

The 37th Meeting of the ASEAN Committee on Science and Technology Yagon, Myanmar on 19-21 May 1999

Joint Press Release

First COST Meeting in Myanmar

1. The 37th Meeting of the ASEAN Committee on Science and Technology (COST) was successfully hosted by Myanmar on 19-21 May 1999. The Meeting reviewed its accomplishments and discussed the planning for implementation of the Hanoi Plan of Action.

Significant Accomplishments

2. ASEAN COST, which is meeting for the first time in Myanmar, monitored the progress in the implementation of projects to enhance S&T development in ASEAN. At this meeting, the successful completion of 7 projects in various areas of regional cooperation in science and technology was reported. These projects are in telecommunications training, multimedia archive development, energy cogeneration from biomass resources, natural gas utilisation in transport, coastal zone environment and resource management, and remote sensing and geographic information systems for sustainable management of natural resources and the marine environment.
3. The Telecommunications Cooperation Training Project is a joint project of ASEAN and Australia. Telecommunications regulation, management and development are becoming more and more important in ASEAN as the region becomes more open and integrated with the rest of the world. This sector is developing rapidly, and thus demands continuing upgrading of the skills and capacities of its personnel. The project addressed this need by conducting technical as well as management training courses for telecommunications personnel in the ASEAN member countries. As a result of the project, around 200 telecommunications technicians, engineers and managers were able to upgrade their knowledge and skills. Those interested in the training programmes may contact the ASEAN Secretariat for further information.
4. Another completed project is the development of an archive of multimedia elements accessible via the World Wide Web. This multi-lingual and multi-cultural archive consists of digitised text, voice, music, pictures and video clips based on common words from most of the ASEAN countries and India. The archive will be useful for teachers who wish to develop computer-based instructional materials, for web page designers and builders and other similar applications. The archive can be accessed at [HTTP://WWW.NECTEC.OR.TH/SLL/AIDA](http://WWW.NECTEC.OR.TH/SLL/AIDA). The project was accomplished with support and technical expertise from India.
5. Given the large coastal zone in the ASEAN region, there is a need to properly manage and support sustainable development of this resource. The project on coastal zone environment and resource management addressed the problem by establishing a network of national environment and resources centres in the ASEAN member countries. Through this network, a harmonised set of information can be exchanged on a timely basis. The availability of such information enables sound decision-making and coordinated actions to effectively address problems related to coastal zone management.
6. COST also announced the successful hosting by Vietnam of the 5th ASEAN Science and Technology Week (ASTW) in Hanoi last October 1998. The technical exhibition in Vietnam was visited by a large number of people, including more than a thousand VIPs and dignitaries. Eight technical conferences attended by more than 600 scientists and researchers were also held. The next such event, the 6th ASTW, will be hosted by Brunei Darussalam in 2001. ASEAN looks forward to this triennial event which showcases ASEAN achievements in science and technology by way of technical exhibits and conferences. It also gives due recognition to outstanding work

by the region's scientists and technologists through the conferment of awards. Interested parties may know more about COST activities by visiting the COST home page at [HTTP://WWW.ASTNET.ORG](http://WWW.ASTNET.ORG).

Planning for Implementation of Hanoi Plan of Action

7. In science and technology, ASEAN's goal is to attain technological competitiveness by 2020. This is one of the many goals of ASEAN embodied in ASEAN Vision 2020. To reach these goals, ASEAN adopted the Hanoi Plan of Action (HPA) at the Sixth ASEAN Summit held in Hanoi in December 1998. The HPA provides the general direction and outlines a road map for reaching the goals stated in ASEAN Vision 2020.
8. At its meeting, COST agreed to prepare a strategic plan for implementing its programmes and other S&T-based activities that are included in the Hanoi Plan of Action. Implementation of these programmes and activities in an efficient manner will need careful planning and allocation of resources. In inviting its Dialogue Partners to support HPA-related activities of mutual interest, COST will build closer relationships with them, marked by mutually beneficial technical cooperation and exchanges, with costs shared by the participating partners in a transparent manner.
9. Recognising the need to assist the new ASEAN member countries to be more rapidly integrated into the mainstream of S&T cooperation in the region, COST will design HRD packages to strengthen S&T institutions in the new member countries. As a start, training in food science and technology will be offered by Thailand to Myanmar. The new member countries have started taking significant roles in regional S&T cooperation by assuming the chairmanships of certain Sub-Committees. Myanmar will be the chairman of the Sub-Committee on Food Science and Technology from July 1999 to June 2002, while Lao PDR will be the chairman of the Sub-Committee on Non-conventional Energy Research during the same period.
10. The next COST meeting will be held in Singapore in October 1999.