



MEDIA RELEASE

SEVENTEENTH MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE ASEAN AGREEMENT ON TRANSBOUNDARY HAZE POLLUTION

(COP-17)

20 October 2022, Singapore

1. The 17th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution (COP-17) was held on 20 October 2022 in Singapore. The Meeting was attended by Ministers, officials and/or representatives for the environment, for land, forest fires and haze, from ASEAN Member States, and the Secretary-General of ASEAN, under the Chairpersonship of H.E. Grace Fu, Minister for Sustainability and the Environment Singapore. The 17th Meeting of the Committee under Conference of the Parties to the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution (COM-17) preceded the Meeting.

2. The Meeting noted the review and outlook of weather and smoke haze situation presented by the ASEAN Specialised Meteorological Centre (ASMC). In the Mekong sub-region, the extended period of dry weather between January and April 2022 contributed to an increase in hotspot and smoke haze activities. The situation intensified in early to mid-April 2022. However the situation improved in end April when shower activities resumed. Overall hotspot count for the Mekong sub-region was around 23% lower in 2022 compared to 2021 between January and September. Above normal rainfall was observed over many parts of the southern ASEAN region during the dry season. Intermittent dry periods in early to mid-August 2022 led to an escalation in hotspot and smoke haze. However, the risk of transboundary haze remained low for the Southern ASEAN region. Overall hotspot count for the Southern ASEAN region was around 12% lower in 2022 compared to 2021 between January and September. For the rest of the year, La Niña conditions are forecast to persist and the negative phase of the IOD is expected to weaken. Hotspot activities are expected to increase in the Mekong sub-region with the start of its traditional dry season in December 2022. The Meeting noted ASMC's initiatives in advancing its remote sensing capabilities and haze dispersion modelling system for the monitoring and assessment of the regional fire and haze situation. ASMC informed the Meeting that the ASMC Regional Capability Building Programme will be extended for another 5 years until 2027, with new programmes such as an attachment programme at ASMC, to complement existing workshops.

3. The Meeting noted the information presented by Malaysia on the refinement of the Southeast Asia Fire Danger Rating System (SEA FDRS) that comprises three elements: (i) increase in the number of weather stations (ii) redefines the fire danger code for northern Southeast Asia; and (iii) simulation of the 7-day forecast. The Meeting further noted Malaysia's intention to continue refining the SEA FDRS and promote the usage of the new refinements.

4. The Meeting expressed appreciation for the various initiatives and actions undertaken by ASEAN Member States and the continuous efforts in strengthening national capabilities for action and regional cooperation in assessment, prevention, mitigation and management of land and/or forest fires and the resulting haze. The Meeting highlighted that while La Nina has resulted in mild transboundary haze pollution in the past year, the Meeting recognised that the increasing threat of climate change, such as more frequent or prolonged drought and other extreme weather events, will pose further environmental challenges to the region. The Meeting agreed on 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.

5. The Meeting reaffirmed its commitment towards the full and effective implementation of the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution as well as developing the new Roadmap on ASEAN Cooperation towards Transboundary Haze Pollution Control with Means of Implementation (Haze-free Roadmap) 2022-2030 and the new ASEAN Peatland Management Strategy (APMS) 2022-2030. The Meeting looked forward to further strengthening and intensifying national efforts, regional and international cooperation through the timely adoption of the new Haze-free Roadmap and new APMS to comprehensively address the root causes of transboundary haze pollution and pursue the overall context of sustainable development for the region.

6. The Meeting guided the ASEAN Task Force on Peatlands (ATFP) and the Committee under the Conference of Parties to the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution (COM) to leverage on multi-stakeholder engagements. The Meeting highlighted that several transboundary haze pollution challenges can be better addressed with higher levels of commitment and investment. The Meeting welcomed the development of an Investment Framework for a Haze-free, Sustainable Land Management in Southeast Asia to prioritise national and regional actions on haze reduction and enable predictable funding flows and potential for joint programme and project development among ASEAN Member States and other stakeholders.

7. The Meeting looked forward to the finalisation of the Establishment Agreement and Host Country Agreement of the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Transboundary Haze Pollution Control (ACC THPC) and its operationalisation in Indonesia. The Meeting underscored that a fully-fledged ACC THPC will help to carry out faster and effective coordination and implementation of all aspects of the AATHP with all relevant parties, including

through facilitation for a more harmonised response to tackling the transboundary haze pollution problem, and promoting sustainable forest management and peatland conservation. The Meeting acknowledged the contributions of the Interim ACC THPC, including on the consolidation and analysis of national haze monitoring data pending the establishment of the ACC THPC.

8. The Meeting appreciated the collaboration with various partners in implementing long-term programmes namely: Sustainable Use of Peatland and Haze Mitigation in ASEAN (SUPA) and Measurable Action for Haze-Free Sustainable Land Management in Southeast Asia (MAHFSA). The Meeting underlined the need of continued partnerships with ASEAN Partners and other external parties to facilitate better prevention, monitoring, preparedness, and response to the land and/or forest fires through strengthened local, national and regional cooperation framework.

9. The Meeting 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 prepare for the upcoming dry seasons and address specific haze-related issues occurring in the respective sub-regions.

10. The 18th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution will be held in 2023 in Lao PDR, back-to-back with the 17th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on the Environment.
