

**46th Meeting of the
ASEAN Committee on Science and Technology (COST)
Ho Chi Minh City, 24-26 September 2003**

JOINT PRESS STATEMENT

1. The 46th Meeting of the ASEAN Committee on Science and Technology (COST) was held in Ho Chi Minh City on 24-26 September 2003. All ten member countries of ASEAN sent their respective delegations composed of top S&T policy makers, scientists, researchers and academics from various institutions and agencies. Representatives of the ASEAN Secretariat, headed by the Deputy Secretary General of ASEAN were also in attendance.

2. Seven out of the nine Sub-Committees of COST also met for two days prior to the 46th Meeting of COST. These were the Sub-Committees on Biotechnology; Materials Science and Technology; Microelectronics and Information Technology; Non-conventional Energy Research; Marine Science and Technology; S&T Infrastructure and Resources Development; and Space Technology and Applications.

Opening Ceremony

3. The Meeting was formally opened by His Excellency, Prof. Dr. Hoang Van Phong, Minister of Science and Technology of Viet Nam. In his Opening Speech, the Minister expressed the strong support of the Government of Viet Nam to science and technology as a key factor in the country's industrialization and modernization. He cited the efforts being made by his Ministry to make scientific and technological activities more effective and a truly direct productive force, contributing to the nation's socio-economic development, and accelerating the country's international and regional integration.

4. He further expressed delight that the issues of interest to Viet Nam are also under discussion and examination by ASEAN Member Countries and ASEAN COST, especially such issues as the commercialization of technology, criteria for selection and evaluation of projects, mechanisms to attract the private sector into research and development activities, and networking of scientific and technological research centers.

5. The Chairman of the People's Committee of Ho Chi Minh City, His Excellency Mr. Le Thanh Hai, was also a special guest at the Opening Ceremony of the Meeting. In his remarks, Mr. Hai cited the outstanding track record of Ho Chi Minh City as an economic, cultural, financial, scientific and technological hub of Viet Nam. He described the efforts of the Ho Chi Minh City government to renovate its scientific and technological management to create an enabling environment for the scientists to be creative in linking their work to business and industry, citing as examples the establishment of the Ho Chi Minh City High-Tech Park, the Quang Trung Software City, and the Bio-tech Park serving agriculture and health care.

6. Welcoming remarks were given by Mr. Bui Manh Hai, Vice-Minister for Science and Technology of Viet Nam and current Chairman of ASEAN COST, and by Pengiran

Mashor Pengiran Ahmad, Deputy Secretary General of ASEAN.

Implementation of Projects

7. The Meeting reviewed the progress of implementation of various S&T cooperation projects. Among the 26 ongoing projects, some outstanding achievements have been attained in engaging the private sector by projects in non-conventional energy technology and in biotechnology.

8. The COGEN Programme is a joint project of ASEAN with the European Union, with the objective of facilitating technology transfer from European technology suppliers to ASEAN end-users, usually small and medium enterprises who need to utilize biomass, coal or natural gas for cogeneration of heat and power in their operations. ASEAN small and medium enterprises who choose to invest their resources in the European technology receive various forms of technical assistance with project funding. The project is monitored by the Sub-Committee on Non-conventional Energy Research.

9. The Sub-Committee on Biotechnology (SCB) also successfully obtained private sector support for one of its projects, the Biotechnology Leaders Meeting in Bioinformatics held in Brisbane in July 2003.

10. On the other hand, the Sub-Committee on S&T Infrastructure and Resources Development (SCIRD) addressed the problem of building awareness of S&T officials and researchers in public R&D institutions on various approaches and successful models of promoting public-private collaboration on R&D, through the successful implementation of three seminars on various topics that included R&D management, intellectual property management, strategies of firms for global competitiveness, and acquisition and assimilation of foreign technologies.

S&T Policy Development

11. On the development of S&T policy and decision-support tools, the Meeting discussed mechanisms and criteria for evaluation and assessment of programmes and projects at the macro and micro levels. Further work will be done by the Sub-Committees and COST in finalizing the evaluation framework and mechanisms as well as the development of key performance indicators.

SCIRD also made good progress in launching a regional technology foresight programme, as well as development of technology competitiveness indicators for the region.

12. Similarly, the Sub-Committee on Biotechnology also reported progress in its work of preparing a Bioinformatics Masterplan and National Roadmap, which will address both regional and national programmes to keep pace with the rapid developments in the emerging field of bioinformatics.

Cooperation with Dialogue Partners

13. The Meeting also reviewed cooperation in science and technology with some

Dialogue Partners of ASEAN. These partners included Australia, China, EU, India, Japan and Korea. The Meeting considered a number of approaches to intensify cooperation and optimize benefits of ASEAN member countries from the cooperation projects with Dialogue Partners.

ASEAN Science Fund

14. The Meeting also reviewed the status of the ASEAN Science Fund. It was noted that the ASEAN COST had already reached the quarter way mark in reaching its target of US \$10 million.

Future S&T Meetings

15. The Meeting also finalized its preparations for the 10th Formal Meeting of the ASEAN Ministers for Science and Technology. The Ministerial Meeting will be held in Luang Prabang, Lao PDR on 15-16 October 2003.

16. COST meets regularly twice a year. The next meeting of COST will be hosted by Singapore in the first half of 2004.