

**The 41st Meeting of the ASEAN Committee on Science and Technology (COST)
9-11 May 2001, Phnom Penh, Cambodia**

Joint Press Statement

The 41st Meeting of the ASEAN Committee on Science and Technology (COST) was held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia on 9-11 May 2001. It marked the first occasion that Cambodia hosted an ASEAN science and technology meeting. Delegates from all ASEAN member countries were present, led by the current Chairman of ASEAN COST, Dr. Anamai Singhabandhu, Deputy Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment of Thailand. The local delegation from the host country was led by Mr. Nhep Bunchin, Secretary of State for Industry, Mines and Energy.

The Meeting was formally opened by His Excellency, Suy Sem, Cambodia's Minister for Industry, Mines and Energy. In his opening address, the Minister addressed the issue of globalization and its implications for science and technology development in the region. He acknowledged that although science and technology provide chances for a nation to be successful in a globalized economy, the opportunity will turn into a risk when the people are not ready to absorb the technology, which could result in marginalization of industries and economies. He urged the Meeting to put concerted efforts in setting up effective measures to keep the region globally competitive.

The Meeting discussed various policy matters affecting science and technology development in the region and reviewed the progress of projects being implemented by the 9 Sub-Committees of COST. The 9 Sub-Committees pursue cooperation projects in the areas of food science and technology, meteorology and geophysics, 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 applications.

Over the last 6 months, the ASEAN COST received fresh funding commitments from external sources totaling approximately \$1,400,000. These came from ASEAN Dialogue Partners New Zealand, Japan, India and China, from Sectoral Dialogue Pakistan and the ASEAN Foundation. ASEAN COST also noted the boost in project funding coming from internal sources. From within ASEAN, Singapore, Thailand and Indonesia offered to organize and support training programmes for the new ASEAN member countries Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Viet Nam in response to the call from ASEAN Leaders for the acceleration of the integration of the newer members into the mainstream of ASEAN activities. The training programmes are in the areas of food microbiology, drying technology for agricultural products, biotechnology, applications of information technology in hydrology, and technology management.

The Meeting also took note of the preparations being undertaken by Brunei Darussalam, host of the 6th ASEAN Science and Technology Week (ASTW) which will be held on 12-21 September 2001 in Bandar Seri Begawan. The ASTW is an event organized by COST every three years. One of the highlights of the event is the announcement of

winners of the ASEAN Outstanding Scientist Award and the ASEAN Outstanding Young Scientist Award. It also features the Science Congress, technical conferences organized by the 9 Sub-Committees of COST, and an exhibition participated in by the ASEAN member countries, the Sub-Committees, the private sector, and ASEAN Dialogue Partners. More details about the ASTW may be obtained from its website located at <http://www.astw.org.bn>

The Meeting expressed satisfaction with the successful holding of the 7th ASEAN Food Conference in Manila in November 2000. About 700 participants from 23 countries participated in the Conference, which highlighted advances and new findings in food science and technology, discussed the impact of the development of food industries on environment, health and nutrition, and helped promote global networking and communication among scientists and researchers in food science and technology. 3 scientists from Cambodia participated in the Conference.

COST also met for the first time on 12 May 2001 in Phnom Penh with senior science and technology officials from China, Korea and Japan to explore possible scientific and technical cooperation under the ASEAN+3 framework. The ASEAN+3 framework is the mechanism by which ASEAN as a region engages the 3 countries of East Asia together.

The next meeting of COST will be held in Brunei Darussalam in September 2001.