 to 115 million people will be pushed into extreme poverty in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic¹.

Objectives of the Roundtable
The overall aim of this roundtable is to facilitate a much-needed dialogue between the public health sector and non-health sector when deciding on COVID-19 related policies and strategies in different countries’ setting. As each country possess different health, economic and social infrastructures, no “one size fit all” response will be expected. Nonetheless, the roundtable will seek to find some guides that can be considered by ASEM Partners. How an agreement is made between governments, public health authorities and non-health sectors on practical ways to overcome economic difficulties will be shared by some ASEM Partners.

AGENDA

16:00  Welcome Address  
Amb MORIKAWA Toru, Executive Director, ASEF
Video Message from Dr Takeshi KASAI, Regional Director, World Health Organisation Western Pacific Regional Office

16:05  Introduction  
Moderator: Ms Riko KIMOTO, ASEF

16:10  Panellist 1  
Prof Vernon LEE, MoH, Singapore

16:20  Panellist 2  
Mr SOH Leng Wan, MTI, Singapore

16:30  Panellist 3  
Mr Jouni VARANKA, Prime Minister’s Office, Finland

16:40  Panellist 4  
Dr Angel KUNCHEV, MoH, Bulgaria

16:50  Panellist 5  
Ms Nobuko ICHIKAWA, EBRD

17:00  Q&A  
Ms Riko KIMOTO, ASEF

17:25  Conclusion  
Ms Riko KIMOTO, ASEF

17:30  Webinar End

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