

Health Sector Recovery After Pandemic

19th MASEAN — CONFERENCE —

Text by Denise Tan, Deputy Manager, International Relations
Photos by Indonesian Medical Association

The 19th Medical Association of South East Asian Nations (MASEAN) Conference was held from 3 to 4 December 2022 at Hotel Borobudur Jakarta in Indonesia. This year's meeting was hosted by the Indonesian Medical Association (IMA) and attended by delegates from the national medical associations (NMAs) of Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. The event was graced by the Indonesian Minister of Health, Mr Budi G Sadikin, who took the opportunity to share the plans and challenges facing the Indonesian healthcare system.

The SMA delegation comprised Dr Ng Chew Lip (Honorary Secretary, SMA and Secretary General, MASEAN), Dr Tan Yia Swam (President, SMA), Dr Ng Chee Kwan (1st Vice President, SMA) and the SMA secretariat team.

The theme for this year's Scientific Symposium was "Health Sector Recovery after Pandemic". The NMAs' representatives shared their respective experiences and roles during the pandemic, their medical manpower arrangements and regulations, how each country planned to emerge stronger,

and their thoughts on the future of healthcare tourism.

Aside from the countries' reports, delegates also discussed other issues that concern the NMAs and the healthcare profession, such as membership matters, telemedicine and healthcare tourism, and women doctors. Dr Tan Yia Swam highlighted that the mindset that women doctors will stop working to stay home and look after their children should change. She added that there should be more women leaders to lead by example, and to mentor and guide other women colleagues. They should also be supported through workplace empowerment (eg, by providing nursing rooms for mothers).

Another issue which delegates felt strongly about was the bullying and discrimination of healthcare workers. A suggestion to draft a position statement on this issue and to adopt it at the 2023 MASEAN Mid-Term Meeting was raised. The theme for the upcoming meeting will be on telemedicine.

With these thoughts in mind, the delegates bade farewell as the MASEAN Conference concluded.

We thank the IMA for their warm hospitality and look forward to the 19th MASEAN Mid-Term Conference, to be hosted by SMA in Singapore in July 2023. ♦

Medical Association of South East Asian Nations

MASEAN was formed on 10 April 1980 in Penang, Malaysia, in recognition of the importance of mutual cooperation and collective efforts among the NMAs in attaining the highest possible level of healthcare for people in the region, and in upholding the image and dignity of the medical profession. Subsequently on 30 January 1981, MASEAN was accepted by ASEAN as an affiliate with non-governmental status.

The main objectives of MASEAN are:

- To promote close ties among the NMAs and physicians in ASEAN;
- To foster the study and dissemination of all aspects of medical knowledge;
- To study and report on the problems which confront the profession in the region; and
- To establish common policies in attaining the highest possible level of healthcare for the people.

Member associations take turns to organise the meetings in their respective countries. SMA currently hosts the MASEAN Secretariat and works closely with member associations to organise these events.



Delegates posing for a group photo at the 19th MASEAN Conference