

**INTERVENTION NOTES BY H.E. AMBASSADOR HAMIDON ALI,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF MALAYSIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS
AT THE SPECIAL EVENT ON THE THEME OF “AVIAN FLU”, ORGANIZED
BY THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (ECOSOC), THURSDAY,
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1. Avian Influenza H5N1 had not occurred in Malaysia until the first case of avian influenza was reported in Tumpat, Kelantan State on 17 August 2004. A total of 48 birds died as a result of the virus. The outbreak was successfully contained and on 22nd February 2005, Malaysia declared itself to be free of the virus. To date, there has been no single bird-to-human transmission of Avian Influenza H5N1 reported in Malaysia thanks to the vigilance and preemptive measures taken by the relevant agencies in the country.

2. In response to the call by World Health Organization (WHO), the Malaysian Government has set up the National Influenza Planning Committee under the Ministry of Health which has been tasked to provide the framework and a plan for dealing with pandemic influenza. In addition, the Ministry of Health has also laid out an Action Plan to tackle the pandemic influenza issue taking into account the above recommendations as proposed by the National Influenza Planning Committee. A joint panel has also been established by the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture and Agro- Based Industries to prepare for the possibility of an avian flu outbreak and to take measures to prevent it. The panel has come up with a contingency plan to prepare for the outbreak including

by intensifying the inspection of import and export of poultry at the country's borders, compensating the poultry breeders in the event that their birds are culled, stockpiling of medication and influenza flu vaccines for at least 25 per cent of the population and intensifying awareness campaigns to inform villagers and breeders of the danger of avian flu. At the moment, the Government has spent approximately RM 4.2 million (US\$ 1.1 million) to stockpile the anti-viral drugs which is sufficient for 60,000 people. The Government has also designated 21 hospitals for patients suffering from avian flu. The institute for Medical Research (IMR) has been monitoring and carrying out tests for the avian flu.

3. Malaysia has also taken additional measures to prevent the spread of bird flu in the country with the establishment of a multi-agency task force comprising of representatives from the Agriculture and Health Departments, Customs Department, Immigration Department, Police and the Armed Forces to prevent the spread of avian flu into Malaysia from neighbouring countries.

4. When the avian flu was first detected in Kelantan in 2004, the Government paid out about RM250,000 (US\$ 65,790) as compensation for culling their poultry to 933 small time breeders and villagers in the affected State. The Government has also made an undertaking that there will be no limit to the compensation that would have to be paid to the farmers and breeders. The government is also looking at the possibility of levying heavier penalties on smuggling of poultry into

the country from the neighbouring countries. Presently, the Veterinary Public Health Ordinance provides for a fine of RM50,000(US\$ 13,150) or two years imprisonment for the importation of banned animals, including live poultry , and the confiscation of the imported items.

5. At the regional level, regional cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region has been strengthened among the ASEAN states through the ASEAN + 3 (China, Japan and ROK) Emerging Infectious Diseases Programme which was started in August 2004 and is now in its 2nd Phase. In addition, there has also been cooperation in this area in other regional forums as such APEC(Asia Pacific Economic Community) and ASEM (Asean Europe Meeting). Under APEC's Infectious Disease Strategy which was agreed to in Shanghai in October 2001, and through the work of its Health Task Force and Task Force on Emergency Preparedness, APEC has laid the groundwork to address the avian influenza threat and future pandemics. The possibility of a coordinated regional response to this problem was also discussed at the recent APEC Ministerial Meeting in Brisbane, Australia. Malaysia and the other ASEAN countries and dialogue partners will further discuss on possible partnerships on this issue at the forthcoming ASEAN Summit, and the first ever East Asian Summit, in Kuala Lumpur in December 2005.

6. Malaysia is fully committed to the prevention and the eradication of the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) in birds to ensure that the disease

does not cause outbreaks and which in turn may affect the human population. In this regard, Malaysia has and will continue to play an active role in promoting the cooperation among the ASEAN countries to eradicate the disease in the region in its capacity as the current chair for the ASEAN Taskforce for the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI). Under this taskforce, a work plan has been formulated for regional cooperation to prevent, control and eradicate the disease which covers eight strategic areas over a period of three years from 2006 to 2008. Based on the work plan, Thailand will lead the region's effort in the area of surveillance and diagnosis, Malaysia will take charge of containment, emergency measures and disease-free zones while Indonesia, Singapore and the Philippines will be leading the efforts in the areas of strategic vaccination, information sharing and public awareness and communications respectively.

7. Malaysia believes that cooperation between countries and international organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO), Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and World Organization of Animal Health (OIE) are essential to eradicate the disease effectively. In this regard, Malaysia is supportive of WHO Global Influenza Programme and also the US initiative on the new International Partnership on Avian and Pandemic Influenza (IPAPI).

8. Due to the world-wide, multi-sectoral threat of the virus, Malaysia also believes that the international community should strengthen their efforts towards the prevention and eradication of the disease by undertaking measures to

improve its capacity to respond and prepare for an influenza pandemic. In this regard, the international community should take the necessary measures to reduce the present global shortage of antiviral drugs including by allowing local pharmaceutical companies to produce generic drugs to ensure equitable and affordable access of antiviral drugs to all the countries in the world.