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English News

# 13 DEC SEASN THE BEST PLATFORM TO DISCUSS ASEAN SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES

PENANG, 9 December 2015 – The establishment of South East Asia Sustainability Network (SEASN) indirectly would provide more space for ASEAN community members to collaborate in the exchange of ideas for advancing the state of the diverse cultures of the ASEAN countries.

That was stated by the Deputy Minister of Higher Education, Datuk Mary Yap Kain Ching in her speech, in conjunction with the SEASN Thematic Working Group (TWG) on WEHAB+3 & SEASN Assembly 2015 at Vistana Hotel Penang recently which was attended by more than 55 participants from various ASEAN countries.

She said, through SEASN and the Thematic Working Group (TWG) in 2015, she hoped that the participating countries would expand the sustainability agenda which has now become an important agenda at the United Nations (UN).

"The UN has now introduced the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with 17 objectives and 169 targets encompassing various issues of sustainable development including the eradication of poverty and hunger, raising the standards on health and education, making townships and cities more sustainable, combating climate change, and protecting the oceans and forests.

"SDGs were introduced to replace the eight international development goals of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), where this year will see the final reporting of MDGs.

"We should not forget that the ASEAN countries too have the potential to compete with other countries in the world in efforts to improve the present situation in each individual country as the ASEAN countries are rich in biodiversity, cultural diversity, and natural resources," she said.

She also hoped that SEASN, initiated by Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), would be the best platform for ASEAN to be the key player in promoting sustainability in this region.

Mary's speech text was read out by USM Vice-Chancellor, Professor Dato' Dr. Omar Osman.

Also present were the Director of Centre for Global Sustainable Studies (CGSS) USM who is also SEASN Secretary, Professor Dr. Kamarulazizi Ibrahim and SEASN Board Members.

In the meantime, Omar who is also the SEASN Chairman said, in order for it to be realised, USM would continue to educate and provide empowerment on issues relating to sustainability as well as to look at this agenda from the higher education perspective.

“ASEAN is also facing issues relating to sustainability which have become the focus of the community, from the socio-cultural aspects such as disaster management, environment, pollution due to the haze, health, rural development and poverty eradication, science and technology, social welfare and development, and also women and youth issues; whereas from the economy aspects, the emphasis was on energy issues, agriculture and forestry.

“An understanding of this issue should be nurtured from the aspect of not only by reacting to a disaster for instance, but also in the preparation to face such a situation,” he explained further.

Omar also stressed that, for USM, networking is truly essential for the sharing and transfer of knowledge in relation to rightful sustainability issues with the community and also the mutual responsibility in preparing to face this challenge and to put a continuous effort in teaching and educating the community.

“It is hoped that SEASN would continue to expand its sustainability agenda by pushing for policy changes in each ASEAN country, where the universities and higher education institutions can play a more dominant role in developing new ideas for the well-being of the future generations,” he added.

SEASN currently comprised of 38 members from five countries (Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, Philippines and Vietnam) and was launched in 28 October 2013 with the objective of promoting sustainability matters at the level of the institutions, the sharing of information and sustainability best practices.

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