

●I am honored to address the high-level meeting on "Pandemic & the Economy 2023: A Pandemic-Resilient Society" in Helsinki co-hosted by the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health of Finland, and the Asia-Europe Foundation. I would like to express my sincere appreciation to everyone for their efforts in organizing this conference.

●Today's event is a part of the Asia-Europe Meeting Initiative for the Rapid Containment of Pandemic Influenza. Japan announced its launch in 2008 in response to the increased risk of a new strains of influenza outbreak in the Asian region at that time. It is one of Japan's major contributions to the ASEF. Japan has made an additional contribution in 2021 in response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

●One of the pillars of the initiative is Public Health Network Project. It has been actively promoting capacity building during emergency operations, enhancing emergency communication, and networking between Asia and Europe.

In February 2023, a conference on “Universal Health Coverage (UHC) in an Era of Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) and Pandemics” was held in Tokyo. There the promotion of Universal Health Coverage was discussed from the perspectives of infectious disease control, including the Antimicrobial Resistance.

The Public Health Network project has been highly evaluated by experts in the health field as a project to support from soft side of preparedness against pandemics. Today's meeting is a part of this project.

●This year, as the chair country of G7, and looking ahead the UN High-level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage in September, Japan has been leading the contribution to international health, focusing on achieving more resilient, equitable and sustainable Universal Health Coverage.

To prepare for future public health emergencies, at the G7 Hiroshima Summit in May, Prime Minister KISHIDA Fumio and his counterparts renewed their commitment:

One: to strengthen efforts to improve international governance for Pandemic Preparedness and Response (PPR).

Two: to set international rules, including negotiating the creation of a so-called pandemic treaty

Three: to implement sustainable financing.

G7 leaders also reaffirmed:

One: the role of UHC, which will be essential in addressing the various challenges set back by the pandemic,

Two: their commitment to continue the G7's contribution toward achieving UHC,

Three: further promoting health innovation, including the promotion of research and development to cope with pandemics and AMR, and the enhancement of equitable access to Medical Countermeasures (MCM).

Japan will continue to contribute to entire international community through the G7's concerted efforts to promote these initiatives while the lessons of the COVID pandemic remain vivid in our memory.

- Today, after the experience of the COVID-19, it is expected that there will be a revival of exchanges between Asia and Europe through business, tourism, and other activities.

This is the best time to bring together stakeholders from various sectors to share best practices to better deal with future pandemics and public health crises, and to improve our pandemic preparedness as a society.

I believe that this high-level meeting will be beneficial to all present here.

- Japan highly appreciates ASEF's activities in implementing exchange projects to promote understanding between Asia and Europe.

We will continue to make best efforts to expand exchanges from the private sector level to the high level through health network projects and other activities.

I hope all of you will have a successful meeting.

Thank you.