

OPENING STATEMENT
H.E DATUK DOUGLAS UGGAH EMBAS
MINISTER OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT, MALAYSIA

**CHAIR FOR THE 7TH MEETING OF SUB-REGIONAL MINISTERIAL
STEERING COMMITTEE (MSC) ON
TRANSBOUNDARY HAZE POLLUTION**

Wednesday, April 29, 2009
Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam

His Excellency Pehin Dato Hj Abdullah bin Begawan Mudim Dato Hj Bakar,
Minister of Development, Brunei Darussalam;

His Excellency Mr. Rachmat Witoelar, Minister of Environment, Indonesia,

His Excellency Dr. Yaacob Ibrahim, Minister for the Environment and Water
Resources, Singapore

His Excellency Mr. Suwit Khunkitti, Minister of Natural Resources and
Environment, Thailand

Senior Government Officers

Ladies and Gentlemen

I would like to thank the Government of Brunei Darussalam for the excellent
arrangements made in hosting the 7th Meeting of the Sub-Regional Ministerial
Steering Committee on Transboundary Haze Pollution (MSC).

It is indeed a great honour for Malaysia to assume the chairmanship of the MSC
for the next two (2) years and I hope to continue the good work of my
predecessor in steering the MSC successfully for the last 2 years. On this note,
let me on behalf of you take this opportunity to pay a special tribute to H.E. Mr.
Rachmat Witoelar, Minister of Environment, Indonesia for his outstanding
stewardship and contributions towards the achievements of the MSC.

We have made substantive progress since MSC's establishment in October 2006. Based on its Terms of Reference (TOR), among others the MSC is tasked to oversee the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan of Action (PoA) on Transboundary Haze Pollution, foremost of which is to foster and strengthen regional cooperation to effectively tackle transboundary haze pollution resulting from land and forest fires.

Some of the MSC's notable achievements thus far include:

- (i) Implementation of Indonesia's PoA and achieving its 50% hotspot reduction target for 2008, compared to 2006;
- (ii) Significant progress on the collaboration between the governments of Indonesia and Singapore for Muaro Jambi Regency and Malaysia for Rokan Hilir Regency to prevent transboundary haze pollution in the region;
- (iii) Various training programmes conducted and participated by member countries and coordinated by the ASEAN Secretariat to enhance fire fighting capabilities, the implementation of zero burning techniques and haze early warning mechanism; and
- (iv) A workshop by ASEAN Specialised Meteorological Centre (ASMC) held in early April 2009 involving relevant experts and agencies to enhance the reporting of regional weather and haze outlook and simulation/modelling of haze transport and incorporating data on PM10 particulate matter which will be a useful indicator to track the dispersion of haze as an early warning mechanism.

Although progress has been made, these should not lull us into complacency as much needed to be done to achieve our aspiration of a haze-free ASEAN.

We need to continuously be vigilant and in my mind seek solutions to the following challenges in tackling the haze issues:-

- (i) To address the underlying causes of land and forest fires, namely: poverty, tradition practices, awareness raising and alternatives to control open burning; and
- (ii) To conduct effective monitoring and enforcement actions and reporting mechanism at national and regional levels;

Thank you.