



MEDIA RELEASE

15th Informal ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on the Environment and 10th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution

30-31 October 2014, Vientiane, Lao PDR

1. Ministers responsible for the environment from ASEAN Member States (AMS) held their 15th Informal ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on the Environment and 10th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution on 30-31 October 2014 in Vientiane, Lao PDR. The Ministers reviewed regional cooperation on a number of environmental issues, in particular actions taken on environmental sustainability under the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) Blueprint, and discussed new initiatives to further promote regional environmental cooperation.

2. The Ministers noted the ASEAN Specialised Meteorological Centre's (ASMC) weather outlook where, among others, rainfall is expected to be slightly below average to average for most parts of the ASEAN region for the rest of the year. With the onset of Northeast Monsoon towards the end of the year, the northern ASEAN region will experience its traditional dry season and an escalation of hotspot activities can be expected, while for the southern ASEAN region, wetter weather conditions during the traditional rainy season would help to subdue the hotspot activities. ASMC also updated that neutral conditions (neither El Niño nor La Niña) continues to prevail in the equatorial Pacific Ocean, and there is a likelihood of a weak El Niño developing towards the end of 2014/early 2015. The Ministers agreed that AMS will continue to be vigilant and take additional preventive measures and immediate fire suppression in the event of any occurrence of transboundary haze in the coming months.

3. The Ministers congratulated Indonesia for ratifying the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution, culminating in full ratification of the Agreement which entered into force in 2003. The Ministers look forward to Indonesia's depositing the Instrument of Ratification with the Secretary-General of ASEAN.

4. The Ministers reviewed national, sub-regional and regional activities to address land and forest fires in the region and its associated transboundary haze pollution. The Ministers welcomed the significant progress in the implementation of the Work Programme of the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution, including concrete on-the-ground activities; and implementation of the ASEAN Peatland Management Strategy (2006-2020). The Ministers welcomed the adoption of the Terms of Reference of the ASEAN Task Force on Peatlands

by the Committee under the Conference of the Parties to the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution.

5. The Ministers adopted the Alert Levels, Trigger Points and Actions on Fire Suppression, to complement and enhance the existing Standard Operating Procedure for Monitoring, Assessment and Joint Emergency Response under the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution, and urged AMS to operationalize the Alert Levels and Trigger Points and Actions to prevent recurrence of transboundary haze pollution.

6. The Ministers welcomed and appreciated the initiative by Thailand to develop the Air4ASEAN application for smart phone and tablet. Air4ASEAN is an application to make air quality information available to the public, including pollution indices in the ASEAN region. The application will be launched in November 2014.

7. The Ministers noted that several ASEAN Member States have contributed to the ASEAN Transboundary Haze Pollution Control Fund towards realising the pledge of providing an initial seed contribution of US\$500,000 for the Fund. The Ministers welcomed contributions from other partners to the Fund.

8. The Ministers commended the significant achievements made upon the completion of activities under the 5-year ASEAN Peatland Forests Project (APFP) funded by Global Environment Facility (2009-2014), and the good progress made under the EU-supported SEApeat Project, which aim to promote the sustainable management of peatlands in ASEAN to sustain local livelihoods, reduce the risk of fires and associated haze and contribute to global environmental management. The Ministers appreciated the positive development of the ASEAN Programme on Sustainable Management of Peatland Ecosystems (2014-2020) which was endorsed by the 9th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP-9) to the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution in 2013.

9. The Ministers noted the initiatives by Sub-regional Ministerial Steering Committee on Transboundary Haze Pollution (MSC) countries to take the necessary actions in order to operationalise the ASEAN Sub-regional Haze Monitoring System (HMS). In the meantime, the Ministers encouraged MSC countries to share hotspot areas that cause transboundary haze on Government-to-Government basis.

10. The Ministers noted the progress of implementation of the ASEAN Action Plan on Joint Response to Climate Change and looked forward to a successful outcome of the UNFCCC negotiation.

11. The Ministers noted that the Joint Statement by the ASEAN Environment Ministers to the Twelfth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP 12) was conveyed at the High-level Segment of CBD COP 12 on 15 October 2014 in Pyeongchang, Republic of Korea, to express their commitment to the implementation of the CBD Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Targets.

12. The Ministers approved the nomination of Mt. Hamiguitan Range Wildlife Sanctuary (MHRWS) and Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park (TRNP) from the Philippines as the 34th and 35th ASEAN Heritage Park (AHP). The AHP Programme serves as a regional network of national protected areas of high conservation importance preserving a complete spectrum of representative ecosystem to generate greater awareness, pride, appreciation, enjoyment, and conservation of ASEAN's rich natural heritage. The ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) in Los Baños, Philippines serves as the Secretariat of the AHP Programme.

13. The Ministers presented, for the third time, the ASEAN Environmentally Sustainable Cities (ESC) Award and, for the second time, the ASEAN Certificates of Recognition for Clean Air, Clean Water, and Clean Land, to selected cities in ASEAN Member States as a way of recognizing exemplary initiatives to keep ASEAN cities clean, green, and livable even as they continue to grow as centers of economic activities.

Table 1. Recipients of the 3rd ASEAN ESC Awards (2014)

Country	City
Brunei Darussalam	Bandar Seri Begawan
Cambodia	Battambang Municipality
Indonesia	Balikpapan
Lao PDR	Luang Prabang
Malaysia	Melaka
Myanmar	Yangon
Philippines	San Carlos
Singapore	North West District
Thailand	Chiang Rai City
Viet Nam	Hue City

Table 2. Recipients of 2nd ASEAN Certificates of Recognition (2014)

City	Country	Category
Tangerang	Indonesia	Clean Air for Big Cities
Da Lat City	Viet Nam	Clean Air for Small Cities
Phnom Penh	Cambodia	Clean Water for Big Cities
Nakhon Sawan	Thailand	Clean Water for Small Cities
Davao City	Philippines	Clean Land for Big Cities
Roi-et	Thailand	Clean Land for Small Cities

14. The Ministers met their counterparts from the People's Republic of China, Japan and Republic of Korea at the 13th ASEAN Plus Three Environment Ministers Meeting on 31 October 2014 to review current activities and discuss future cooperation on areas such as biodiversity, climate change, environmental education, environmental science and technology, and environmentally sustainable cities.

15. The Ministers also met their counterparts at the 4th East Asia Summit Environment Ministers Meeting (EAS-EMM) on 31 October 2014 to review current activities focusing on environmentally sustainable cities and discuss future cooperation under the EAS EMM framework.

16. The Ministers responsible for the environment will meet again in Viet Nam in 2015 on the occasion of the 13th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on the Environment and the 11th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution.
