

ASEAN CONFERENCE ON REDUCING MARINE DEBRIS IN ASEAN REGION

22-23 NOVEMBER 2017, PHUKET, THAILAND

MEDIA RELEASE

More than 200 participants from ASEAN Member States, dialogue and development partners, international organisations, private sector, and civil society gathered on 22-23 November 2017 in Phuket, Thailand, for the ASEAN Conference on Reducing Marine Debris in ASEAN Region. The Conference was opened by H.E. General Surasak Karnjanarat, Minister of Natural Resources and Environment of Thailand; and H.E. Vongthep Arthakaivalvatee, Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN for ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC).

General Surasak highlighted the adverse impacts of marine debris, especially plastics, to the environment, economic development and human health, as well as the urgent need for ASEAN countries to address the issue. “On behalf of the Royal Thai Government, I reaffirmed our voluntary commitment on this issue, as reflected during the ‘Ocean Conference’ in New York, United States of America, this year”, he said. He added, “I hope this Conference will serve as a platform for all sectors in ASEAN countries and partnerships to share experiences, best practices, and views on tackling marine debris issue. This Conference will not only strengthen our collaboration in ASEAN community to tackle the marine debris problem together, but also will raise awareness of our next generation in the future.

In his opening remarks, DSG Vongthep stressed the importance of addressing marine debris pollution through regional action collectively and holistically. “Although the problem of marine debris pollution is global, it is important to note that the top 20 countries ranked by size of mismanaged plastic waste include six ASEAN Member States. Marine debris pollution is therefore very much a regional concern to ASEAN which will require a regional action,” he said. As the majority of marine debris originates from the land, DSG also highlighted that transforming consumer behaviour through Culture of Prevention approach will be among the first critical steps for ASEAN to take at the regional level to prevent waste from entering the oceans in the first place, and the Conference will play a pivotal role in setting the necessary transformation in motion.

The Conference reviewed the issue of marine debris pollution from the global, regional, and legal perspectives; exchanged views on existing national policies, initiatives and best practices; and discussed two main approaches towards solution, namely (i) policy and management solutions and (ii) innovative solutions and technologies.

An exhibition was also set up during the Conference to showcase the rich marine biodiversity of ASEAN Member States and various initiatives of ASEAN countries, ASEAN

Centre for Biodiversity, and other partner organisations on marine protection, marine biodiversity conservation, and marine debris solution.

The two-day Conference was hosted by the Royal Thai Government and co-organised by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of Thailand with the support of the ASEAN Secretariat, the ACB-GIZ Care4Bio Project and Coca Cola.