

**The Eighth ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Drug Matters
(8th AMMD)**

11 August 2023, Vientiane, Lao PDR

Chairman's Statement

1. The Eighth ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Drug Matters (8th AMMD) was held on 11 August 2023 in Vientiane, Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR). His Excellency Police General Vilay Lakhampong, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Security, on behalf of the Government of Lao PDR, officiated and chaired the 8th AMMD. The Meeting was attended by all ASEAN Member States and the Secretary-General of ASEAN. The Meeting also welcomed the participation of the representatives of Timor-Leste for the first time at the AMMD meeting as Observer.
2. The Meeting reaffirmed its strong commitment to strengthen the role of the AMMD in coordinating a coherent, comprehensive and effective ASEAN strategy in realisation of a Drug-Free ASEAN with strict adherence to the rule of law and observance of human rights while maintaining full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of ASEAN Member States.
3. The Meeting noted with satisfaction ASEAN Member States' joint efforts in promoting dialogue and facilitating information sharing on illicit drugs situation in the region under the ambit of AMMD and its subsidiary mechanisms, namely the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Drug Matters (ASOD) and its working mechanisms, including the ASEAN Airport Interdiction Task Force (AAITF), the ASEAN Seaport Interdiction Task Force (ASITF), the ASEAN Narcotics Cooperation Center (ASEAN-NARCO) and the ASEAN Drug Monitoring Network (ADMN).
4. The Meeting took note of the activities reported by ASOD and commended the resumption of five ASOD Working Groups and ASOD Consultations with its Dialogue Partners since 2022, reinvigorating the spirit of joint efforts to combat illicit drugs in the region in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Meeting also welcomed the establishment of the ASOD + Australia Consultation and the engagement of the External Parties with the ASITF and AAITF to deliver concrete cooperation activities in combating illicit drugs.
5. The Meeting expressed concerns over the scourge of illicit drugs that wrought disastrous consequences on the health, safety, and security of people in the region and further acknowledged emerging challenges posed by illicit drugs in the region, including (i) increasing complexities in combating illicit drugs across the ASEAN region, particularly in the wake of reopening borders, (ii) the dynamic modus operandi of the drug syndicates, among others, the stronger links of local drug

syndicates with those of international syndicates and emerging trends of drug smuggling through sea routes and drug transactions through internet-enabling platforms such as social media, e-commerce, e-hailing, food delivery, courier services, and cryptocurrency, (iii) the continued flows of illicit drugs in the ASEAN region, and (iv) the growing trend of displaying more liberal attitudes towards marijuana legalisation.

6. The Meeting took note of the national anti-drugs campaigns, implemented by ASEAN Member States in the areas of preventive education, law enforcement, alternative development, research, treatment and rehabilitation as guided by the ASEAN Work Plan on Securing Communities Against Illicit Drugs 2016-2025 (ASEAN Work Plan 2016-2025).

7. The Meeting emphasised the importance of addressing and mitigating the impact of emerging challenges arising from the current illicit drugs situation in the region and reaffirmed the necessity to implement concrete and evidence-based drug prevention measures as we are witnessing the global recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, through the strengthening inter-agency coordination among relevant ministries, public institutions, the private sector and development partners as well as enhancing cross-sectoral and cross-pillar coordination among relevant ASEAN Sectoral Bodies.

8. The Meeting tasked ASOD to conduct the Final Review of the ASEAN Work Plan 2016-2025 and submit the outcomes as well as the recommendations for consideration at the 9th AMMD in 2025

9. The Meeting welcomed the launch of the ASEAN Drug Monitoring (ADM) Report 2022 and appreciated Thailand's unwavering commitment to continue leading this initiative, as well as other ASEAN Member States for their contribution to the ADM Report.

10. The Meeting reaffirmed ASEAN's resolute stand against the legalisation and manufacturing of illicit drugs for non-medical and non-scientific use or measures to undermine international control over any type of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances without relevant, verifiable and reliable scientific evidence.

11. The Meeting also urged the international community to uphold the provisions of the international drug control conventions. The Meeting called on all ASEAN Member States to maintain ASEAN unity and solidarity in their participation at the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) and related meetings. The Meeting adopted the ASEAN Joint Statement to be delivered during the 67th Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) in 2024 on the occasion of the mid-term review of the Ministerial Declaration of 2019 entitled "Strengthening Our Actions at the National, Regional and International Levels to Accelerate the Implementation of Our Joint Commitments to Address and Counter the World Drug Problem".

12. The Meeting welcomed the offer by the Philippines to host the 9th AMMD in 2025.

13. The Meeting expressed appreciation to the Government and the Ministry of Public Security of Lao PDR for the excellent arrangements made for the 8th AMMD.

14. The Meeting was held in the traditional spirit of ASEAN solidarity and cordiality, in keeping with ASEAN's journey towards a region of "One Vision, One Identity, One Community".

Lao PDR
11 August 2023