

The 4th Annual Board Meeting of the e-ASIA Joint Research Program

August 11th - 12th 2015

Yangon, Republic of the Union of Myanmar

Minutes of the Meeting

1) The Fourth Annual Board Meeting of the e-ASIA Joint Research Program (the “Program”), chaired by Dr. Phyu Phyu Win, Deputy Director General of the Department of Research and Innovation (DRI), the Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST) of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar was held on the 11th and the 12th of August 2015 at the Inya Lake Hotel in Yangon, the largest city of Myanmar. The meeting was attended by the Board Members from nine of the seventeen Member Organizations of the Program, namely:

1. MOH of the Kingdom of Cambodia
2. MEXT/JST of Japan
3. AMED of Japan
4. MOST of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar
5. RFBR of the Russian Federation
6. NSTDA of the Kingdom of Thailand
7. ARDA of the Kingdom of Thailand
8. NIAID (NIH) of the United States of America
9. NCI (NIH) of the United States of America

The Board Members from RISTEK of Indonesia, MOST and MOH of the Lao P.D.R., HRC of New Zealand and DOST of the Philippines did not attend but expressed their intention to comply with the consensus of the Board. Also in attendance were administrative staff from JST, AMED, MOST of Myanmar, NSTDA and ARDA. MOSTI of Malaysia, TCELS of Thailand and MOST of Vietnam were absent.

2) H.E. Dr. Aung Kyaw Myat, the Deputy Minister of Science and Technology of Myanmar presented a welcome address.

3) As the Board Members of the newest Member Organizations in the Program, Ms. Kunvara of ARDA, Mr. Noda of AMED and Mr. Sorokotyaga of RFBR (in the afternoon) were invited to introduce their organizations to the Board and to outline some potential opportunities for collaboration that might be pursued under the Program. The Program Secretariat introduced TCELS using the file prepared by them.

4) The attending nine Board Members, reviewed what had been discussed and agreed at the previous Annual Board Meeting including the representation of each country in the Board and their corresponding voting rights.

5) The Board reviewed and confirmed the items that were approved at the 7th, 8th, 9th and 10th ad hoc Board Meetings which were held via email. Those

items are as follows:

7th ad hoc Board Meeting (September 2014)

- Formal participation of the Agricultural Research Development Agency (ARDA) of Thailand
- Minutes of the 3rd Annual Board Meeting

8th ad hoc Board Meeting (February 2015)

- Formal participation of the Russian Foundation for Basic Research (RFBR)
- Approval of 2 projects in the field of 'Infectious Diseases'

9th ad hoc Board Meeting (March 2015)

- Formal participation of the Thailand Center of Excellence for Life Sciences (TCELS)
- Approval of 2 projects in the field of 'Infectious Diseases'

10th ad hoc Board Meeting (March 2015)

- Formal participation of the Japan Agency for Medical Research and Development (AMED) (effective from April 1st, 2015)

6) The Board acknowledged that the Program Secretariat will prepare the 3rd Annual Activity Report and present it for Board's review and approval via email.

7) The Board reviewed the previous Flexible Call for Proposals in the field of 'Infectious Diseases' including participating Member Organizations, duration of the Call, successful projects, etc.

8) The Board was updated with the results of the workshops on “Intelligent Infrastructure” and “Disaster Risk Reduction and Management” held in Tokyo, Japan and Metro Manila of the Philippines respectively, the summary of current ongoing projects and the status of prospective countries. The Board also was informed of the revision of the program brochure and the creation of e-ASIA publicity materials.

9) The Board discussed and agreed to delete the “Peer Review Panel” from the Program Statutes and to add a sentence that stipulates each Member Organization takes responsibility for their own review process. In this regard, the Board requested that the Program Secretariat make a draft revision of the Program Statute and present it for the Board's review and approval.

10) The Board accepted the results of the second Scientific Advisory Council (“SAC”) Meeting and agreed that the duration of membership of the Council as well as the terms of its Chair and Vice-Chair shall be three years. The SAC Members as well as the Chair and Vice-Chair can serve for two terms in succession if they are re-selected. The Board also agreed that each Member Organization could nominate an SAC Member if they choose to do so (i.e. multiple SAC Members from one country are acceptable). The Board asked the Program Secretariat to revise the Terms of Reference of the SAC and present it for the Board’s review and approval.

11) The Board had no objection to the current criteria to be an SAC Member. According to the current SAC Terms of Reference, “the Council Members shall be eminent persons in terms of their expertise in their particular scientific fields as well as their comprehensive knowledge about STI relevant to the implementation of the Program. Preference shall be given to persons who have broad international experience and are familiar with the implementation of the Program”. The Board confirmed that, when nominating an SAC Member, Member Organizations should inform nominees about this qualification. Likewise, the Board requested that the Program Secretariat reminds the SAC Members of this qualification whenever it contacts them.

12) Although the Board had proposed the use of a “General” Non-Disclosure Agreement, the Board reversed this decision based on a recommendation from the SAC. The Board also agreed with an SAC recommendation that the Progress Report should only include information that is disclosable. The Board confirmed that if the Progress Report includes any confidential information, it should be separately reviewed.

13) The Board requested that the Program Secretariat ask the PIs of ongoing projects to submit a brief abstract of their research progress.

14) The Board agreed to redefine/rename the fields of cooperation under the Program as follows (areas that the Program puts particular emphasis on

are in parentheses):

- (i) Materials (Nanotechnology)
- (ii) Alternative Energy
- (iii) Agriculture (Food)
- (iv) Health Research (Infectious Diseases, Cancer)
*Deleted “prioritized areas” and “research” after “cancer”
- (v) Disaster Risk Reduction and Management
*Agreed to include post-disaster research as supportable
- (vi) Advanced Interdisciplinary Research towards Innovation
*Remains unchanged
- (vii) Environment (Climate Change, Marine Science)

15) The Board accepted the SAC’s recommendation that the Program focus on requirements from society in all the fields of cooperation rather than defining specific fields to focus on. The Board also suggested that future calls for applications request that applicants describe in their applications how their e-ASIA research effort may contribute to society. Moreover, the Board confirmed that there is no need to change the following current evaluation criteria since they should include information that addresses “contribution to society” as an element of the review criteria.

- (i) Relevance of the Research
- (ii) Mutual Benefits of the Joint Research
- (iii) Effectiveness of Exchange

16) In addition, the Board agreed to add “Regional” to the above evaluation criteria (i), thus making it “Regional Relevance of Research”.

17) Although the Board welcomes collaboration with other countries, it noted a concern that the Program should not lose its ‘regional focus’ by expanding e-ASIA membership to organizations in countries far outside the region. Its focus on the East Asian region is one of the unique and positive aspects of the Program. Therefore, the Board decided to continue to consider qualified member organizations as those from the countries that participate in the East Asia Summit (EAS) (i.e. ASEAN 10 Member States + 8). Member organizations from these countries will continue to be “Full Members” and any member organizations that may wish to participate from other countries would participate as “Guest Partners”. Since it is critically important that all the current Board Members agree about member organization eligibility, the Board asked the Program Secretariat to confer with the absent Full Member Organizations to confirm all are in agreement on this issue before contacting any additional potential member organizations other than those already contacted from Sri Lanka, Mongolia and Bangladesh, three countries from which the Board had previously agreed to invite member organizations to join the Program. Moreover, the Board asked that the Program Secretariat inform any interested potential member organizations from these three countries, namely Sri Lanka, Mongolia and Bangladesh, about the conditions of their participation, which are: (1) status will be as a “Guest Partner” (i.e. not full membership); (2) participation will be on a call by call basis; (3) observing

Board Meetings is possible but they will not be represented on the Board (i.e. no voting Board Member); (4) participation in a call requires obligation of “new funds” for the grantees; thus, for Guest Partners, participating in a call for proposals only on an “in-kind” basis is not acceptable. At the same time, it is important to let them know that these conditions have not yet been formally adopted as a final decision of the Board. If the Board applies these conditions, there will still be two opportunities for the Board to consider participation of funding agencies from non-EAS participating countries. One is when they apply to be a “Guest Partner” and the other is when they request to participate in a specific call for proposals. Since many Member Organizations were absent at this Board meeting, the Board decided to further discuss this issue at the next Annual Board meeting (i.e. how far the Program should expand its collaboration), taking into consideration any input received from potential members in the three already contacted countries. The Board also asked that the Program Secretariat consult the SAC about the involvement of “Guest Partners” and related issues.

18) The Board Members agreed to investigate the possibility of identifying a special allocation within the national scholarship systems of their own countries to be able to award scholarship funds related to the Program. This might be similar to how JST has secured a special allocation of the Japanese governmental MEXT scholarships for awarding to young researchers involved in e-ASIA JRP projects. Moreover, the Board requested that the Program Secretariat collect information on the “Mobility Schemes” of each

Member Organization after defining what is meant by “Mobility Schemes”.

19) The Board recognized and praised JST of Japan for its use of special reserves for the Program under the MEXT scholarship program, noting it that it has already awarded scholarships to some students from the region.

20) The Board confirmed the schedule, fields of cooperation, participating Member Organizations, call guidelines, etc. of the current (fifth including pilot calls) Call for Proposals. It was agreed to discuss evaluation results via teleconference. Moreover, the Board asked the Program Secretariat to contact absent Member Organizations and ask their budget size and possible numbers of projects that they can support under the current Call.

21) The Board discussed conditions/requirements to launch calls or start funding.

- (i) MoU to launch a call for proposals: some Member Organizations require an MoU to launch a call for proposals. However, the Board agreed with the Program Secretariat that concluding such a document among multiple Member Organizations is not practical or efficient (it is a time-consuming procedure which cannot be achieved in a short period of time) and an alternative is necessary to keep the smooth ongoing realization of Program initiatives. Therefore, the Board suggested that each Member Organization participating in a call send a “Letter of Intent” (to express its

intention to participate in that particular call) to the Program Secretariat and that the Program Secretariat compiles the letters received. Then this compiled document may serve as the equivalent of a multi-party commitment so that it can be used to fulfill the purpose of an MOU where such a document is needed. The Board recommended that NSTDA and ARDA of Thailand and any other Member Organizations with similar requirements contact appropriate authorities to confirm if this approach would be acceptable. The Program Secretariat was asked to seek similar confirmation from absent Member Organizations.

- (ii) MoU to fund a project: some Member Organizations require conclusion of an MoU to fund a particular project. For all the ongoing projects except the ones from the previous Flexible Call for Proposals in the field of “Infectious Diseases”, such MoUs were concluded. However, for some Member Organizations, concluding such documents is difficult. Therefore, the Board suggested use of a “Letter of Support Confirmation” which mentions each Member Organization’s financial commitment and any other necessary information as an alternative. The Board recommended that NSTDA and ARDA of Thailand contact appropriate authorities to confirm if this would be acceptable. The Program Secretariat was asked to seek similar confirmation from absent Member Organizations.
- (iii) Collaborative Research Agreement: Some Member Organizations

require a “Collaborative Research Agreement” among the PI’s research institutions, and some do not. In principle, the Board agreed to leave the development and use of such agreements up to the researchers and their institutions. However, the Board also agreed that the call guidelines should strongly recommend the conclusion of a “Collaborative Research Agreement” among all the PIs and they should note that such agreements are mandatory for some Member Organizations before grants can be awarded. The Board also agreed that, any “Collaborative Research Agreement” should include a clause providing agreed guiding principles on IP management rather than having minimum requirements for IP management within the Program itself. The Board appreciated JST’s offer to provide its template and it decided to post JST and European templates as “Model Collaborative Research Agreements” as well as templates for “IP Sharing Agreements”, “Data Sharing Agreements” and/or “Material Transfer Agreements” on the Program website, as optional resources for investigators to consider using.

22) The Board requested that the Program Secretariat summarize points to be included in the Progress and Final Reports and present them to the Board for review and approval. It was also agreed that the Program Secretariat should post templates of these reports, and that non-proprietary parts of the Final Reports may be made public on the Program’s website.

23) The Board confirmed that although accepting “in-kind” and “re-budgeting” participation does not require any identification of new or set-aside funds, Member Organizations participating through these funding modalities do have the same responsibilities for project oversight as participating Member Organizations that do provide new or set-aside funds. These responsibilities include: (1) evaluation of submitted proposals; (2) approval of successful proposals; (3) communicating with PIs; (4) assessing project progress; (5) serving as a contact point for the Program.

24) The Board understood that if three or more Member Organizations agree to participate, the next call for proposals will be launched around February 2016. The Board requested the Program Secretariat ask absent Member Organizations about their plans.

25) Even though it is difficult to share individual Member Organization’s evaluation results, the Board understood that all Member Organizations are encouraged to find ways to summarize review findings regarding strengths and weaknesses of the proposals, especially the unsuccessful ones, and to share those summaries with the other Member Organizations.

26) The Board agreed to promote the Program by convening workshops or to use other communication tools in conjunction with related international conferences and/or by inviting PIs to present their work, rather than organizing one event with all the projects presented together because the

scientific focus of e-ASIA projects differs so widely. The Board also agreed to require that PIs always acknowledge in publications and presentations that their projects have been supported by the Program.

27) The Board agreed to and commended a proposal from the Program Secretariat to develop an “e-ASIA Grantee Network”. The Board requested that the Program Secretariat consider the potential benefits and uses of such a network and present them to the Board. As part of this network, the Board suggested creation of a mailing list of PIs and their research team members for use to help disseminate information on workshops, calls for proposals, etc. Moreover, the Board proposed to post PIs’ CVs and project titles on the Program website.

28) The Board welcomed e-ASIA convening, with support from the Member Organizations: MOST Myanmar, AMED, NIAID, and NCI, a scientific workshop focused on “Emerging Infectious Diseases and Cancer Priorities in South East Asia and the Pacific Rim” on the 13th and 14th of August 2015. This workshop, convened in conjunction with the Fourth Annual Board Meeting, is intended to explore research collaboration opportunities and to promote applications in response to the current Call for Proposals in the field of “Health Research”.

29) The Board also acknowledged that three workshops are currently in preparation:

- (i) Final report of the “Cassava” project and progress reports of the other 3 ongoing projects in October 2015 in Thailand hosted by NSTDA of Thailand and JST of Japan.
 - (ii) Workshop on “Nanotechnology and Materials” in January 2016 in Japan hosted by JST of Japan.
 - (iii) Workshop on “Renewable Energy” in early summer 2016 in Lao P.D.R. hosted by MOST of Lao P.D.R. and JST of Japan.
- 30) The Board recognized that the Program Secretariat, to help publicize the Program, will consider participating in the “18th International Conference on Emerging Infectious Diseases in the Pacific” organized in Bethesda, Maryland by Member Organizations AMED, NIAID and NCI during the week of January 11, 2016.
- 31) The Board discussed whether or not the field of “Health Research” includes “Medical Devices”, “Medical Robotics” and/or “Biomedical Materials”. These are candidate topics for the upcoming workshop on “Nanotechnology and Materials”. “Diagnostics” and “Cancer relevant technology” are supportable at NIAID and NCI of the United States respectively. For other topics, NIAID and NCI will contact the relevant NIH organizations as needed. The Board asked the Program Secretariat to prepare for the workshop by communicating with the Member Organizations.
- 32) The Board enthusiastically welcomed the JST statement that it intends

to support the Program Secretariat for the next term of 3 years. The Board expressed great appreciation to JST and NSTDA for their continuous contribution to the Program Secretariat and their assignment of its capable staff.

33) The Board endorsed and welcomed the new e-ASIA Secretary-General, Mr. Masaki Sato from JST, and the extension of Ms. Eriko Kishida's term of office as Program Secretariat staff, with appreciation for her outstanding performance. The Board also commended the outstanding performance of Mr. Osamu Kobayashi as the first Secretary-General of the Program Secretariat.

34) The Board acknowledged with appreciation the offer of the HRC of New Zealand to host the Fifth Annual Board Meeting around July 2016. Since New Zealand is far from other parts of the region, the Board understands that Thailand is an alternate option for the venue. In this regard, the Board agreed to vote on the venue of the next Annual Board Meeting. If a majority of the Board members support convening in New Zealand or if the vote is even, the meeting will be held in New Zealand.

35) The Board recognized that the third SAC Meeting will be convened around February 2016 in the Philippines or Cambodia. The Board expressed its appreciation for the proposal from MOH of Cambodia to host the next SAC Meeting and for the similar offer from the DOST of the Philippines. The Board asked the Program Secretariat to further discuss this issue with the relevant

Member Organizations.

36) The Board closed its meeting with a unanimous expression of appreciation to MOST Myanmar for the outstanding arrangements made for the meeting, the attentive and professional meeting support staff, the vibrant evening programs, and for the generous and welcoming hospitality it provided to the Board.

37) We acknowledged that the Board Member of MOST of Lao P.D.R. has changed from Mr. Malaithong Kommasith to Dr. Silap Boupaha.