



MEDIA RELEASE

20TH MEETING OF THE SUB-REGIONAL MINISTERIAL STEERING COMMITTEE ON TRANSBOUNDARY HAZE POLLUTION

**1 June 2018
Bangkok, Thailand**

1. The Twentieth Meeting of the Sub-Regional Ministerial Steering Committee on Transboundary Haze Pollution (20th MSC) was held on 1 June 2018 in Bangkok, Thailand, and attended by Ministers/representatives responsible for the environment, for land, forest fires and haze, from Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand, and the Secretary-General of ASEAN. The Twentieth Meeting of the Technical Working Group on Transboundary Haze Pollution (20th TWG) preceded the Meeting.
2. The Ministers noted the ASEAN Specialised Meteorological Centre's (ASMC's) weather outlook that the dry season in the southern ASEAN region was expected between June and October 2018, during which neither El-Niño nor La-Niña condition was forecast. During the season, occasional dry periods could result in an increase in the risk of hotspot activities in the region. MSC countries pledged to remain vigilant and to monitor and step up their haze preventive efforts to minimise any possible occurrence of transboundary smoke haze during periods of drier weather.
3. The Ministers noted ASMC's continual efforts in improving its monitoring and early warning of transboundary haze, and noted with appreciation the initiative by ASMC on its new 5-year Regional Capability Building Programme that will benefit AMS through the sharing of technical knowledge and skills in haze monitoring and weather and climate prediction.
4. The Ministers noted with appreciation various initiatives and actions by MSC countries to address the transboundary haze pollution in the region. The MSC countries reaffirmed their readiness to provide assistance such as deployment of the technical resources for firefighting assistance on emergency response situation, if requested, and to collaborate among MSC countries with enhanced cooperation and coordination to mitigate land and forest fires, when necessary.
5. The Ministers recalled the commitment and guidance of the ASEAN Leaders at the 31st ASEAN Summit held on 13 November 2017 in Manila, Philippines, and 32nd ASEAN Summit held on 28 April 2018 in Singapore, towards the regional cooperation on transboundary haze pollution control. The Ministers reiterated their commitment to fully and effectively implement the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution (AATHP) and the Roadmap on ASEAN Cooperation towards Transboundary Haze Pollution Control with Means of Implementation

(the Roadmap) to achieve a Haze-Free ASEAN by 2020. The Ministers welcomed the progress towards the finalization of the Establishment Agreement and Host Country Agreement of the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Transboundary Haze Pollution Control (ACC THPC) in Indonesia, and looked forward to the full operationalization of the ACC THPC. The Ministers also welcomed the progress on the implementation of the Roadmap, and looked forward to the mid-term review of the implementation of the Roadmap as stock-taking of the implementation progress and to sustain momentum in ensuring demonstrable improvements so as to achieve the vision of haze-free ASEAN by 2020.

6. The Ministers noted the discussion and substantial progress on the implementation of the Strategic Review of the Sub-Regional Ministerial Steering Committee (MSC) Programmes and Activities which includes: (i) enhancing haze control management through early warning/monitoring and fire prevention and suppression; (ii) refinement of the Fire Danger Rating System (FDRS); (iii) revised Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for Monitoring, Assessment and Joint Emergency Response under the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution, in which the Alert Levels, Trigger Points and Actions on Fire Prevention and Suppression were incorporated; (iv) bilateral collaboration in line with AATHP; and (v) capacity building of ASEAN Member States under the Regional Haze Training Network.

7. The Ministers recalled that the Ministers at the Thirteenth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution (COP-13) held on 12-13 September 2017 in Brunei Darussalam, welcomed the endorsement of the modality for sharing hotspot information among MSC countries as recommended by the 7th Meeting of the MSC Technical Task Force (7th MTF). The Ministers noted that the information sharing mechanism has been operationalized during the dry season in southern ASEAN.

8. The Ministers noted the significant progress of the implementation of the ASEAN Peatland Management Strategy (APMS 2006-2020) through the ASEAN Programme on Sustainable Management of Peatland Ecosystems (APSMPE 2014-2020) and expressed appreciation for the support from ASEAN dialogue and development partners. The Ministers recalled the Financing Agreement for the ASEAN-EU Programme on Sustainable Use of Peatland and Haze Mitigation in ASEAN (SUPA) which was signed on 27 December 2016 with an indicative budget of EUR 24.5 million for the duration of 60 months, and looked forward to the programme implementation in 2018. The Ministers also looked forward to the finalisation and signing of Large Grant Agreement of the Measurable Action for Haze-Free Sustainable Land Management in Southeast Asia (MAHFSA), a programme supported by International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), amounting USD 3.5 million for a duration of 60 months. The Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to coordinate the implementation of programmes/projects under APSMPE (2014-2020) through ASEAN mechanisms, enhanced national level efforts and multi-stakeholder partnership. The Ministers also supported the second review of APMS to be undertaken by the ASEAN Task Force on Peatlands.

9. The Ministers also noted the report of the Study on the Economic, Health and Social Impact of Haze in 2015 on the ASEAN Region which has been endorsed by the Conference of the Parties to the AATHP (COP).

10. The Ministers expressed their appreciation to the Royal Thai Government for hosting the 20th MSC Meeting, the excellent arrangements made, and generous hospitality provided. The 21st MSC Meeting will be held in Brunei Darussalam in 2019.
