

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 working 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 civil society 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. burnings of forests 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 actions as follows:

1.1 The Environmental Fund, the Community Organizations Development Institute, Thailand Research Fund, Thai Health Promotion Foundation and the private sector to act as partners to support the civil society 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 by developing administrative plans, raising awareness, generating a correct body of knowledge, and setting up resource centers for further actions,

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

1.1.3 Support research work and the application of findings to public agencies and the civil society 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 educational institutes,

¹ Document Health Assembly 5/Main7

1.1.5 Support the efforts to reduce burnings in agricultural areas through supporting the making of organic fertilizer from plant leftover materials by the Land Development Department,

1.16 Promote providing knowledge and skills to the general public and youngsters in schools to collectively solve forest fire and haze problems in the area in a suitable manner.

1.2 The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment to act as a 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) Have the Prime Minister or Deputy Prime Minister assigned by the Prime Minister to act as Chairperson, with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment as Secretariat,

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

(3) 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,

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

The Committee under 1.2.1 shall undertake the management of forest fire and haze problems on a permanent and regular basis until the problems are solved.

(5) Appoint a committee to monitor and inspect forest fire and haze problems, including the impacts on the ecosystem, society and the environment, by allowing opportunity for the public to participate at every level from the village level to sub-district, district, provincial and 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(4) to act as a 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;

1.2.3 Have a mutual agreement among bordering countries in order to jointly tackle the forest fire and haze problems.

1.3 Law Reform Committee to act as a 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 compensation 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 of National Health Commission to report progress to the 7th National Health Assembly.