

TENTH ASEAN MINISTERIAL MEETING ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (AMMST)

16 October 2003, Luang Prabang

CHAIRMAN'S PRESS STATEMENT

1. The Tenth ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Science and Technology (AMMST) was held on 16 October 2003 in Luang Prabang, Lao PDR. The Meeting was attended by Science and Technology Ministers and other high-level officials of the ten ASEAN Member Countries. The Secretary-General of ASEAN and members of his delegation were also in attendance.

Opening Ceremony

2. The Meeting was formally opened by H.E. Mr. Bounnhang Vorachith, Prime Minister of the Lao PDR. In his keynote address, the Prime Minister cited the importance of science and technology not only as a direct productive force and prerequisite for national development but as a driving force for peace and international cooperation as well.

3. The Prime Minister further highlighted that in the ASEAN regional context, cooperation projects among the ASEAN member countries and with external partners have promoted science and technology capacity building to help improve the competitiveness of ASEAN economies. He stated that within the Lao PDR, the government is committed to give special attention to research and development, and the transfer of technology by implementing a wide range of national plans.

4. Delegates to the Meeting were welcomed by H.E. Prof. Dr. Bountiem Phissamay, Minister to the Prime Minister's Office and President of the Science, Technology and Environment Agency (STEA) and Chairman of the Meeting. In his welcome remarks, the Minister described the AMMST as a demonstration of ASEAN's strong desire for cooperation and collaboration in science and technology applications for development in the region. He expressed the hope that the Meeting would result in fruitful discussions, creative and concrete guidance and decisions of the Ministers on current and future crucial issues, as well as valuable directives for regional cooperation among the ASEAN countries for sustainable development.

5. The Chairman also expressed on behalf of the ASEAN S&T Ministers his congratulations to China for its major achievement of a successful first manned space mission. He cited China's emerging role as an important partner of ASEAN in science and technology cooperation.

Exchange of views on S&T issues

6. During the Meeting, the ASEAN S&T Ministers exchanged views on current issues that bear upon science and technology development at the national and regional levels. Through their opening statements, the Ministers discussed their national strategies and

priorities and placed them in the context of ASEAN's goals of regional economic integration and competitiveness.

7. There was a consistent voice raised by the newer ASEAN member countries calling for continuing implementation of the ASEAN-help-ASEAN projects of the ASEAN Committee on Science and Technology (COST). The ASEAN-help-ASEAN scheme was launched by COST to assist the newer member countries, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Viet Nam (CLMV) build up their S&T capability to facilitate their integration into the mainstream of ASEAN S&T cooperation programmes. The previous initiatives launched by the older member countries to promote S&T capacity building, especially human resource development, to assist in the development of a highly technically skilled workforce in the newer member countries had been found to be valuable.

8. In this regard, Thailand announced that its programme of offering research attachment fellowships to biotechnology researchers from CLMV will be extended through to 2005.

9. Likewise, Indonesia offered to cover local costs of scientists and researchers from CLM countries to conduct doctoral level research at various R&D facilities of Indonesia, and to participate in specially designed training courses to cater to the needs of the CLM countries. One such training course being planned for implementation in 2004 is a course on technology management.

Progress in regional S&T cooperation

10. The Ministers also reviewed the progress of implementation of previous S&T Ministerial decisions. They were especially pleased to note the initiatives being made to engage the private sector in regional S&T cooperation, and called for increased efforts to achieve greater private sector commitment and involvement in R&D activities. The Ministers noted that mobilizing private sector resources for ASEAN S&T cooperation activities was one way of addressing another important issue being faced by the S&T sector, that of generating sufficient resources to support the implementation of the ASEAN Plan of Action on S&T and the S&T programmes identified in the Hanoi Plan of Action.

Implications of the Bali Summit on S&T activities

11. The Ministers also looked at the science and technology dimensions of decisions made by the ASEAN Leaders at the recently concluded ASEAN Summit in Bali on 5-8 October 2003, as embodied in the Declaration of ASEAN Concord II (Bali Concord II). In particular, the Ministers noted that the vision of realizing an ASEAN Economic Community as described in Bali Concord II called for technical and development cooperation to address the development divide within ASEAN, addressing, among others, human resources development and capacity building; recognition of educational qualifications; and enhancing private sector involvement.

12. Similarly, the Ministers noted that the vision of an ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community as articulated in Bali Concord II called for investing more resources for

basic and higher education, training, science and technology development, job creation and social protection.

13. The Ministers agreed to carry on the momentum gained from the Bali Summit and implement programmes that will respond to the calls made by Bali Concord II that relate to science and technology concerns.

14. Implementation of the Ministerial decisions will be done by the ASEAN COST and its Sub-Committees. Monitoring of the progress of implementation will be done in subsequent meetings of the S&T Ministers.

15. The ASEAN Ministers for S&T will hold an informal meeting in 2004 in the Philippines, while the 11th AMMST will be hosted by Indonesia in 2005.