

**40th Meeting of the ASEAN Committee on Science and Technology (COST)
Chiang Rai, Thailand, 1 -3 November 2000**

JOINT PRESS RELEASE

1. The ASEAN Committee on Science and Technology (COST), a high-level body composed of senior policy-makers, planners and decision makers on science and technology from the ASEAN Member Countries, held their 40th meeting on 1-3 November 2000 in Chiang Rai, Thailand. Delegations from the ten member countries of ASEAN were present to discuss strategic and policy issues pertaining to science and technology cooperation in ASEAN, and to review the progress of joint programs and projects.

2. A short ceremony marked the opening of the Meeting. The delegates were welcomed to Chiang Rai by the Governor, Mr. Samrerng Poonyopakorn. The Meeting was formally opened by His Excellency Dr. Arthit Ourairat, Minister of Science, Technology and Environment of Thailand. The Minister congratulated COST for its long history of cooperation in science and technology, and issued a challenge for them to assume an even more important and productive role in addressing the region's needs.

ASEAN helping ASEAN in science and technology development

3. An interesting development is the effort being given by COST to projects that would help the newer ASEAN member countries to upgrade their human resources in science and technology through selected training programs. A case in point is the initiation by Singapore of a new intra-ASEAN project on manpower training and technology transfer on drying of agricultural products that will be organized by Singapore for Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar. The project, which commenced on 1 November 2000, is funded by the National Science and Technology Board of Singapore.

4. Similarly, in materials science and technology, Thailand agreed to organize and fully sponsor one participant from each member country to plan a regional R&D project on processing of ferroelectric films for electroceramic devices.

Fresh funding for joint projects

5. New funding for projects of the Committee was obtained recently. ASEAN recently signed a financing agreement with the European Commission (EC) for a project on energy cogeneration systems to be implemented through the Sub-Committee on Non-conventional Energy Research (SCNCER), one of the subsidiary bodies of COST. The total project cost is around 250 million ECU, with the EC committing to provide around 25 million ECU for a period of five years. The SCNCER also successfully obtained funding commitment of around US\$300,000 from the ASEAN Foundation to conduct a series of seminars and training workshops on drying technology, and about NZ\$100,000

from New Zealand to conduct a training program on the economics, design and construction of natural gas distribution and reticulation systems.

6. On the other hand, the Sub-Committee on S&T Infrastructure and Resources Development (SCIRD), another subsidiary body of COST, started implementation of a feasibility study on the establishment of a network on investment and technology transfer information with support from Korea in the amount of US\$33,000.

7. Meanwhile, COST's effort to build up its own ASEAN Science Fund is on-track, with member countries meeting their annual pledges of contributions to the Fund. Most recently, fresh contributions were received from Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Malaysia, Thailand and Viet Nam.

Special events

8. COST also announced two upcoming special events. The first one is the 7th ASEAN Food Conference to be held in Manila, Philippines on 19-22 November 2000, with the theme of "Food Science and Technology in the ASEAN: Moving Towards the New Millennium". Among the activities featured in the Conference are technical sessions covering various areas of food science and technology that address issues on food security, international trade, food safety and quality, and manpower needs for the new millennium. Pre- and post-conference short courses on food safety and on food packaging will also be offered.

9. The second event is the 6th ASEAN Science and Technology Week (ASTW) to be held in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam on 12-21 September 2001. Among the activities of the 6th ASTW are 9 technical conferences and science exhibition focusing on the main theme of "S&T: Enhancing the Quality of Life."

Next meeting

10. The next meeting of COST will be held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, in the first half of 2001.