



## **Mission Report**

**Special Meeting of SOM ED on Higher Education and  
Technical Meeting of ASEAN Higher Education Experts was convened as a follow-up to the ASEAN  
Special Senior Officials Meeting on Education (Special SOM-ED)  
April 10-11, 2017  
Jakarta, Indonesia**

Prepared by

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### **A. SEAMEO Officials and Staff Member on Mission**

1. Dr Ethel Agnes P Valenzuela  
Deputy Director for Programme and Development

### **B. Background, Description and Objectives of the Activity**

1. The Special Meeting of SOM ED on Higher Education and the Technical Meeting of ASEAN Higher Education Experts were convened by ASEAN Secretariat on 10 April 2017.
2. The objectives of the SOM ED are to discuss technical matters on Higher Education programmes in the region and get a consensus on convening an ASEAN HIGHER Education Working Group. The Technical Meeting of Experts on Higher Education were to deliberate upon the decisions made during the Special SOM-ED and discuss specific actions to pursue further development of higher education in ASEAN.
3. The meeting was chaired by Tan Sri Dr. Noorul Ainur Mohd Nor, Secretary General of Ministry of Higher Education of Malaysia.

### **C. Participants**

The meeting was attended by higher education experts and focal points from all ten ASEAN member states, the ASEAN Secretariat, and the concomitant higher education institutions and organisations - the ASEAN Quality Assurance Network (AQAN), the ASEAN University Network (AUN), AUN/Support for Engineering Education and Development Network (AUN/SEED-Net), the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRf), the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation (SEAMEO) Secretariat, the SEAMEO's Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development (SEAMEO-RIHED), the Asia-Europe Institute, and UNESCO. Other invited participants were the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan (MEXT), and the consortium of the European Union Support to Higher Education in the ASEAN Region (SHARE) comprising British Council, DAAD, EP Nuffic, and Campus France.

#### D. Organizer/s

- ASEAN Secretariat
- EU Share Secretariat
- Partners (MOES, MEXT Japan, SEAMEO RIHED, DAAD, AUN, Asi Europe Foundation etc)

#### E. Highlights of the Activity/Summary Points

- **The SOMED listened to the EU SHARE's** current programme and collaborative plans for higher education development in the region. The presentation highlighted the fact that SHARE should be perceived as an "ASEAN toolkit" that seeks to heighten the quality of development of higher education effort in the region. To this end, its three key features – comprehensiveness, inclusiveness, and alignment, were developed alongside the priorities of the ASEAN Blueprint 2025.
- Evidence of the work done in alignment of these three key features include the harmonisation of work between AQAN and AQAF, the inclusion and development of programmes that had the interests of the CLMV countries at its heart, and the development of an ASEAN scholarship. With regard to its work towards inclusiveness, SHARE highlighted how it has developed programmes that benefitted from the expertise of ASEAN regional partners such that its programmes either build on and complement existing programmes, or fills gaps in the system (such as that in the ASEAN-wide student mobility scheme).
- With regard to alignment, SHARE highlighted that the partnership has been designed jointly by ASEAN and the EU. The programme, hence, is fully supportive of ASEAN centrality and prioritises the needs of the region, such as that expressed in the Kuala Lumpur Declaration on Higher Education 2015, and ASEAN Work Plan on Education 2016-2020. Hence, ASEAN owns the results produced by SHARE and should leverage on these for the construction of an ASEAN Higher Education Area.
- SHARE ended its presentation with the reminder that its collaboration with the region is set to end in less than two years, and that it would be helpful for the SOM-ED to work towards taking over the reins of Higher Education development in the region.
- **MEXT Japan** informed the Meeting of its proposed ASEAN-Japan inter-university programme to be supported by the Government of Japan. ASEAN collaboration with Japanese universities has been underway since 2013 and in light of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ASEAN in 2017 and the 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation in 2018. The promotion of ASEAN-Japan inter-university exchanges aims to strengthen regional cooperation, stimulate two or multi-way student mobility, share priority issues, and explore possibility of online collaboration. To develop a future vision for higher education and cooperation of ASEAN-Japan, views and discussion from university high level are essential.
- **Vietnam** informed the Meeting of the Global 30 Programme by Japan which aims to attract as many as 300,000 students, and where scholarships are made available. In 2016, 28,000 Vietnamese students have taken part in this programme, while in 2017 thus far, 53,000 students have taken part.
- **AQAN** raised the generic nature of regional frameworks, and how this would pose a challenge to harmonisation processes. Undergirding this challenge is the need for an

established recognition mechanism such as that outlined in the Lisbon Convention or the Tokyo Convention. Currently, the quality assurance system in higher education in ASEAN is running on a trust-based mechanism, and this system would eventually need to move towards legal regulations. AQAN posed a question on whether ASEAN might need a recognition mechanism.

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- **SEAMEO RIHED** informed that the 5-year support of MEXT Japan to AIMS programme would finish soon. Beyond this, SEAMEO encouraged participating Japanese universities in AIMS to continue and sustain scholarship opportunities for AIMS.
- **The Asia-Europe Institute (AEI)** presented to the Meeting its focus of work. Its programmes ensure balanced mobility and support students from all of Asia. Currently, the theme of the AEI's programmes is on multiculturalism and pluralism, and uses the example of Europe as case study. The AEI also highlighted how ERASMUS+ was conducting research on capacity building in Lao PDR and Malaysia. AEI offers student exchanges under the Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence, summer school programmes and other scholarships. At present, the centre for ASEAN regionalism at AEI works on establishing a mobility unit which would focus on collecting data on issues of mobility and TVET such that the institute could better support mobility in the ASEAN region.

#### **F. Role/Participation of SEAMEO**

1. SEAMEO was invited to collaborate and study the proposals of ASEAN in Higher Education.
2. SEAMEO and RIHED presented the activities on student mobility and other new programmes in higher education. **SEAMEO RIHED** highlighted that its aim is to cultivate global resources and promote regional cooperation. Clarifying the need for SEAMEO RIHED's work, the presenters asserted that the ASEAN International Mobility for Students (AIMS) programme's past effort to promote mobility were limited to individual participating institutions.

#### **G. Follow-up Actions Needed**

- a) On the new proposals of ASEAN Secretariat, SEAMEO Secretariat informed the Meeting that SEAMEO and ASEAN Secretariats maintain a regular coordination meeting that allows both secretariats to update on each other's activities and coordinate implementation. The schedule of the next meeting is being planned for July 2017.
- b) There is a need for further discussion on harmonised higher education area in ASEAN including a possible ASEAN scholarship scheme that is based on best practices and lessons learned from SHARE, AIMS and AUN, and that is developed and supported by the ASEAN Member States. This also includes a need for a harmonisation of credit transfer systems.

- c) There is a need for an analysis of existing systems, quality assurance frameworks, and quality frameworks of AUN, AIMS and SHARE to better assess implementation and advise ASEAN Member States.

H. Photos



- I. Documents (Hard copies of the documents will be provided to the Documentation Officer.