



# ASEAN European Academic University Network (ASEA-UNINET)

## 19<sup>th</sup> Plenary Meeting

### Meeting Minutes

Tuesday – Friday, February 27<sup>th</sup> – March 1<sup>st</sup> 2024  
held at the Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) in Penang, Malaysia

under the patronage of

**Prof. Dato' Seri Ir. Dr. Abdul Rahman Mohamed**  
Vice Chancellor of Universiti Sains Malaysia

**Prof. Dato' Gs. Dr. Narimah Samat**  
ASEA-UNINET President



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## FULL PROGRAMME, 19<sup>TH</sup> ASEA-UNINET PLENARY MEETING

The Full Programme of the 19<sup>th</sup> ASEA-UNINET Plenary Meeting may be accessed via [link](#) in the Appendices.

### DAY 1 “ASEA-UNINET PLENARY MEETING”

TUESDAY, 27-02-2024

*\* streamed event with online participation*



### OPENING CEREMONY\*

The Master of Ceremonies introduces the Plenary Meeting as a platform for collaboration, innovation, and knowledge exchange. Founded in 1994 by Austrian and Southeast Asian universities, ASEA-UNINET acts as a role model for cooperation and quality research between Europe and the ASEAN region and today encompasses 90 institutions from 15 different countries. The network aims to build its success on equal footing in collaboration and by fostering scientific and intercultural exchange.

The President of ASEA-UNINET, Prof. Dato’ Gs. Dr. **Narimah Samat**, greets honorary guests and participants of the network’s 19<sup>th</sup> Plenary Meeting. Every year, more than 80 bilateral and multilateral research projects take place within the network with new ones also continuously being started. Scholarship and project calls are opened every year, and there is a continuous desire to grow in these areas. **Samat** emphasises that there is no limit to academic collaborations with these taking place in multidisciplinary disciplines. Gratitude is expressed to the hosting institution, Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), including the Vice Chancellor and in particular her team who helped organise the event, as well as other USM staff members and students for their support.

In the first welcome address, Vice Chancellor of USM, Prof. Dato' Seri Ir. Dr. **Abdul Rahman Mohamed**, remarks that the network is a testament to the spirit of collaboration and fosters a vibrant and inclusive academic environment. As with USM's belief in the transformative power of knowledge and its impact on society, **Mohamed** encourages participants to engage with faculty, students, and other attendees, to seek opportunities for collaboration.

Virtual welcome addresses are given by the Austrian Minister of Education, Science and Research, Ao. Univ.-Prof. Dr. **Martin Polaschek**, as well as by the President of the Federation of Austrian-Foreign Societies, Univ.-Prof. Dr. **Hermann Mückler**. The welcome addresses may be accessed via [link](#) in the Appendices.

The Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Austria to Malaysia, H.E. Mag. **Andreas Launer**, welcomes the Plenary Meeting participants and thanks USM for its hospitality in hosting the event. Addressing the large number of research projects, educational programmes, and capacity building projects within the network across a variety of disciplines, Austria is commended for its contribution to the mission of the network by offering strength in science, technology, and education, as well as by building bridges to learn from and with countries in other regions. When considering that the network was founded in 1994, the founders demonstrated vision and foresight for already then understanding the importance the axis between Southeast Asia and Europe would hold. ASEAN and the EU stand economically as the most dynamic alliances of nations worldwide, and cooperations between states in ASEAN and EU states are considered to be at an all-time high. **Launer** highlights the salience of partnerships to tackle political, economic, and environmental challenges that societies are faced with today, as well as the importance of collectively seizing opportunity of this cooperation. A long established and solid network such as ASEA-UNINET plays a significant role in the partnership between ASEAN and EU states, and possibilities abound to further deepen partnerships, including through funding opportunities. An observation on cooperation opportunities is shared, namely the significant role that the private sector plays as seen in investments made from Austria in Malaysia (e.g., in investments made in semi-conductors in the area of substrates). In particular, the high-tech sector offers opportunities for a close connection between the scientific community and the business sector.

The final welcome address is given by the Director General of Higher Education Malaysia, Prof. Dr. **Azlinda Azman**, who first expresses gratitude for returning to USM as an alumna who was seconded to the Ministry of Higher Education, as well as for seeing the venue filled with distinguished delegates who share a common goal of fostering internationalisation and collaboration. The network has played a pivotal role in bringing together institutions in Higher Education and in facilitating the exchange of knowledge. **Azman** describes that, at the Ministry of Higher Education, such initiatives are highly encouraged in the face of a crossroads of innovation and academic distinctions. Pillars of Higher Education are reflected on: a global curriculum with an influx of new technology; a need to accelerate research and innovation so as to produce research that is relevant, solution focused, and caters to society's needs; internationalisation, the need for collaboration, particularly in cutting edge innovation, and the desire for Malaysia to be an international heart in the region; knowledge sharing and the importance of tapping into scientific products; the need to work internationally for which the network is seen as a role model; finally, investigating what is needed to provide an enabling ecosystem so that the education system may further flourish. The aim of the Plenary Meeting underscores the importance of the timely and pertinent topic that reflects dynamics and

challenges facing institutions worldwide. Through collective efforts, **Azman** is confident that insights will be shared, best-practice examples highlighted, and fruitful exchange occur.

#### KEYNOTE ADDRESSES\*

The first keynote address is delivered by Emeritus Prof. Dato' Dr. **Morshidi Sirat**, Advisor to the Education Malaysia Global Services, on the topic "Global North-South Collaboration: Higher Education Research in the Post-Pandemic Era". **Sirat** reflects on the designations of so-called "Global North" and "Global South" nations as a demarcation of political, geopolitical, and economic commonalities, and differences, between nations. These terms serve as a heuristic for developed and likewise developing nations, the latter of which generally denote low-income and marginalised countries. Not reflected adequately in this designation, however, are the emerging nations in the so-called 'Global South'.

Taking SDG 17 with its focus on partnerships into consideration, **Sirat** addresses an idealised Global North-Global South agenda in which northern nations inherit the role of co-producing knowledge, technologies, and processes with southern nations to support the development of their capacities. Within this agenda, Global North partners are typically regarded as experts while the Global South is perceived as being confined to its own region, thus enabling the perception that knowledge generally flows from the Global North to the Global South. As a result, theories are seldomly seen as deriving from the Global South, and a citation bias further fuels underrepresentation of the Global South.

Towards a meaningful collaboration and partnership, a mutuality-based collaboration and partnership is required where parties are expected to cooperate as equal partners rather than in a supporter-recipient relationship. This may exist between partners with similar or different degrees of economic and educational development. The objective is to make engagement and collaborations more equitable and effective. However, the danger of unintentional rebranding of colonial and neocolonial relationships through the idea of partnership persists. Therefore, innovative forms of Global North-Global South collaborations need to be explored.

Are there perhaps also new models emerging in the post-pandemic era involving the Global South? Questions to reflect on include: Are we seeing more of the same Global North sponsored partnerships directed at Global South participants as beneficiaries? Can we regard ASEA-UNINET as a progressive model and paradigm, indicating best practices in Higher Education research collaboration that could withstand the challenges of a medium towards a longer-term post-pandemic era? Are there new financing and resourcing arrangements to be explored with a view of moving beyond negotiated power between the Global North and the Global South in light of new Global South-Global South collaborations that are slowly emerging? While there are many initiatives in Europe like Erasmus+, how many comparable initiatives can be identified in the Global South? These considerations are important to ensure an equitable involvement of southern partners in the co-production of knowledge systems that may be considered credible, salient, and legitimate.

The second keynote address is delivered by Prof. Dr. **Abd Karim Alias**, Principal Fellow at Universiti Tenaga Nasional's Centre for Academic Advancement & Flexible Learning, on the topic "Strategies for Future-Proof Learning Ecosystem Beyond the Pandemic". **Alias** explores some of the most common challenges learners in Malaysia faced at the start of the COVID19-pandemic, referencing an increasing number of articles on students that had been climbing

trees to access online classes due to poor internet connection. The pandemic revealed the vulnerabilities of traditional education and the divide between physical and blended or virtual learning. More than 60% of USM at the start of the pandemic, **Alias** explains, was not sufficiently equipped despite institutional efforts prior to the pandemic to champion e-learning. The pandemic served as a tipping point to consider a change in trajectory.

Since then, the much-debated transformation of education has accelerated and grown more widespread. The pandemic sparked a digital transformation for thousands of institutions, and those already adapting were forced to accelerate this process even faster. However, in a so-called VUCA world – a world of volatility, uncertainty, ambiguity, and complexity (VUCA), **Alias** explores how we can deal with the underlying dynamic changes and the challenges they bring about and proposes shifting towards a so-called RICH paradigm: Resilience, adapting and thriving through challenges and adversity; Innovation, creating novel solutions to challenges; Collaboration, joint efforts yielding shared success; and Holism, addressing all community needs inclusively (RICH). The RICH paradigm may thereby be a promising model to face future adversities such as, but not restricted to, the pandemic.

Practical considerations towards building a future-proof ecosystem are proposed:

- Considering pedagogical ability, e.g. by promoting active learning approaches, fostering critical thinking and problem-solving skills, embracing micro-credentials and personalised learning.
- Designing curricula and the delivery thereof with consideration for social and emotional well-being, e.g. by fostering cultural community and belonging, and integrity.
- Enabling equitable access and inclusion, e.g. by addressing digital divides, providing affordable learning resources, designing inclusive learning environments for diverse learners.
- Collaboration and partnerships: Making a collective effort in building partnerships with industry, government, and other stakeholders to share resources and best practices.
- Fostering technological resilience: Investing in flexible learning infrastructure, developing diverse online learning platforms, building digital literacy skills.

The Keynote Presentations may be accessed via [link](#) in the Appendices.

#### WORKING GROUPS

Working Groups take place for discussions, exchanges, and an exploration of five topics. An outline of each topic and the presented results is provided in the following:

##### **i. Alumni Engagement in ASEA-UNINET**

Moderation: Asst. Prof. Dr. **Wongkot Phumphumirat** (Prince of Songkla University)  
on behalf of Assoc. Prof. Dr. **Thakerng Wongsirichot** (Prince of Songkla University)

In development for an ASEA-UNINET alumni strategic plan, this workshop explores ideas on effectively managing the alumni within ASEA-UNINET: What kind of alumni related activities should be arranged and, in the future, implemented? The alumni network is positioned as a global hub for collaboration, innovation, and a positive impact, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration among alumni worldwide. Arising from this alumni network are change-makers dedicated to global progress as well as leaders in research, innovation, and societal transformation.

Presented Results:

As of current, there are around 1.000 alumni within the network with the majority coming from Thailand, Indonesia, and Vietnam. Given this significant number, a valuable opportunity presents itself to build and maintain meaningful relationships between ASEA-UNINET and its alumni, and to connect these together. Three questions are explored within the working group:

- Why is building and maintaining a connection between the ASEA-UNINET network and its alumni necessary?
- What activities should be arranged?
- How should alumni engagement activities be implemented?

The working group defines the term “ASEA-UNINET alumni” as anyone who received a benefit from the ASEA-UNINET network, including professors in the case of postdoctoral grant recipients. Information and expertise shared during the working group is presented, including a portal of connection to give alumni a sense of belonging; offering support to establish interdisciplinary connections; offering guidance on the future career path of alumni; assistance with fundraising; promoting network activities for further projects; establishing a mentorship connection to share experiences or best practice; receiving feedback from alumni to improve the network as a way of customer feedback. A poll of the working group participants revealed that particularly mentorship programmes and the establishment of a strong alumni network are activities to be prioritised. The organiser of the working group, **Wongsirichot**, will further engage in this topic within his role as “Coordinator for Alumni Affairs” within the network’s Strategic Advisory Team.

ii. **DIGITAL HUMANISM as an enabler to address the urgent need for a holistic socio-technical approach to the latest developments in computer science and artificial intelligence**

Moderation: Univ.-Prof. Dr.Dr.h.c. **A Min Tjoa** (Vienna University of Technology)

As early as 2017, the inventor of the World Wide Web, Tim Berners Lee, diagnosed that the "system is failing" and that the future of the web was beginning to falter in the face of a "nasty storm" of problems, including the spread of fake news, propaganda, and the increasing polarisation of the web. This working group focuses on the need for research and development across multiple disciplines to harness computer science and AI for humanity with the "DIGITAL HUMANISM Manifesto" at its centre as a position statement on digital technologies that are seen as disrupting societies and challenging our understanding of what it means to be human.

Presented Results:

Digital humanism is considered as an enabler for a holistic sociotechnical approach to the latest developments in computer science and AI at a crucial time to consider IT and its consequences, both as an enabler for progress but also about possible threats. In computer science, the interplay between digital technology and humanity has governed topics in recent years. The assessment of AI models and its risks, so-called horizon scanning, is named as an example of a hitherto little explored area of research and is suggested as an example of cooperation possibilities between ASEA-UNINET members. This could be achieved through interdisciplinary project, e.g. law and humanities, the arts and social sciences). A further example is given in data curation



strategies, e.g. “explainable AI”, to be further researched. These examples are promising avenues in the (co)-development of curricula embracing possibilities of AI. The working group concludes that the interdisciplinary and multilateral research done within the network lends itself to investigating this field further.

**iii. ASEA-UNINET Funding Opportunities for Research in/and the Performing Arts**

Moderation: Univ.-Prof. Dr. **Sarah Weiss** (University of Music and Performing Arts Graz), **Christoph Niederhauser** MSc (OeAD)

This two-part working group addresses opportunities within ASEA-UNINET for universities and students working in, or doing research on, the performing arts. Three core funding schemes are presented (i.e., Music Practice Grant within the Ernst Mach Grant – ASEA-UNINET for performance grants; Ernst Mach Grant – ASEA-UNINET for doctoral or postdoctoral research within music and other subjects within the arts; ASEA-UNINET Project Funding). It is also explored how to conceptualise projects that are fundable within these programmes, and how to construct a proposal for research that involves documenting and analysing performing arts traditions for researchers from Europe and Southeast Asia.

Presented Results:

Themes and ideas are identified by participants. Common themes include how to find research partners; unintuitive website structures that, in addition to independent research by prospective grant applicants, presents an opportunity for coordinators to share information and connect prospective grant applicants with suitable funding schemes. The working group also discusses how to foster relationships across ASEAN based institutions, e.g. through multilateral projects. While this cannot be funded by the ASEA-UNINET Project Funding, it is nonetheless seen as complimentary to funding provided by the network and worth exploring. Finally, many participants who work in performing arts institutions identify that a doctorate is not required at their institution; as a result, prospective new members from performing arts institutions may not necessarily be eligible to become an ASEA-UNINET partner due to the PhD requirement of the network. **Weiss** as the workshop organiser will draft a proposal for the network, so that additional performing arts institutions may be considered in the future.

**iv. European Universities in ASEA-UNINET: Strategies for Expansion**

Moderation: Prof. Dr. **Roberto Ranzi** (University of Brescia), Univ.-Prof. Dr. **Wolfgang Obenaus** (Vienna University of Economics and Business)

With the backdrop of ASEA-UNINET having expanded from an Austrian-Southeast Asian to now a European-Southeast Asian network, besides from strong representation in Austria and Italy, an overall fragmented state of European members can be observed with some member countries featuring only one member institution. This working group explores possibilities for achieving sustainable development in expanding the network’s European members by gathering participant input on recent trends and observations, particularly from Southeast Asian members, with the goal of proposing a membership strategy based on this input following the Plenary Meeting.

Presented Results:

Throughout the working group, the benefit of network membership is discussed as a factor that provides opportunity to create linkages and cooperations with other members. For Southeast Asian universities, opportunities are given to enter into connection with a wide catalogue of European universities. However, feedback is given on the importance to expand the European side of the network in light of an imbalance between the well represented Southeast Asian side compared to the limited European side. A strategic consideration on the European side of the network is to utilise institutional alliances such as the European Universities alliances. The idea is proposed that when a Southeast Asian student comes to a European university, the door is open to further universities. ASEA-UNINET, as such, is positioned as an educational hub.

To incentivise prospective network members in joining, concrete outcomes may be showcased, including for example an alumni database, and citations and top-cited publications that demonstrate the high quality of researchers within the network. Furthermore, Higher Education is seen as a democratic, inclusive environment within the network as opposed to a business-driven paradigm, in which opportunity may be given to talented students and researchers towards a peaceful and sustainable common goal. As such, scientific diplomacy and the concept of European citizenship is fostered by the network members.

Standardising how research funding is granted may broaden the appeal of the network. Italy may serve as an example here, as it has been able to demonstrate considerate representation within the network without necessarily relying on ministry funding. A joining criterion for prospective Italian members could be the provision of scholarships for ASEAN partners as is currently offered at the Master level. This is seen as complimentary to the Austrian funding schemes, which predominantly start at the PhD level. Nonetheless, financial support from the ministries of partner countries should be gained to further incentivise membership and contribute towards a sustainable growth of the network.

**v. Diversification and Impact of European and National Funding schemes for academic cooperation between Southeast Asia and Europe**

Moderation: Mag. Gerhard Volz (OeAD), Prof. Dr. **Alessandro Capra** (Università degli Studi di Modena e Reggio Emilia), Assoc. Prof. Dr. **Mohamad Farizal bin Rajemi** (Universiti Utara Malaysia)

The focus of this working group addresses (i) the strategic use of different institutional, national, and European funding schemes, and (ii) the impact of the use of funds among ASEA-UNINET member universities and beyond. The objective is to contribute towards an awareness about different funding sources while raising the understanding how synergies between different schemes and their use may foster the impact of international academic and research cooperation, thus, enhancing collaboration among network members and beyond.

Presented Results:

Erasmus+ as an established global funding scheme is presented as a complimentary tool to other funding schemes. Platforms, including EURAXESS ASEAN and the OeAD Map for registered alumni and projects with/in Austria, are recommended as tools that



help connect Southeast Asian researchers with Europe. Malaysian funding schemes are presented, and when comparing these to European grants two contrasting insights are gained: (i) there is a gap in mobility funding schemes comparable to the Ernst Mach Grant and Erasmus+; (ii) matching funding schemes, particularly for tech-readiness level grants, are prevalent at the national level.

Following a group discussion, recommendations made include raising awareness amongst members over funding opportunities; considering Erasmus+ funding, although it is considered competitive; making use of available funding, and taking up funding that has been granted; analogue to prevalent matching grants in Southeast Asian member countries, considering the potential for matching grants at the European level and investigating readiness for these both at the institutional and governmental level; creating a pool of experts as facilitators and promoters (n.b. these do not necessarily have to be coordinators within the network); effectively showcasing testimonials and best practice examples. How best to address the Generation Z with offers available within the network, in light of decreasing scholarship applications, is identified as a challenge to be further investigated.

\* streamed event with online participation



Photo Credits: ASEA-UNINET

COUNTRY COORDINATORS’ REPORTS\*

Reports by the following participating National Coordinators and by the OeAD are presented:

- **Austria,**
- **OeAD – Austria’s Agency for Education and Internationalisation,**
- **Indonesia,**
- **Italy,**
- **Malaysia,**
- **Pakistan,**
- **Philippines,**
- **Thailand,**
- **Vietnam.**

The individual country reports may be accessed via [link](#) in the Appendices.

MEMBERSHIP PRESENTATIONS\*

Presentations by the following universities seeking membership are held.

Candidate Universities seeking Full Membership:

1. **Mae Fah Luang University (Thailand)**

New Universities seeking Candidate Membership:

1. **Walailak University** (Thailand)
2. **Vidyasirimedhi Institute of Science and Technology** (Thailand)
3. **Posts and Telecommunications Institute of Technology, Ho Chi Minh City** (Vietnam)

A presentation is also given by the following New University seeking Candidate Membership within the Performing Arts. Due to an ongoing inquiry regarding membership eligibility (see Working Groups, iii.), this institution is not currently considered for membership elections:

1. **Princess Galyani Vadhana Institute of Music** (Thailand)

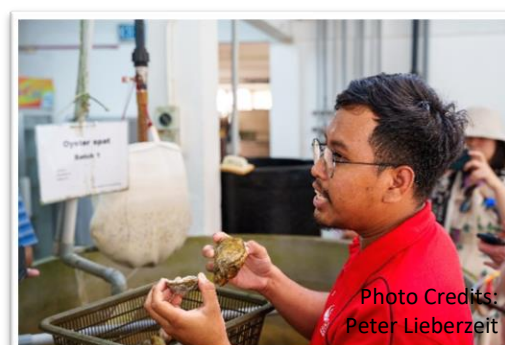
The individual presentations may be accessed via [link](#) in the Appendices.

### USM CAMPUS TOUR

Participants engage in a tour of the USM campus over five sites:

- Walking through a durian valley, the campus is highlighted as not only a place of study and teaching, but also of research where species of the surrounding flora and fauna are actively researched. One such example is seen in the cultivation of so-called stingless bees and the honey they produce.
- A visit to USM's Centre for Global Archaeological Research demonstrates research being conducted not only on Penang Island but also across other archaeological sites across Malaysia. Research results have contributed significantly to uncovering the origin of archaeological findings and how these shaped communities and their cultures.
- The Muzium & Galeri Tuanku Fauziah is shown as a unique museum and gallery that combines both the sciences and arts with cutting edge equipment under one roof.
- A scenic lookout point in front of USM's School of Housing, Building and Planning offers a unique view of the USM campus at the centre of Penang and of the mainland in viewing distance connected to the island by a bridge.
- Finally, a visit to The Bricks, a newly established area for students, offers an insight into the venue as a space where students and USM communities alike may come together and strengthen their entrepreneurship skills.

\* streamed event with online participation

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Peter Lieberzeit**BERND RODE AWARD 2024 CEREMONY \***

**Kotsis** as the National Coordinator for Austria moderates the ceremony of the Bernd Rode Award for the 2024 recipients. The award, named after the founder of ASEA-UNINET, is given every one and a half years upon nomination of either researchers or colleagues in three different categories: the Junior Researcher Award for early career researchers; the Senior Researcher Award for established researchers; and the Project Based Award to celebrate joint research endeavours within ASEA-UNINET. Nominations are evaluated by an expert commission, resulting in a ranking that determines the final awardees.

The award is associated with a financial support of up to a maximum of EUR 4.500,-- depending on the category. The aim of the Bernd Rode Award is to enhance and extend the research possibilities in the context of collaborations backed by ASEA-UNINET. A call for future award nominations is announced, and coordinators are reminded to keep in touch with the ASEA-UNINET Network Office in the case of questions or if further information are required.

The following awardees are confirmed at the Plenary Meeting. Presentations on their research topics are given and may be accessed via [link](#) in the Appendices.

**Junior Researcher Category**

- **Mongkon Thongchaithanawaut** (University of Vienna), “Climate Change, Migration, and Translocal Dynamic in Southeast Asia”
- **Trinh Phan-Canh** (Medical University of Vienna), “A CO<sub>2</sub>-Sensing Pathway Controls Antifungal Resistance and Skin Topism in *Candida Auris*”

#### Senior Researcher Category

- **Regletto Aldrich D. Imbong** (University of the Philippines Cebu in cooperation with University of Vienna), “Fascist Technics in the Regimes of Duterte and Marcos Jr.”

#### Project Based Category

- **Katharina Keiblinger** (University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna in cooperation with Universitas Gadjah Mada), “Local soil amendments for improving soil health and crop yield in degraded post-mining soils”

#### ASEA-UNINET ELECTIONS

**Kotsis** explains the procedure for the upcoming scheduled elections:

1. Institution Membership Status
2. Motions
3. National Coordinators
4. Regional Coordinators
5. Network President

With the consideration of participants’ input, elections proceed with an open vote. As communicated to participants prior to the Plenary Meeting, (i) only physically present university coordinators may cast votes, and (ii) vote delegation is possible in the case of non-participation, provided arrangements were made prior to the Plenary Meeting with advance notice given to the ASEA-UNINET Network Office and a letter of confirmation by the absentee.

#### 1. ELECTIONS FOR INSTITUTION MEMBERSHIP STATUS

The following Candidate Member institutions are proposed by the National Coordinators for being accepted as **Full Members** of ASEA-UNINET:

- **Mae Fah Luang University** (Thailand)

Following a vote, Mae Fah Luang University is accepted as **Full Member** of ASEA-UNINET unanimously by the Plenary Meeting delegates.

The following New Universities seeking membership are proposed by the National Coordinators for being approved as **Candidate Members** of ASEA-UNINET:

- **Vidyasirimedhi Institute of Science and Technology** (Thailand)
- **Walailak University** (Thailand)
- **Posts and Telecommunications Institute of Technology, Ho Chi Minh City** (Vietnam)

Following a vote, all of these are accepted as **Candidate Members** of ASEA-UNINET unanimously by the Plenary Meeting delegates. The Candidate Membership is given for at least one and a half years to demonstrate active cooperations within the network before requesting Full Membership.

#### 2. ELECTIONS FOR MOTIONS

**Kotsis** proposes a motion to establish a new role within the network for individuals who would be nominated to take on strategic coordination agendas on behalf of the network. This role is proposed as the “Strategic Advisory Team”, and a first nomination is made for Assoc. Prof. Dr. **Thakerng Wongsirichot** (Prince of Songkla University) as “Coordinator for Alumni Affairs”.

Following a vote, the motion to establish the “**Strategic Advisory Team**” and accept the proposed nomination is passed unanimously by the Plenary Meeting delegates.

Additional areas for strategic development, or guidance, may be discussed in future National Coordinators’ Meetings.

### 3. ELECTIONS FOR NATIONAL COORDINATORS

The Universities of the member countries confirm the nominations of their **National Coordinators**.

### 4. ELECTIONS FOR REGIONAL COORDINATORS

A motion is proposed to re-elect the current Regional Coordinators for 2024-2025.

Following a vote, this motion is passed unanimously, and the **Regional Coordinators** are re-elected:

- **Vice-President and Regional Coordinator for Europe:**  
Univ.-Prof. Dr. **Wolfgang Obenaus** (Vienna University of Economics and Business)
- **Vice-President and Regional Coordinator for South-East Asia:**  
Assoc. Prof. Dr. **Mohamad Farizal bin Rajemi** (Universiti Utara Malaysia)
- **Coordinator for Technology, Innovation and Sustainability Projects for Europe:**  
Prof. Dr.Dr.h.c. **A Min Tjoa** (Vienna University of Technology)
- **Coordinator for Technology, Innovation and Sustainability Projects for South-East Asia:**  
Assoc. Prof. Dr. **Ngo Chi Trung** (Hanoi University of Science and Technology)

### 5. ELECTIONS FOR NETWORK PRESIDENT

**Kotsis** thanks **Samat** and expresses appreciation for her stewardship as an active Network President of the current term, and for the meticulously organised Plenary Meeting with fruitful discussions and mutual exchanges. Prof. Dr. **Roberto Ranzi** (Rector’s Delegate for International Affairs, Department of Civil, Environmental, Architectural Engineering and Mathematics at the University of Brescia in Italy) is nominated for President of ASEA-UNINET.

Following a vote, Prof. Dr. **Roberto Ranzi** (University of Brescia) is elected unanimously as **President of ASEA-UNINET (2024-2025)**.

### SUMMARY OF THE PLENARY MEETING

**Ranzi** as new President delivers an address to the Plenary Meeting participants. After thanking the hosts at USM and expressing gratitude for an excellently organised Plenary Meeting, **Ranzi** invites coordinators to be in contact with National Coordinators regarding considerations for new roles within the newly established Strategic Advisory Team. Tribute is paid to the founder of ASEA-UNINET, Prof. Dr. **Bernd Michael Rode**, who was a visionary in his ideas. The network has grown considerably since, and the current challenges it faces can be tackled with much input from the exchanges during events including the Plenary Meeting. Addressing some of the programme contributions made, **Ranzi** appeals to take advantage of artificial intelligence while remaining human; to embrace STEAM and thereby value technology while preserving the Arts; to transfer capabilities to students in an emotional teaching environment for vibrancy and a love of learning; to be guided by lessons learned from the pandemic; and to improve our collective capability to cooperate in an equitable fashion in the context of Global North-Global South relationships. With a common vision within the network, an appeal to



members is expressed to focus efforts in peaceful and sustainable development on the unique planet that is collectively shared.

**Samat** as host and outgoing President expresses gratitude for the input and support throughout the Plenary Meeting, which enabled an enriching experience in terms of the network and its many collaborations occurring within it. Within her capacity as President, **Samat** was able to visit numerous universities and university events. She expresses gratitude towards the donors who made the event possible, as well as the many teams and individuals at USM who supported her throughout the organisation.

Upcoming National Coordinator Meetings are announced for the upcoming months. Further details will be shared at a later point.

**September 2025** is announced as the likely date for the next **Plenary Meeting**, which is planned to take place in Italy.

**Samat** officially closes the Plenary Meeting. Photos with the newly elected President are taken.



Photo of Hosting President and Newly Elected President:  
Prof. Dato' Gs. Dr. **Narimah Samat** and Prof. Dr. **Roberto Ranzi**

Photo Credits: ASEA-UNINET



#### VISIT TO USM CENTRE FOR MARINE AND COASTAL STUDIES

Participants engage in a visit to the USM Centre for Marine and Coastal Studies (CEMACS). Formerly a field station since 1978 that was upgraded to a Centre of Excellence in 1991, CEMACS is the oldest marine centre in Malaysia and aims to excel in the fields of marine and coastal science. From the traditional marine science fields of coral reef ecology, mangrove and coastal forest ecology and mariculture, CEMACS' research includes emerging fields with a focus on the sustainable use of the seas and coastal areas in line with the pledge made to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Located in the northwestern coast of Penang Island at the periphery of the Penang National Park, participants visit the centre by boat and are given a presentation in which the science generated at CEMACS, including research, technology, and its applications, is contextualised within the aim to make the sciences more applicable and useful to its users. Science is thereby generated for the four sectors of science, industry, government, and communities.

Participants are given a tour of the centre in which the science for particularly this last sector, the communities, is highlighted. Examples are given from research into green mariculture focussing on clean water culture of marine organisms, including marine plants, symbionts of reef organisms, and filter feeding invertebrates. The Oyster Programme is highlighted as an example of community involved research, whereby local farmers often do not have the required technology for oyster culture but are willing to learn, engage in the programme, cultivate oyster seeds, and in some cases even become specialists in the supply chain. The programme thereby fosters cooperation in communities and contributes towards stabilising local incomes and reducing poverty levels.

The presentation given by CEMACS may be accessed via [link](#) in the Appendices.

## APPENDICES

The appendices may be accessed using the following links:

- I. [Full Programme of the Plenary Meeting](#)
- II. [Welcome Addresses\\*\\*](#)
- III. [Keynote Speaker Presentations](#)
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## PLENARY MEETING PHOTOS\*\*

Plenary Meeting Group Picture:



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A selection of photos, courtesy of Assoc.-Prof. Dr. **Mohamad Farizal bin Rajemi**, Univ.-Prof. Dr. **Peter Lieberzeit**, and other Plenary Meeting Guests, may be accessed via [link\\*\\*](#).

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\*\*These files were uploaded via IONET-Cloud. Due to their size, these may be accessed up until **31.05.2024**. If access is requested beyond the date listed, kindly get in touch with us: [asea-uninet@oead.at](mailto:asea-uninet@oead.at).