



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **17<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on the Environment and the 18<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution**

**23 August 2023  
Vientiane, Lao PDR**

1. The 17<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on the Environment and the 18<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution were held on 23–24 August 2023 in Vientiane, Lao PDR. The Meetings acknowledged the achievements and progress of regional cooperation efforts in addressing a number of environmental issues.

2. The Meeting commended Indonesia's 2023 ASEAN Chairmanship priorities to foster regional cooperation in advancing climate action, promoting biodiversity conservation, combating marine plastic pollution and realising sustainable cities. The Meetings endorsed the ASEAN Joint Statement on Climate Change to 28<sup>th</sup> Session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework on Climate Change (UNFCCC COP28) for consideration of the 43<sup>rd</sup> ASEAN Summit. The Meetings commended Indonesia's initiative on the ASEAN Community-based Climate Action to share experiences, build capacity, promote best practices, and enhance multi-stakeholder participation in implementing community-based climate actions in ASEAN countries.

3. The Meetings welcomed the successful conclusion of the Agreement on the Establishment of the ASEAN Centre for Climate Change based in Brunei Darussalam, which aims to facilitate regional cooperation and coordination on climate change initiatives among Member States with relevant national governments, regional, and international organisations; and provide policy recommendations on addressing climate change to Member States. The Meetings looked forward to the operationalisation of the Centre.

4. The Meetings expressed appreciation to the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) for the continued support to the ASEAN Member States in facilitating cooperation and coordination on biodiversity. The Meetings approved the designation of Phu Khieo Wildlife Sanctuary – Nam Nao National Park of Thailand; and Phu Kradueng National Park of Thailand, as the 56<sup>th</sup> and 57<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Heritage Parks respectively. The Meetings endorsed the ASEAN Action Plan on Invasive Alien Species Management, which was initiated by Indonesia to address one of the major threats of nature and biodiversity loss in the region.

5. The Meetings looked forward to the conduct of the Horizontal Learning for ASEAN Sustainable Cities on Indonesia, which will provide a platform for ASEAN countries to share experiences and lessons learned in sustainable cities development, enhance knowledge and better understanding on Sustainable Development Goals especially on the waste management and urban development topics, and build networks and potential collaboration between policymakers, private sectors and civil society in initiating sustainable cities in ASEAN.

6. The Meetings congratulated the recipients of the 4<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Eco-schools Awards and the 2<sup>nd</sup> ASEAN Youth Eco-champions Awards. The Meetings commended the achievements of the awardees and encouraged other schools and citizens to learn from their best practices and adopt more sustainable environmental practices.

7. The Meetings recognised the high and rapidly increasing levels of marine debris, and reaffirmed their commitment to implement the ASEAN Regional Action Plan on Combating Marine Debris in AMS. The Meetings further commended the progress of implementation of marine-debris related projects and initiatives, including the successful convening of the ASEAN-Indo Pacific Workshop on Marine Plastic Debris and the upcoming ASEAN Conference on Combating Plastic Pollution, hosted by Indonesia.

8. The Meetings were pleased to present the publication of the Sixth ASEAN State of Environment Report (SOER6), which provides relevant and useful information on environmental state and trends in the region and informs environmental management decisions that will contribute to ASEAN's sustainable development efforts.

9. The Meetings noted the continuing dialogues between ASEAN and partners on environment, climate change and cross-cutting environmental issues, at the ASEAN-Japan Dialogue on Environmental Cooperation, ASEAN-ROK Dialogue on Environment and Climate Change, ASEAN-EU High-Level Dialogue on Environment and Climate Change, ASEAN-US High-Level Dialogue for Engagement on Environment and Climate Change, and ASEAN Plus Three Senior Officials Meeting on the Environment, held on 2-3 August 2023 in Bogor, Indonesia.

10. The Meetings reaffirmed their commitment to the full and effective implementation of the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution (AATHP) and commended the successful conclusion of the Establishment Agreement of the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Transboundary Haze Pollution Control (ACC THPC) hosted by Indonesia. The Meetings appreciated the contribution of the ASEAN Secretariat in performing the functions as Interim ACC THPC and looked forward to the full operationalisation of the Centre which will facilitate faster and effective implementation of all aspects of the AATHP to address transboundary haze pollution in the ASEAN region. The Meetings also endorsed revisions to the Standard Operating Procedures for Monitoring, Evaluation and Joint Emergency Response (SOP MAJER).

11. The Meetings commended the Committee under the Conference of Parties to the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution (COM) and welcomed the adoption of the Second Roadmap on ASEAN Cooperation towards Transboundary Haze Pollution Control with Means of Implementation (Haze-free Roadmap) 2023-2030 and the Second ASEAN Peatland Management Strategy (APMS) 2023-2030 to further strengthening, intensifying, and comprehensively addressing the root causes of transboundary haze pollution. The Meetings further endorsed the ASEAN Investment Framework for Haze-free Sustainable Land Management to enhance multi-stakeholder partnerships and securing resources at local, national and regional levels to promote sustainable land management and effectively address transboundary haze issues.

12. The Meetings expressed deep concerns the transboundary haze situation and the “Very Unhealthy” levels of Air Quality Index in the northern ASEAN sub-region early this year and discussed the potential of prolonged and intense dry season this year in the southern ASEAN sub-region in part due to the return of El Niño. The Meeting recognised the effects of climate change, such as more frequent drought and other extreme weather events, may increase the risk of elevated hotspot activities and transboundary smoke haze occurrence since 2019. The Meeting reiterated the importance of taking strong action to improve vigilance, preventive measures, and immediate fire suppression procedures to mitigate land and forest fires and to minimise the occurrence of transboundary haze during periods of drier weather.

13. The Meetings noted the ASEAN Specialised Meteorological Centre's (ASMC's) assessment that the Mekong sub-region was affected by elevated hotspot and smoke haze activities during its traditional dry season between December 2022 and May 2023. The situation intensified in March and April 2023 and Alert Level 3 was issued for the sub-region on 2 March 2023, with widespread moderate to dense transboundary haze affecting many parts of the sub-region. Overall hotspot count for the sub-region was around 57% higher in 2023 compared to 2022 between January and August. Alert Level 1 for the southern ASEAN region was issued on 29 May 2023 and Alert Level 2 was activated on 28 July 2023. Overall hotspot count for the region was around 114% higher in 2023 compared to 2022 between January and August. The Meeting noted that existing El Niño conditions are predicted to persist at least until the end of the year. A positive Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) was also forecast to develop from August 2023. The dry season for the southern ASEAN region could be more prolonged and intense compared to the past three years when La Niña conditions were present and the risk of elevated hotspot activities and transboundary smoke haze occurrence this year is the highest since 2019. For the Mekong sub-region, hotspots and smoke haze activities may start to intensify towards the end of the year, especially if El Niño conditions persist in the coming months. The Meetings also noted on the update on satellites and applications used for fire and haze monitoring, and that physical workshops under the ASMC capability building programme resumed in 2023, including the first run of its new attachment programme.

14. The Meetings noted the Malaysian Meteorological Department (MET Malaysia) refinement of the Southeast Asia Fire Danger Rating System (SEA FDRS) which includes increased number of weather stations, implemented new fire danger code for the northern ASEAN sub-region, and simulation of the 7-day forecast. The Meetings supported the initiatives by MET Malaysia and will continue the cooperation and promote the usage of new refinements of SEA FDRS.

15. The Meetings noted the reports by the Sub-Regional Ministerial Steering Committee on Transboundary Haze Pollution (MSC) and the Sub-Regional Ministerial Steering Committee on Transboundary Haze Pollution in the Mekong Sub-Region (MSC Mekong) in reaffirming their commitment to address specific haze-related issues occurring in the respective regions. The Meetings congratulated the successful 24<sup>th</sup> MSC in Singapore and looked forward to the earliest convening of the 12<sup>th</sup> MSC Mekong in Viet Nam in preparation for the upcoming dry season.

16. The Meetings met their counterparts from Plus Three countries (China, Japan, and Republic of Korea), Japan, and the United States at the ASEAN Plus Three Environment Ministers Meeting, ASEAN-Japan Ministerial Dialogue on Environmental Cooperation, and the ASEAN-U.S. Ministerial Dialogue on Environment and Climate respectively, to review current activities and discuss future strategic cooperation in biodiversity, climate change, environmental education, environmental science and technology, environmentally sustainable cities, and marine plastic debris, among others.

17. The Meetings welcomed the ASEAN-Japan Cooperation Initiative: Strategic Program for ASEAN Climate and Environment (SPACE), the conduct of the ASEAN-Japan Environment Week, and the launch of the SPACE initiative, in commemoration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ASEAN-Japan dialogue relations.

18. The Meetings welcomed the ASEAN-U.S. Environment and Climate Work Plan to guide the cooperation between ASEAN and the U.S. in enhancing climate ambition and regional mitigation and adaptation, promoting innovation for a low-carbon future, mobilising climate finance, and supporting environmental protection and biodiversity conservation.

19. The Meetings agreed to meet again in Thailand in 2024 for the 19<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution, and in Malaysia in 2025 for the 18<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on the Environment and the 20<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution.

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**Attachment:**

**Recipients of the 4<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Eco-schools Award  
& 2<sup>nd</sup> ASEAN Youth Eco-champions Award**

**A) 4<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Eco-Schools Award**

<b>4<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Eco-School</b>		
<b>AMS</b>	<b>Primary</b>	<b>Secondary</b>
Brunei Darussalam	Sekolah Rendah Pengiran Setia Negara Pengiran Mohammad Yusof	Maktab Sains Paduka Seri Begawan Sultan
Cambodia	Kumru Krong Primary School	Hun Sen Mittapheap High School
Indonesia	SMP Negeri 2 Cilegon	SMA Negeri 1 Ajibarang
Lao PDR	Houngheuang School	Pathana School
Malaysia	Sekolah Kebangsaan Putra, Perlis	SM St. Patrick, Sabah
Myanmar	Basic Education Primary School (Daunk Kwe), Daunk Kwe Village, Kyaunggon Township, Kyonpyaw District, Ayeyarwady Region	No. (1) Basic Education High School, Ayeyar Ward, Pyidaungsu Road, Myitkyina, Kachin State
Philippines	Caranan North Elementary School	Santiago City National High School
Singapore	Northoaks Primary School	Compassvale Secondary School
Thailand	Satit Tedsaban Baan Hua Hin School	Satit Tedsaban Baan Hua Hin School
Viet Nam	Nhon Nghia 1 Primary School	Yen Lac Secondary School

**B) 2<sup>nd</sup> ASEAN Youth Eco-Champions Award**

<b>2<sup>nd</sup> AYECA</b>		
<b>AMS</b>	<b>Junior</b>	<b>Senior</b>
Brunei Darussalam	Ms. Shaima binti Haji Misli	Ms. Noor Hafizah binti Rashid
Cambodia	Mr. Sopherm Hem	Ms. Sochenda Aok
Indonesia	Mr. Mochammad Zidane Nur Adha	Mr. Devirisa Djabumir
Lao PDR	Mr. Phetsavanh Songvilay	Mr. Phonesavanh Chindamany
Malaysia	Mr. Tan Wei Kang	Mr. Beh Zeng Kang
Myanmar		Mr. Kaung Htet Swan
Philippines	Mr. Adem Marianne C. Inovejas	Engr. Jay Carlo S. Aguilar
Singapore	Ms. Teng Chu Yu	Mr. Tan Shi Zhou
Thailand		Mr. Montri Juethaisong
Viet Nam	Ms. Nguyen Chau Bao	Ms. Nguyen Hong Minh