

Press Release

The 21st Meeting of ASEAN Senior Officials on Drug Matters (ASOD), Jakarta, Indonesia, 6-8 April 1999

1. The 21st Meeting of the ASEAN Senior Officials on Drug Matters (ASOD) was held in Jakarta from 6 to 8 April 1999. The Meeting was declared open by H.E. Prof Dr. Haryono Suyono, Coordinating Minister for People's Welfare and Poverty Alleviation of Indonesia. In his Keynote and Opening Address, he stated that there was an urgency in ASEAN to enhance regional cooperation in combating drug abuse and other related activities due to the increasing sophistication by which drug barons carry out cross-border trafficking of drugs and money laundering. He noted that striving for an ASEAN free from dangerous drugs and narcotics was the decision made by the ASEAN Leaders and that efforts should be made to intensify ASEAN's efforts to strengthen regional capacity in controlling the drug abuse problem. He emphasized that to this end, concrete actions were required to implement all relevant decisions and that the role of the Dialogue Partners was important in supporting various programmes and projects in ASEAN to address drug abuse and illicit drug trafficking. In conclusion, he stated that the drug problem was no longer considered merely a government responsibility and called for the greater involvement and participation of the private sector and NGOS. He pointed out that the work of ASOD through its role of coordinating and implementing priority programmes and projects in drug control would benefit the peoples of ASEAN.
2. At the Meeting, while assessing the magnitude of the drug problem, delegates and observers noted that the problem of drug abuse and illicit drug trafficking had turned more complicated and people, particularly young people, were more susceptible to drug abuse, especially in view of the regional financial and economic crisis. They also agreed that national efforts alone could not guarantee the success of the combat against the scourge of the problem. Greater regional and international efforts together with national endeavors were needed to address the problem in the region.
3. In view of the growing seriousness of the problem, the decision by the ASEAN Leaders in December 1997 to achieve a Drug-Free ASEAN by 2020 and the issuance of the Joint Declaration for a Drug-Free ASEAN by the ASEAN Foreign Ministers in July 1998 were timely directives. How a drug-free ASEAN will be accomplished is a major topic of deliberation of the Meeting. Future activities of ASOD will be guided by the directive included in the Hanoi Plan of Action to "implement the ASEAN Work Programme to Operationalize the ASEAN Plan of Action on Drug Abuse Control by 2004, and continue developing and implementing high-profile flagship programmes on drug abuse control, particularly those related to prevention education for youth, and treatment and rehabilitation." In this regard, the Meeting reviewed the status of all projects under ASOD and agreed that priority pending project proposals, particularly those under the Work Programme to Operationalize the ASEAN Three-Year Plan of Action on Drug Abuse Control be presented to the ASEAN Development Cooperation Forum to be convened by the ASEAN Secretariat in May 1999 in Jakarta:

- i. Training of Trainers on Intelligence Operations Management and Supervision;
 - ii. ASEAN Training on Financial Investigations;
 - iii. Enhancement of Community-Based Drug Prevention Activities;
 - iv. Youth Empowerment Against Drug and Substance Abuse;
 - v. Training of Trainers in Interpersonal Skills and Peer Support Counseling in Drug Education;
 - vi. Promoting Drug Abuse Prevention Activities Among Out-Of-School Youth;
 - vii. Promotion of Drug Control Activities in the Workplace; and
 - viii. ASEAN Seminar on Precursor Chemicals.
4. The Joint Declaration for a Drug-Free ASEAN is also a guiding document for regional cooperation among Member Countries. The Meeting agreed that ASOD would monitor the implementation of the Declaration by regularly providing the ASEAN Secretariat with relevant information for the purpose of reporting to the annual ASEAN Ministerial Meeting.
5. Striving to mitigate the social impact of the crisis is another directive in the Hanoi Plan of Action, which was also discussed by the 21st ASOD Meeting. The meeting expressed concern that the impact of the crisis may adversely affect drug abuse control and agreed that Member Countries shall nonetheless cooperate in fighting drug abuse with continued vigor and commitment.
6. To further promote awareness on the need to effectively combat the drug problem, the Meeting agreed that the ASOD Award with two categories, one for individual and one for organization would be given every three years. The Meeting also endorsed the recommendation made by the Regional Conference on Drug Abuse Among the Youth held in Vietnam in November 1998. The Meeting agreed that a plan of action be developed to follow-up with the recommendations of the Regional Conference.
7. The meeting noted growing interest expressed by Australia, Canada, the European Union, New Zealand the United states of America, Pakistan, UNDCP, the Economic Co-operation Organization and the Colombo plan in working with ASEAN towards the goal of a drug-free ASEAN. The 21st ASOD Meeting provided a timely opportunity to Member Countries to review the status of cooperation with the above-mentioned partners and requested the ASEAN Secretariat to follow up with them to explore specific areas of cooperation.
8. H.E. Lt. Gen. (Retd) Z. A. Maulani, Chairperson of the Coordinating Board for the Implementation of the 6th Presidential Instruction of 1971 (BAKOLAK INPRES No. 6/1971) of Indonesia and Mr. Daovong Vongsay, Member of the Lao National Committee for the Control and Supervision of Drugs were elected Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Meeting, respectively. The Meeting was attended by delegations from Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, the Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam and the ASEAN Secretariat and observers from Cambodia, Interpol, UNDCP, the Colombo Plan and the ASEAN – Non-Government Organizations For Prevention of Drug and Substance Abuse.

9. The 22nd Meeting of the ASEAN Senior Officials on Drug Matters will be held in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, tentatively in the second half of April 2000.