

**JOINT STATEMENT OF THE 9TH INFORMAL ASEAN
MINISTERIAL MEETING ON THE ENVIRONMENT
28 September 2005, Makati City, the Philippines**

ASEAN Environment Ministers met at the 9th Informal ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on the Environment on 27 September 2005, Makati City, the Philippines to review and enhance cooperation on regional environmental issues, in particular nature conservation and biodiversity, water resources management and transboundary haze pollution.

The Ministers recognised the immense value of biological resources of the region and reaffirmed their commitment to conserve and to use these resources in a sustainable manner. The Ministers and other dignitaries witnessed the launch of the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) by H.E. Michael T. Defensor, Secretary, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, the Philippines on 27 September 2005. The ACB aims to further strengthen cooperation and coordination on the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of such resources. The Ministers expressed their appreciation to the Philippines for hosting the Centre, and to the European Commission for their financial support to ACB.

The Ministers and other dignitaries also witnessed the launch of the web portal for the ASEAN Network on Environmentally Sustainable Cities (ESC) (<http://www.aseansec.org/aiesc.htm>) by H.E. Assoc. Prof. Koo Tsai Kee, Senior Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources, Singapore on 27 September 2005. The web portal promotes sharing of best practices, and capacity building among ASEAN participating cities. The Ministers noted that a workshop will be held in December 2005 in Jakarta to develop key indicators for Clean Air, Clean Land and Clean Water as well as to develop criteria for ASEAN ESC awards.

The Ministers adopted the ASEAN Strategic Plan of Action on Water Resources Management, and noted the publication of the Report on the State of Water Resources Management in ASEAN. The Strategic Plan addresses key issues faced by the region namely water supply and demand management; water quality and sanitation; impact of extreme events such as floods and droughts; and governance and capacity building.

The Ministers had an extensive discussion on concrete measures to combat land and forest fires and transboundary haze pollution and issued a Joint Communique on Transboundary Haze Pollution as attached herewith.

The Ministers met with their counterparts from the Plus Three countries (People's Republic of China, Japan and Republic of Korea) at the Fourth ASEAN Plus Three Environment Ministers Meeting held on 28 September 2005. ASEAN and the Plus Three Environment Ministers exchanged views on priority areas of cooperation, and on several project ideas to promote collaboration in specific areas. The Plus Three Ministers expressed their interest to collaborate with ASEAN on some of the project ideas, and the ASEAN Plus Three Senior Officials were tasked to follow-up on these proposals.

JOINT COMMUNIQUE ON TRANSBOUNDARY HAZE POLLUTION

9th Informal ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on the Environment,
Makati City, the Philippines, 27 September 2005

1. We, the ASEAN Ministers responsible for the environment, met at the 9th Informal ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on the Environment on 27 September 2005 in Makati City, the Philippines to review and enhance cooperation on regional environmental issues. We placed particular emphasis on transboundary haze pollution in view of the recent severe land and forest fires and smoke haze incident.
2. We reinforced our commitment and resolved to combat the transboundary haze pollution problem that affects our region.
3. We welcomed the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Plan of Action and the Vientiane Action Programme, endorsed by the ASEAN Leaders at the 10th ASEAN Summit in November 2004, which among others, emphasise ASEAN's focus and direction to effectively prevent transboundary haze pollution as a result of land and forest fires through concerted national efforts and intensified regional action and international cooperation, pursued in the context of sustainable development and in accordance with the provisions of the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution.
4. We reiterated our commitment to the implementation of the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution, which was signed by all ASEAN Member Countries on 10 June 2002 and entered into force on 25 November 2003.
5. We resolved to further intensify regional cooperation taking note of various measures over the years to combat transboundary haze pollution, including National and Regional Haze Action Plans, sub regional standard operating procedures for monitoring, assessment and joint emergency response, simulation exercises, inventory of fire fighting capability to facilitate resource sharing arrangements, guidelines for zero burning and controlled burning practices, establishment of community fire brigades, implementation of ASEAN Peatland Management Initiative, strict enforcement, weather forecast, monitoring and early warning, and public awareness activities.
6. We note with concern the serious impact of smoke haze on our people's health and livelihood, the economy, tourism, transportation and environment, as a result of deterioration of air quality.
7. We took concerted action during the recent severe haze episode by mobilising personnel, aircraft and equipment to suppress the fires. We stand ready to assist each other by mobilising our resources to mitigate fires in the region during critical periods.

8. In this respect, we have established a Panel of ASEAN Experts on Fire and Haze Assessment and Coordination to undertake rapid assessment of the situation on the ground during impending critical periods, and to provide recommendation to facilitate immediate response and effective mobilisation of resources in the region.
9. We shall review existing measures and further strengthen regional cooperation when we meet at the Twelfth ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Haze, and the Second Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution in Indonesia in December 2005.
10. We recognise the need to attach greater importance to swift and more effective inter-agency collaboration and coordination at the national and regional level to deal comprehensively with the transboundary haze pollution. Recognising also its transboundary nature and widespread impact on various sectors, we will recommend to our Leaders to provide guidance on this issue at the 11th ASEAN Summit in December 2005 in Malaysia.

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