

**Joint Press Statement of the 12th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Science and
Technology (AMMST)
Mandalay, Myanmar, 16-17 November 2007**

1. The 12th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Science and Technology (AMMST) was held in Mandalay, Myanmar, on 16-17 November 2007. The Meeting was chaired by H.E. U Thaung, Minister of Science and Technology of the Union of Myanmar, and attended by Science and Technology Ministers and Senior Officials from the ten ASEAN Member Countries. The Deputy Secretary General of ASEAN and her staff were also in attendance.

Opening Ceremony

2. The Meeting was officially opened by H.E. U. Thaung, Minister of Science and Technology of Myanmar. In his Opening Speech, H.E. U Thaung extended his warmest welcome to all the S&T Ministers and their delegations to the Meeting and to Myanmar. As ASEAN has just adopted the new ASEAN Plan of Action on Science and Technology (APAST) 2007-2011, he emphasised the need for ASEAN to put extra efforts to implement the thrusts and actions specified in the APAST. He further urged the region to foster S&T cooperation to ensure that S&T remains a key factor in sustaining economic growth, enhancing community well-being, and promoting integration in ASEAN through human resources, research and technology development to meet the needs of economic integration.

3. H.E. U Thaung believed that the implementation of the four flagship programmes identified in the APAST, namely (i) Early Warning System for Disaster Risk Reduction, (ii) Biofuels, (iii) Application and Development of Open Source System, and (iv) Functional Food would benefit the region. He also suggested that ASEAN should give more priority to strengthen its S&T infrastructure for the sustainable development of the region, and that the close cooperation with the ASEAN Dialogue Partners would help narrow the technological divide within ASEAN.

Progress of the ASEAN Plan of Action (APAST) 2007-2011

4. The Ministers were pleased to note that the publication of the APAST 2007-2011 has been completed. The thrust and specific actions identified in the Plan of Action, which was developed taking into account the various directives of ASEAN Leaders and ASEAN S&T Ministers, allow the S&T sector to develop more policies and mechanisms to support active cooperation in research and technology both at the regional level. At the same time, it would also promote effective networking among S&T centers of excellence in ASEAN.

5. Recognising the cross sectoral nature of S&T, the presence of the new Plan of Action would be able to provide an opportunity for the Sub-Committees under the ASEAN Committee on Science and Technology (COST) in the development of strategies on how technologies can be made more accessible to various communities in ASEAN thereby

ensuring that S&T activities which will be undertaken over the next four years remain effective and responsive to the various ASEAN challenges.

6. The Ministers noted the progress of various projects and initiatives implemented by the nine Sub-Committees under the Committee on Science and Technology (COST). With regard to the four COST's flagship programmes, the Ministers also noted that initial activities have been implemented or are being prepared by the lead countries. To provide concrete framework in implementing these flagship programmes in a more effective manner, the Ministers suggested that the lead countries develop a roadmap for their respective flagship programmes.

S&T Interventions on climate change

7. The Ministers recognised the need for ASEAN to collectively address the impact of climate change on socio-economic development, health and the environment, and to take an effective approach to the interrelated challenges of climate change. To this end, the Ministers expressed their full support for the S&T sector to initiate cooperation activities to undertake appropriate interventions to help mitigate the adverse impacts of climate change. The Ministers further tasked the COST's Sub-Committee on Meteorology and Geophysics (SCMG), in coordination with the other COST's Sub-Committees, to take the lead in these undertakings. The Ministers suggested that the Declaration on Climate Change, Energy and the Environment to be issued at the Third East Asia Summit (EAS) in Singapore on 21 November 2007, the outcomes of the 13th Session of Conference of Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention and Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the 3rd Meeting of Parties (MOP) to the Kyoto Protocol in Bali, Indonesia, on 3-14 December 2007, should guide the implementation of further activities.

S&T Interventions on the initiative to use nuclear as an alternative energy

8. The Ministers noted that some ASEAN countries such as Indonesia, Thailand and Viet Nam have initiated preparations to build nuclear power plants to produce electricity as part of their long term plans to cope with the energy demands. In support of these initiatives, the Senior Officials Meeting on Energy (SOME) and ASEAN Ministers on Energy Meeting (AMEM) agreed in-principle to establish the ASEAN Nuclear Energy Safety Sub-Sector Network (NES-SSN). To ensure that the S&T sector plays a role to support the various initiatives, the Ministers agreed to establish an ad-hoc Technical Working Group (TWG) addressing the S&T intervention activities in support of the plans to establish nuclear power plants in some ASEAN countries. As a start, the ad-hoc TWG could operate under the direct supervision of the COST's Sub-Committee on Non-Conventional Energy Research (SCNCER). In addition, the Ministers also support the idea to establish direct interfacing with SOME by having a representation in the proposed NES-SSN.

9. The Ministers noted the need to also address the safety regulatory issue on nuclear energy based on the existing national, regional and multilateral arrangements to avoid duplication of functions and synergise limited resources.

ASEAN Science Fund

10. The Ministers reviewed the status of the ASEAN Science Fund (ASF), particularly the progress of its augmentation. The Ministers were pleased to note that since the signing of the Agreement on the Augmentation of the ASF in 2000, the Fund has grown considerably to around US\$7.1 M. Under the Agreement, the target contribution is US\$1 M per country. Currently, the ASF is supporting the regular publication of the ASEAN Journal of Science and Technology for Development (AJSTD).

ASEAN-US S&T Agreement

11. The Ministers agreed to strengthen the S&T cooperation between ASEAN and the US through the establishment of the ASEAN-US S&T Agreement. The Ministers expected that the necessary review process on the draft Agreement in each country could be completed as soon as possible to allow the signing of the Agreement to take place in between February and April 2008. The Ministers appreciated Singapore's effort to take the lead in consolidating the inputs from the ASEAN Member Countries and the US.

Strengthening S&T cooperation between ASEAN and its Dialogue Partners

12. The Ministers agreed to conduct informal discussions with their counterparts from some ASEAN Dialogue Partners such as Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand and Republic of Korea back-to-back with the 5th Informal AMMST scheduled to be held in Manila, Philippines, in July 2008. These discussions are expected to generate various joint activities such as research and technology development, human resource development, exchange of scientific information etc.

Formalisation of Chairmanship of AMMST

13. Recognising the ASEAN Leaders' decision to build the ASEAN Community by 2015 and also the signing of the ASEAN Charter at the 13th ASEAN Summit in November 2007 in Singapore, consultations among ASEAN S&T Ministers and among ASEAN ministerial bodies will be more intensive. In this regard, the Ministers agreed to formalise the chairmanship of the AMMST with one year term covering the period between two scheduled Ministerial Meetings. The Ministers agreed to designate Myanmar, the host of the 12th AMMST, as Chairman of the AMMST, effective immediately, until the convening of the 5th Informal AMMST in July 2008. The Philippines, which will host the 5th Informal AMMST, shall be the Vice Chairman.

The 8th ASEAN Science and Technology Week (ASTW)

14. The Ministers expressed their support to the holding of the 8th ASEAN Science and Technology Week (ASTW) on 7-11 July 2008 in Manila, Philippines. The ASTW, held every three years, is an ideal venue for the ASEAN S&T sector to promote people-to-people contacts, both in ASEAN and outside ASEAN. This event would also be an effective venue to promote business opportunities arising from technological undertakings. It could also be used to promote ASEAN to its own peoples and also peoples from other parts of the world.

15. With a theme "Making Science Work For You", the 8th ASTW will feature a series

of activities such as (i) S&T exhibition, (ii) S&T conferences and poster presentation, (iii) ASEAN S&T Awards, and (iv) ASEAN Youth Summit.

Next Meetings of the S&T Ministers

16. The Ministers agreed to convene the 5th Informal AMMST in Manila, Philippines, on 6-7 July 2008 in conjunction with the 8th ASTW. They also agreed to hold the 13th AMMST in the second half of 2009 in Singapore.