

LOCAL News

Concern over recurrence of haze this year

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Simon Tay delivering the chairman's statement. - DEAN KASSIM

The 2nd Ministerial Steering Committee Forum on Transboundary Haze Pollution in South Asia (MSC Forum) yesterday concluded with the Chairman's statement by Simon SC Tay and Nicholas Fang, the Singapore Institute of International Affairs cum moderators for the MSC Forum.

In the statement, the MSC Forum hosted by Brunei Darussalam through the Ministry of Development was regarded as an extension of the inter-governmental MSC meeting. The MSC Forum brought government leaders and officials from the MSC countries of Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand together with regional and international non-government organisations, experts and academics, and representatives from financial institutions and business consultancies.

In terms of recurrence, there was a concern that the transboundary haze caused by land and forest fires will recur in 2012. This is despite continuing efforts taken within MSC and Asean as well as steps taken by Indonesia, including a new Presidential Decree. However, the MSC Forum discussed innovative approaches and projects that will hold potential results.

During the chairman's statement, focussed on fire-prone areas, these projects look for cooperative solutions that would involve not only government officials at the national and local levels but also community groups, corporation and landowners. With support and financial incentives, projects that would be implemented will involve potential donors and private sectors, creating livelihoods in the communities, benefiting the various stakeholders and generating sufficient financial returns for investors that would be critical for the success.

In the discussion, various examples were given by NGO representatives. In these projects fire prevention goals were combined with other concerns including conservation issues, including species and eco-system conservation and payments for eco-system services. Links to climate change such as efforts against deforestation and land degradation, carbon credits under various schemes were also among the topic of discussion yesterday. Sustainable development such as in developing sustainable production and trade-in-agricultural and forest products were also discussed.

Meanwhile, the MSC Forum members also agreed that the participation of government role to make projects proposed are viable. Participants agreed that these approaches will be further examined and pilot projects were encouraged to be carried out. There is a need for regulations and incentives to be put in place by governments in order to structure the market to respond as carbon markets are still evolving and have been affected by the lack of agreement on a new regime globally. While the promise of REDD+ to provide funding and assistance has yet to be fulfilled, MSC