

**ASEAN Needs To Revive Its High-Priority Activities in Combating Haze - DPM
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KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 11 (Bernama) -- ASEAN countries need to revive their high-priority activities in combating the haze problem to achieve a haze-free region by 2020, said Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi.

Opening the 12th Meeting of the Conference of The Parties To The ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution (COP-12) here Thursday, he said some of the activities had been dormant for quite some time due to lack of resources such as:

- * Technical cooperation to increase the preparedness for and to mitigate the risks to human health and the environment;
- * Implementation of activities to further promote zero burning and controlled burning practices;
- * Conduct of table-top and simulation exercises to enhance joint emergency response;

Ahmad Zahid taking photos with members of the 12th Meeting of the Conference of The Parties To The ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution (COP-12)

- * Capacity building for law enforcement and prosecution;
- * Regular forums or dialogues with international donor community and other stakeholders to promote the implementation of the agreement on transboundary haze pollution;
- * Explore international partnerships to ensure sustainable financial support of the ASEAN Transboundary Haze Control Fund; and
- * Establishment of the ASEAN Coordinating Centre to facilitate cooperation and coordination among the parties in addressing the haze pollution.

Ahmad Zahid said this matter should be their high priority to effectively tackle the haze problem in a way to be better prepared in the event of adverse weather condition in coming years.

"Taking year 2015 as the benchmark of the worst experience of haze incident in the region, we should be vigilant and undertake concrete actions, particularly on preventive and mitigation efforts.

"Let us not only reflect on the issues, but also focus on solutions and encourage one another in achieving our national plans and targets to eliminate the transboundary haze problem," said Ahmad Zahid.

The Deputy Prime Minister concluded his speech by reminding member states that the complexity and multifaceted haze problem in the region could not be resolved by one country or organization.

"However, working together with a shared vision, we can accomplish much," he said.

The ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution (AATHP) was established in 2002 as one of the key steps towards air pollution management in this region in an attempt to address the recurrence of the annual haze period since 1997.

Following this, one of the most significant achievements by ASEAN was the ratification of the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution by all member states in January 2015.

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