

Greetings,

We at the APEC EINet are pleased to invite you to a special videoconference on a critical and timely topic: **Pandemic Influenza Preparedness and Response: Information Sharing through a Virtual Symposium**. This videoconference will take place on Thursday, January 19, 2006, at 6pm Pacific Standard Time. The “virtual symposium” will explore how each economy is preparing for, and planning to respond to, pandemic influenza and other emerging bio-threats. All APEC member economies are invited and encouraged to participate.

The overall aim of this videoconference is to promote regional information sharing and collaboration to enhance biopreparedness against pandemic influenza and other emergent threats. In order to improve preparedness regionally, it is vital to understand how each economy in the region is undertaking preparedness and response planning. These activities, aimed at increasing coordination and collaboration, are in line with recently endorsed APEC HTF recommendations. Specifically, EINet’s aims are to:

1. Bring together APEC economies in a dynamic, real time discussion on biopreparedness at the national level and at the hubs of commerce and transportation.
2. Initiate discussion by sharing specific examples of current practices—e.g. scenario exercises, communication drills and policy evaluation.
3. Encourage future collaborative partnerships in biopreparedness, especially between those economies with close economic links.
4. Use innovative technologies (e.g. Access Grid) for real-time, virtual interchange, enhancing their utility for future collaboration and response to a bio-threat.

Videoconferencing offers an alternative to in-person conferencing, with numerous advantages. It cuts down on the time and cost of traditional conferences requiring long-distance travel. Simultaneous communication with multiple sites is possible, with numerous visualization options on screen. Simultaneous Web-based information exchange is also possible, maximizing the benefit of the Internet.

The virtual symposium requires advanced Internet networking capabilities. We are prepared and willing to provide technical consultation to assist in participation. For those economies interested, we ask that you first respond to this email (by October 28, 2005), requesting participation. We will follow up with a confirmation and request that your team submit a brief presentation proposal in a Word document by December 30, 2005. Presentations for the videoconference may be in the form of a live PowerPoint presentation, pre-recorded video, or other media which are deemed appropriate by the international steering committee. We ask formal presentations to be approximately 15 minutes each with an emphasis on follow up, a moderated question and answer session, and a debriefing discussion to assure that all participants receive maximum benefit from their participation. As one of the goals is to enhance transparency without compromising integrity, questions that entail sensitive security issues (e.g. specific information on isolation and quarantine) will be avoided.

Thank you for your interest, and we hope your economy will be represented at this important and timely event. If you know of experts in your economy who would be interested as a presenter, please let us know. If your economy would like to participate, please respond to this email and we will follow-up with a more detailed letter regarding this event.

Sincerely,

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