

2021 THE 10TH MEETING OF THE SUB-REGIONAL MINISTERIAL STEERING COMMITTEE ON TRANSBOUNDARY HAZE POLLUTION IN THE MEKONG SUB-REGION

Adopted on 8 December 2021

1. The Tenth Meeting of the Sub-Regional Ministerial Steering Committee on Transboundary Haze Pollution in the Mekong Sub-Region (10th MSC Mekong) was held on 8 December 2021 through Video Conference hosted by Myanmar. The Meeting was attended by Ministers/representatives responsible for land, forest fires and haze from Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam, and the Secretary-General of ASEAN, under the Chairpersonship of H.E. Khin Maung Yi, Union Minister of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation of Myanmar. The Sixteenth Meeting of the Technical Working Group on Transboundary Haze Pollution in the Mekong Sub-Region (16th TWG Mekong) preceded the Meeting.
2. The Meeting expressed concern over the smoke haze affecting the northern part of the ASEAN region in the past two years. The Meeting expressed appreciation for the continuous engagement of all MSC Mekong countries and recalled the convening of Teleconference Meetings on Smoke Haze Incident in Mekong Sub-region on 8 December 2020 and 20 May 2021 which provided platforms to brainstorm concrete actions and cooperation to improve monitoring, step up prevention and mitigation to tackle transboundary haze pollution.
3. The Meeting noted information on the review and outlook of weather and smoke Haze situation presented by the ASEAN Specialised Meteorological Centre (ASMC). Hotspot count for the Mekong sub-region in 2021 was slightly less compared to 2020 and 2019, many parts of the sub-region were affected by transboundary smoke haze for several days during the dry season. The upcoming dry season for the Mekong sub region is expected to start in end 2021 and stretch to mid-2022. The La Niña conditions which were present in December 2021 are forecast to persist till early 2022. The Meeting noted ASMC's continual efforts in enhancing its technical capabilities in monitoring, assessment and early warning of weather and haze conditions in the region, and weather and climate prediction modelling. The Meeting was updated on ASMC's enhancements in service delivery and outreach. ASMC informed the Meeting of its training courses and technical fora conducted regularly by the ASMC as part of its five-year Regional Capability Building Programme, which has been well attended by 614 ASEAN colleagues.
4. The Meeting reaffirmed its commitment at the 16th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution (COP-16) on 22 October 2021. The Meeting agreed to further working collectively and individually in intensifying in-country actions through respective National Action Plans as well as exploring further cooperation on technologies and innovation on fire monitoring. The Meeting also agreed to ensure the full implementation of the ASEAN Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for Monitoring, Assessment and Joint Emergency Response where the Alert Levels, Trigger Points and Actions on Fire Suppression adopted by COP-10.
5. The Meeting recalled the in-principle agreement at the 9th MSC Mekong in 2020 to extend the Chiang Rai 2017 Plan of Action to 2025 with renewed hotspot reduction target. In line with the COP-16, the Meeting agreed for the MSC Mekong countries to consider joint indicators for 20% hotspot reduction for next year and tasked TWG Mekong to undertake the preparation under the leadership of Thailand.

6. The Meeting noted the outcomes of the Final Review of the Roadmap on ASEAN Cooperation towards Transboundary Haze Pollution Control with Means of Implementation that has allowed ASEAN Member States to take stock of the progress and sustain the momentum in ensuring demonstrable improvements to achieve the vision of a haze-free ASEAN through the recommendations of a renewed Roadmap for ASEAN. The Meeting welcomed the completion of the final review of the ASEAN Peatland Management Strategy (APMS 2006-2020) by the ASEAN Task Force on Peatlands (ATFP). The Meeting emphasised the importance to continuously strengthen national and regional capabilities and cooperation in assessment, prevention, mitigation and management of land and/or forest fires and thus looked forward to the development of the next roadmap and APMS.
7. The Meeting appreciated the continued support and valued the contributions of ASEAN's external partners to promote sustainable management of peatlands in the ASEAN region through the Sustainable Use of Peatland and Haze Mitigation in ASEAN (SUPA) funded by EU and Germany, GEF-6 Project on Sustainable Management of Peatland Ecosystems in Mekong Countries by International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and Measurable Action for Haze-Free Sustainable Land Management in Southeast Asia (MAHFSA) funded by International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). The Meeting reiterated the importance of collective actions and enhanced cooperation to support and sustain local livelihoods, reduce risk of fire and associated haze and contribute to global environmental management.
8. The 11th MSC Mekong Meeting will be held in Thailand in 2022.