

1 Ministers responsible for the environment from Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand met on the occasion of the Seventeenth Meeting of the Sub-Regional Ministerial Steering Committee (MSC) on Transboundary Haze Pollution on 28 July 2015 in Jakarta, Indonesia.

2 The Ministers noted the ASEAN Specialised Meteorological Centre's (ASMC's) weather outlook of drier than usual weather conditions for the prevailing Southwest Monsoon season (June – October 2015). With the possibility of the prevailing moderate El Niño strengthening in the coming months, the risks of occasional extended periods of drier and warmer conditions, which could lead to increase in hotspot activities and transboundary smoke haze from land and forest fires in the region during the season, are high. The MSC countries agreed to remain vigilant and step up their efforts to minimise any possible occurrence of transboundary smoke haze from land and forest fires in anticipation of the extended drier weather in the coming months.

3 The Ministers expressed appreciation for the substantive efforts by Indonesia in implementing its Plan of Action (PoA) in Dealing with Transboundary Haze Pollution, which include among others the mobilization of armed forces and Manggala Agni to suppress fires, strengthening of law enforcement to address open burning, and enhancement of close and continuous monitoring of hotspots and coordination among local government, national government, private sector and communities to prevent and suppress land and forest fires. The MSC member states reaffirmed their offer of assistance for emergency response should the situation warrant it.

4 The Ministers welcomed Indonesia as a Party to the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution with the deposit of instrument of ratification of the Agreement with H.E. Le Luong Minh, Secretary-General of ASEAN, on 20 January 2015. The Ministers commended Indonesia for its efforts and commitment to working collectively with other AMS to address the transboundary haze pollution issues under the framework of the Agreement.

5 The Ministers provided guidance on the implementation of the Strategic Review of the Sub-Regional Ministerial Steering Committee (MSC) Programmes and Activities, which covers enhancing haze control management through early warning/monitoring, fire prevention and fire suppression; refinement of the Fire Danger Rating System; operationalisation of Alert Levels and Trigger Points for immediate and expeditious fire prevention and suppression by including them in the existing SOP for Monitoring, Assessment and Joint Emergency Response; and meeting the training needs of ASEAN Member States under the Regional Haze Training Network.

6 The Ministers noted the continued efforts by Indonesia on finalising its respective Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with Malaysia and Singapore to address transboundary haze issues, building upon the previous successful experiences in bilateral cooperation in Riau and Jambi provinces. In this regard, Malaysia and Singapore look forward to finalising their respective MOUs with Indonesia soon.

7 The Ministers noted that the Leaders at the 26th ASEAN Summit held in Kuala Lumpur on 27 April 2015 had noted the initiatives by the Sub-Regional Ministerial Steering Committee on Transboundary Haze Pollution (MSC) countries to take the necessary actions in order to operationalize the ASEAN Sub-Regional Haze Monitoring System (HMS). The Ministers also noted the difficulties in sharing the land use and concession maps by the MSC countries. The Ministers noted that in the meantime, the Leaders had encouraged MSC countries to share information on a Government-to-Government basis on hotspot areas that cause transboundary haze.

8 The Ministers noted the discussion of MSC Technical Task Force (MTTF) on developing a set of guidelines to follow-up on MSC's direction. The Ministers noted the constraints faced by the MTTF and directed the MTTF to work further on the technicalities of the information that could be shared.

9 The Ministers noted the intention and steps taken by Indonesia to host the ASEAN Coordinating Centre on Transboundary Haze Pollution Control, and Indonesia's plan to have a Workshop before the next Meeting of Conference of Parties to the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution, to further establish ACC in consultation with AMS.

10 The Ministers commended the significant achievements made through the local, national and regional activities under the 5-year ASEAN Peatland Forests Project (APFP), which was funded by Global Environment Facility (2009-2014) through International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and implemented by ASEAN Member States in coordination with ASEAN Secretariat and Global Environment Centre. The Ministers also commended the good progress being made under the EU-supported SEApeat Project (2011-2015), which has supplemented support for the APFP and expanded activities to the northern ASEAN Member States. Together, APFP and SEApeat projects have demonstrated the value of integrated peatland management and engagement of local communities and the private sector as well as enhancing peatland fire prevention and warning.

11 The Meeting noted the substantive progress of the development of the successor ASEAN Programme on Sustainable Management of Peatland Ecosystems – APSMPE (2014-2020), and the encouraging response and support from ASEAN dialogue and development partners. The Ministers renewed their commitment to implement this regional Programme through ASEAN mechanisms, enhanced national level efforts and multi-stakeholder partnership.

12 The Ministers recognized the need to develop a Roadmap on ASEAN Cooperation towards Transboundary Haze Pollution Control with Means of Implementation. The Ministers welcomed Thailand's offer to host a workshop to draft the Roadmap next year with a view to promote sharing of experiences and lessons learned, enhance institutional capacities, human resources development and technology transfer to achieve a vision of Haze-free ASEAN by 2020.

13        The Ministers expressed their appreciation to the Government of Indonesia for organising the 17th MSC Meeting and the excellent arrangements made and hospitality provided.

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