



MINISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

**YBHG. DATUK NOR YAHATI AWANG
DEPUTY SECRETARY GENERAL
(ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY)**

ASEAN WORKSHOP ON SEA LEVEL RISE 2025

**DATE : 11 JUNE 2025
TIME : 9.00 AM
VENUE : RAIA HOTEL & CONVENTION CENTRE,
KUALA TERENGGANU**

TITLE OF KEYNOTE: Preparing ASEAN for Rising Seas: Building Awareness and Resilience against Sea Level Rise

Bismillahirrahmanirrahim

Assalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh,

Salam Sejahtera and a very good morning

Ms. Natalia Derodofa

Senior Officer, Environment Division

ASEAN Secretariat

YBhg. Prof. Emeritus Dato' Dr. Azizan Bin Abu Samah

Board of Trustees, Sultan Mizan Antarctic Research Foundation

YBhg. Dato' Ir. Mohd Zaki Mat Amin

Director General of National Water Research Institute of Malaysia
(NAHRIM)

Mr. Abd Shukor Jamaluddin

Chief Executive Officer

Sultan Mizan Antarctic Research Foundation

Ts. Dr. Mohd Fadzil bin Mohd Akhir

Pro Vice- Chancellor (Strategic, Performance and Corporate), Universiti
Malaysia Terengganu

Esteemed Delegations from ASEAN Member States

Respectful Line of Speakers

GIZ ASEAN EU-German Climate Action Programme

Ladies and gentlemen,

1. It is my honour to welcome all of you to ASEAN Workshop on Sea Level Rise, themed “ASEAN’s Response to Rising Seas: A New Chapter in Climate Adaptation,” held here in the beautiful and culturally rich state of Terengganu, Malaysia. As the Deputy Secretary General of Malaysia’s Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Sustainability, I extend our warmest hospitality to all participants who have traveled from across the region to address one of the most pressing challenges of our time.

INTRODUCTION

2. As we are all aware, coastal communities around the world are increasingly alarmed by the rising sea levels and frequent coastal floods. Since 1900, average sea levels have risen by nearly 21 centimetres, at an average rate of 1.7 millimetres per year. Alarmingly, this rate has more than doubled in the last two (2) decades, reaching up to 3.7 millimetres per year.
3. Even more concerning is that over 2.5% of the global population lives in coastal areas less than three metres above sea level. In Asia and the Pacific, 44.1 million people live in areas under one metre of elevation, and 112.3 million live below three (3) metres. These trends pose serious risks to low-lying deltas like those in Bangladesh, Vietnam, and small atoll nations—where both populations and critical assets remain highly exposed.

4. According to Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Assessment Report 6th (IPCC AR6) (2023), global sea levels have risen about 21–24 centimetres since 1900, with acceleration in the past 30 years due to rapid ice sheet melt and ocean warming. The Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets are losing mass faster than predicted, contributing more to sea-level rise than previously thought. This accelerating rise in global sea levels poses profound and multifaceted challenges for the ASEAN region.
5. A recent study by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in 2024 estimates that coastal flooding linked to sea level rise could cause average annual damages of USD 26.8 billion—equivalent to 0.1% of the region's GDP. Southeast Asia alone is projected to bear over 42% of this impact. The repercussions are far-reaching—affecting not just infrastructure and property, but also tourism, agriculture, public health, and livelihoods.

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY AND ROLES OF ASEAN

Ladies and gentlemen,

6. These projections highlight the urgent need for robust, targeted adaptation and mitigation strategies. As we know, the ASEAN region is home to more than 600 million people — the majority of whom live near the coast. Our cities, deltas, and islands are not only hubs of economic activity but also uniquely vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Therefore, we must act decisively and inclusively.

7. This workshop provides a valuable opportunity to deepen regional cooperation and to craft inclusive, actionable climate deliverables that reflect the diverse capacities and aspirations of all ASEAN Member States.
8. Our discussions today will focus on enhancing ASEAN's visibility on the global stage, unifying our collective capacity in climate change negotiations, and advancing efforts related to Article 6 of the Paris Agreement. These initiatives represent not only our region's ambitions but also underscore the need for multi-sectoral collaboration to achieve meaningful progress.

LEVERAGING MALAYSIA'S ASEAN CHAIRMANSHIP 2025

Ladies and gentlemen,

9. Malaysia is deeply honored to convene this gathering during our tenure as ASEAN Chair for 2025. This leadership role represents not merely a ceremonial position, but a solemn responsibility to advance regional cooperation on environmental challenges that transcend national boundaries.
10. Sea level rise knows no borders, and neither can our response to it. Under Malaysia's chairmanship, we have prioritized environmental sustainability as a cornerstone of ASEAN's collective future, recognizing that our economic prosperity and social stability are inextricably linked to the health of our shared environment.

11. Simultaneously, Malaysia's role as Chair of the AWGCC positions us at the forefront of regional climate action. Through the AWGCC, we have witnessed remarkable collaboration among ASEAN Member States in developing comprehensive strategies to address climate impacts. This workshop represents the culmination of months of preparation and coordination, bringing together the finest scientific minds and policy experts to tackle the specific challenge of rising seas.

12. Let us remember adaptation is not just a technical task; it is a shared moral responsibility to future generations. Let ASEAN lead by example—not just in preparing for the tides, but in rising above them, together.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Ladies and gentlemen,

13. I would like to take this opportunity to extend my sincere appreciation to the Climate Change Division of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Sustainability Malaysia; our co-secretariat partners the Sultan Mizan Antarctic Research Foundation (YPASM), Universiti Malaysia Terengganu, the National Antarctic Research Centre, and the National Water Research Institute of Malaysia (NAHRIM) for your hard work in organizing this workshop. Most importantly, to the GIZ under the ASEAN-EU-German Climate Action Programme and ASEAN Secretariat for their unwavering support.

CONCLUSIONS

14. In the face of rising seas, we must not stand by—we must act together. This is a shared challenge and also a shared opportunity to build a safer, more resilient future for ASEAN. Rising sea levels are already affecting millions across our region. But through stronger policies, innovative solutions, and regional cooperation, we can turn this challenge into collective strength.
15. Let us move forward—working together, supporting one another, and ensuring a better future for generations to come.

Thank you, and I wish everyone a meaningful and productive workshop ahead.