



MEDIA RELEASE

14TH MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE ASEAN AGREEMENT ON TRANSBOUNDARY HAZE POLLUTION

5 OCTOBER 2018, NAY PYI TAW, MYANMAR

1. Ministers responsible for the environment, for land, forest fires and haze, from ASEAN Member States (AMS), held their 14th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution on 5 October 2018 in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar.
2. The Ministers reviewed the implementation of the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution (AATHP) and reaffirmed their commitment through concerted national efforts and regional cooperation to fully and effectively implement the AATHP and the Roadmap on ASEAN Cooperation towards Transboundary Haze Pollution Control with Means of Implementation to achieve a Haze-Free ASEAN by 2020. The Ministers commended the various initiatives and actions undertaken by ASEAN Member States and noted with appreciation the continuous efforts in strengthening national capabilities and regional cooperation in assessment, prevention, mitigation and management of land and/or forest fires and the resulting haze.
3. The Ministers were updated on the ASEAN Specialised Meteorological Centre's (ASMC's) review and outlook of the weather and smoke haze situation for the ASEAN region. The Ministers noted ASMC's update that models from major climate centres forecast a 70% chance of weak El Nino conditions developing toward the end of the year while current conditions remained neutral (neither El Nino nor La Nina). In terms of weather outlook, the onset of the Northeast Monsoon in the coming months is expected bring a transition to the traditional dry season in the northern ASEAN region, and conversely a transition to the traditional rainy season in the southern ASEAN region. Rainfall is expected to be below-normal and near-normal for the northern and southern ASEAN regions respectively, and temperature is forecast to be above-normal across the region. A gradual increase in hotspot activities can be expected in the northern ASEAN region with the transition to the dry season. In the southern ASEAN region, sporadic increases in hotspot activities can still be expected during dry periods in the coming weeks. With the onset of the traditional rainy season in November 2018, an increase in shower activities are expected to help keep hotspot activities subdued. The Ministers urged AMS to remain vigilant and continuously monitor and step up their haze preventive efforts to minimise any possible occurrence of transboundary smoke haze from land and forest fires during periods of drier weather.

4. The Ministers were also updated on ASMC's continual efforts to enhance its weather and haze monitoring and forecast capabilities by leveraging on advanced modelling systems and the latest satellite technology. The Ministers noted with appreciation the initiative by ASMC on its 5-year Regional Capability Building Programme that aimed to benefit AMS through the sharing of technical knowledge and skills in haze monitoring and weather and climate prediction.

5. The Ministers welcomed the progress made in the second year of the implementation of the Roadmap on ASEAN Cooperation towards Transboundary Haze Pollution Control with Means of Implementation. The Ministers looked forward to the mid-term review and evaluation of the implementation of the Roadmap which will be presented at the next Meeting with a view to take stock of the progress and sustain momentum in ensuring demonstrable improvements so as to achieve the vision of a haze-free ASEAN by 2020.

6. 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 operationalisation of the ACC THPC. 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, on the importance of regional cooperation on transboundary haze pollution control and urged the Parties to further intensify efforts to bring the negotiations to conclusion.

7. The Ministers noted with satisfaction 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.

8. The Ministers welcomed the findings from the Study on the Economic, Health and Social Impact of Haze in 2015 on the ASEAN Region which had provided baseline indicators on 2015 haze impact on health, economy and society. The Ministers recognised the need for ASEAN to embark in more comprehensive studies to further improve our in-depth understanding of the transboundary haze pollution.

9. The Ministers commended the Sub-Regional Ministerial Steering Committee on Transboundary Haze Pollution in reaffirming 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. The Ministers noted with appreciation the modality for sharing hotspot information among MSC countries has been operationalised during the dry season in southern ASEAN.

10. The Ministers commended the Sub-Regional Ministerial Steering Committee on Transboundary Haze Pollution in the Mekong Sub-Region (MSC Mekong) in reaffirming their commitment to the full and effective implementation of the Chiang Rai 2017 Plan of Action to further strengthen and synergise cooperation in the implementation of the Roadmap through a common set of priorities namely: information technology, public awareness and engagement, reduction of health and environmental risks, and air quality monitoring network. Specifically, the Ministers were pleased to note the achievement of the target in 2017 with an annual cumulative hotspot count in the MSC Mekong below 30,000.

11. The Ministers agreed to meet again in 2019 in Cambodia on the occasion of the 15th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution (COP-15) which will be held back to back with 15th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on the Environment.
