

Management of Smoke Hazes/Smog with Adverse Effects on Health

The 5th National Health Assembly

Having considered the report on Management of Smoke Hazes/Smog with Adverse Effects on Health¹

Realizing that the smoke haze situation has become a serious problem with far-reaching effects on public health, caused by several factors, including the burning of forest land and agricultural land, the urban sector, transport and industry, that because of the complex nature of the problems management requires appropriate strategic problem-solving plans at regional, provincial, district, and village levels to ensure that the action taken has a clear direction and meets the intended objective,

Concerned about an increasing amount of small dust and particulates from the haze exceeding the standard level, a phenomenon that will affect health and tourism and will become a cause of social conflict between urban people and rural people or farmers,

Noting that the situation is related to the existing economic, social, and legal structures, that effective action needs to take place at every level – personal, community, agencies concerned, that improvement must be made on work mechanisms, power structure, rights and public participation, and that all this is not an easy undertaking in a short time,

Concerned that the lack of participation from all sectors and at all levels will make it almost impossible to solve haze problems successfully as intended,

Appreciating the work of various agencies concerned and the people sector that have helped to make haze prevention measures a public policy for health,

Seeing that public participation and decentralization of power in the management of natural resources will be important success factors and that even though the problems are caused by different factors, it is important to focus on the main cause, i.e. burning of forest and agricultural lands, as the main strategy,

Has, therefore, passed the following resolutions:

1. Requesting the National Health Commission to submit to the cabinet for approval the National Health Assembly resolutions on Management of Smoke Hazes/Smog with Adverse Effects on Health and for the cabinet to assign agencies concerned to take appropriate action as follows:

1.1 Thai Health Promotion Foundation to act as the principal agency coordinating with Community Organizations Development Institute, Thailand Research Fund, Environmental Fund, and the private sector, supporting the people sector and community organizations in their efforts to solve haze problems, and to set up the private sector's working group for cooperation to do the following duties:

1.1.1 Support community organizations and local government organizations capable of advocating movements to solve haze problems by developing administrative plans, raising awareness, generating a correct body of knowledge, and setting up resource centers for further action,

1.1.2 Urge local government organizations to develop bylaws on the management of natural resources and environment,

1.1.3 Support research work and the application of findings to public agencies and the people sector, including the development of a system that can integrate health and environment information necessary for common undertakings,

1.1.4 Provide greater budgetary support for community organizations to act to solve the problems, while the private sector's working group for cooperation shall work with public agencies concerned, NGOs, National Council of Farmers, and education institutes.

¹ Document Health Assembly 5/Main7

1.2 The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment to act principal agency to do the following:

1.2.1 Improve the structure and power of the National Forest Fire and Haze Committee as follows:

(1) Add more representatives of the public and private sector on the committee proportionately in every region of the country,

(2) Have the power to consider and comment on work plans and budgetary plans prepared jointly by community organizations and local government organizations before they are submitted to the cabinet for approval,

(3) Appoint working groups to prepare community strategic plans for the management of forest fires and hazes at village, district, provincial, ad regional levels;

1.2.2 Work with the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of Industry, Ministry of Education, and Ministry of Social Development and Human Security to support the working group in 1.2.1(3) to act as major coordinating unit in the development of plans to solve haze and forest fire problems at every level, while the working group in 1.1 will provide help and support, and provincial governors shall assemble plans and budgetary considerations and submit them for approval to the National Forest Fire and Haze Committee;

1.3 Law Reform Committee to act as principal mechanism working with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment and the Working group in 1.1 to study, draft, and amend laws and regulations that are obstacles to the work to solve forest fire and haze problems, as well as to develop legal provisions on public participation in the efforts to solve problems concerning hazes, forest fires, management of forest resources, utilization of land and farming, including relevant laws on payment of ecological damages, and to submit all the proposed amendments and developments to the cabinet for approval within two years.

2. Requesting the Secretary-General to report progress to the 8th National Health Assembly.