



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **19<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE SUB-REGIONAL MINISTERIAL STEERING COMMITTEE ON TRANSBOUNDARY HAZE POLLUTION**

**18 May 2017  
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia**

1. The Nineteenth Meeting of the Sub-Regional Ministerial Steering Committee on Transboundary Haze Pollution (19<sup>th</sup> MSC) was held on 18 May 2017 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 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 Nineteenth Meeting of the Technical Working Group on Transboundary Haze Pollution (19<sup>th</sup> TWG) preceded the Meeting.

2. The Ministers noted the ASEAN Specialised Meteorological Centre's (ASMC's) outlook that dry weather conditions are expected for the region between June and October 2017. In addition, with a chance of El Niño conditions emerging in the upcoming dry season, below normal to normal rainfall is expected for the region, and hotspot activities in 2017 are likely to be more active compared to that in 2016. MSC countries pledged 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 in anticipation of the drier weather in the coming months.

3. The Ministers noted the various initiatives and actions taken by MSC countries to address transboundary haze pollution. The MSC countries reaffirmed their readiness to provide assistance, if requested, and work among MSC countries for emergency response when necessary, and called for enhanced cooperation and coordination to ensure the timely and effective deployment of international resources for firefighting assistance, mitigate land and forest fires, and to control smoke haze pollution.

4. The Ministers recalled the commitment and guidance of the ASEAN Leaders at the 30<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit held on 29 April 2017 in Manila towards regional cooperation on transboundary haze pollution control, including their concern over the rapidly changing climate and its adverse impacts, causing severe social and economic disruptions and damage throughout the region. 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 to achieve a Haze-Free ASEAN by 2020, including the comprehensive Plan of Action (PoA) on Transboundary Haze Pollution. The Ministers provided guidance for TWG to initiate corresponding projects and activities to strengthen and synergise their cooperation that support the implementation of the Roadmap. The Ministers

recognised that it would be timely to conduct a mid-term review of the implementation of the Roadmap in 2018 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.

5. The Ministers noted the substantial progress on the implementation of the Strategic Review of the Sub-Regional Ministerial Steering Committee (MSC) Programmes and Activities which involves: (i) enhancing haze control management through early warning and monitoring, (ii) fire prevention and suppression; (iii) refinement of the Fire Danger Rating System; (iv) revised Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for Monitoring, Assessment and Joint Emergency Response under the AATHP, in which the Alert Levels, Trigger Points and Actions on Fire Prevention and Suppression were incorporated; and (v) capacity building of ASEAN Member States under the Regional Haze Training Network. The Ministers noted the outcomes of the ASEAN Workshop on Operationalisation of the Alert Levels and Trigger Points for Fire Prevention and Suppression held on 23-24 May 2016 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and the completion of Train-the-Trainer Workshop on Implementing the Guidelines on Peatland Fire Management held on 30 May to 1 June 2016 in Pontianak, West Kalimantan, co-hosted by Indonesia and Singapore.

6. The Ministers recalled that the Leaders at the 27<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit in Kuala Lumpur had noted the initiatives by the MSC countries and encouraged them to take the necessary actions in order to operationalise the ASEAN Sub-Regional Haze Monitoring System. The Ministers noted the discussions of the 7<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the MSC Technical Task Force (MTTF) held in August 2016 on the modality for sharing the hotspot information among MSC countries, namely: (i) data to be shared; (ii) time frame for queries and clarifications; and (iii) mechanism for sharing. The Ministers endorsed the modality for sharing hotspot information, in line with the existing mechanism under the ASEAN SOP for Monitoring, Assessment and Joint Emergency Response as recommended by the 7<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the MSC Technical Task Force (MTTF) subject to national laws and regulations. The Ministers tasked the MSC countries to operationalise information sharing mechanism during the upcoming dry season.

7. The Ministers noted the preparation undertaken by Indonesia in hosting the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Transboundary Haze Pollution Control (ACC THPC), and looked forward to the finalisation of the Establishment Agreement of the ACC THPC at the upcoming 13<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution (COP-13) in September 2017 in Brunei Darussalam. The Ministers also looked forward to faster and effective implementation of all aspects of the AATHP after the ACC THPC is operational.

8. The Ministers also noted the significant progress of the implementation of 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 noted the signing of the Financing Agreement for the ASEAN-EU Programme on Sustainable Use of Peatland and Haze Mitigation in ASEAN (SUPA) on 27 December 2016 with an indicative budget of EUR 24.5 million for the duration of 60 months. The Ministers also noted the development of the Measurable Action for Haze-Free Sustainable Forest, Land and Water Management in Southeast Asia supported by International Fund for

Agricultural Development (IFAD) to implement the Roadmap on ASEAN Cooperation towards Transboundary Haze Pollution Control with Means of Implementation with an indicative budget of 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.

9. The Ministers also noted the progress of the Study on the Economic, Health and Social Impact of Haze in 2015 on the ASEAN Region to assess the implication of the 2015 haze incident to ASEAN and enable countries to have a baseline economic, health and social data to understand the impact of transboundary haze. The Ministers looked forward for the results of the Study to be conveyed to COM/COP.

10. The Meeting expressed their appreciation to the Government of Malaysia for hosting the 19<sup>th</sup> MSC Meeting and the excellent arrangements made and generous hospitality provided. The 20<sup>th</sup> MSC Meeting will be held in Thailand in 2018.

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