

PRESS RELEASE

Luistro joins SEAMEO's new leadership in creating a stronger ASEAN community

"The education sector must play a more active role in the preparation of societies for the eventual ASEAN integration. It is necessary for the compelling ideas of regional solidarity and understanding be put forward by those who love to learn and those who love to teach. Education is essentially a future-looking endeavour, and thus should not be left out in charting future directions," said Education Secretary Armin Luistro during his recent visit to Brunei Darussalam for the 46th SEAMEO Council (SEAMEC) Conference.

After the Philippines's successful one-year term as the President of the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization, Luistro turned over the leadership to Brunei Darussalam Minister of Education Pehin Abu Bakar Apong and expressed his support to SEAMEO to face diverse challenges of the rapidly changing world.

"Many far-reaching and intense changes are taking place or are due to take place over the next few years. When we celebrate SEAMEO's 50th anniversary five years hence, we are bound to see a very different Southeast Asia, one that is shaped by our actions and our level of commitment today," said Luistro.

Luistro shared his experiences while still the President of the organization, emphasizing on his observations during his visits to SEAMEO countries.

"The visits I had made to SEAMEO Countries and the regional centers over the past few months revealed a much broader scope and challenge for leveling up the region's human resources. Indeed, as Southeast Asians, we rightly take pride in our nation's history and achievements, in the rich and diverse natural environment, scenery and monuments. But what I found truly remarkable is discovering the warmth, graciousness and openness among the people – be they officials of the Government and the Ministries of Education, school principals, university professors, teachers and especially the young learners. You could feel Southeast Asia's dynamism when you come in contact with our fellow citizens of the region," shared Luistro.

With this, he observed that as the region keeps up with the global demands, ASEAN is ready to emerge and assume role in the regional blocs of the world. He furthered that, "across the region and amongst education workers, our colleagues in education are increasingly aware of the ASEAN community taking shape. As we move forward as envisioned by the ASEAN leaders to 2015, we at SEAMEO must be able to define our role in integrated ASEAN community. There is a compelling need to explore ways for SEAMEO to become a stronger voice in the regional discourse that is shaping the future community."

Last year, the Philippines hosted the 45th SEAMEC in Cebu City. This opened a number of avenues for the SEAMEO community as a whole, but most especially for the Philippines and the Department of Education.

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“DepEd has embarked on the agenda of development to level up Philippine basic education. Challenging as it is, we are encouraged by the insights of our colleagues who have gone through the same path. Professional exchanges among the region’s education workers – principals, teachers, supervisors – as well as students, were conceived in the sidelines of the Cebu SEAMEC, which the Ministries of Education are determined to pursue,” Luistro told.

Currently, DepEd is on its way of revising the basic education curriculum as part of its proposed additional two years in basic education or the Enhanced K+12 Basic Education Program. The Philippines is the only country in Asia and among the three countries in the world which follows a 10-year basic education cycle.

Meanwhile, Luistro thanked his brothers in the Council, the officials of the Ministries of Education, the leaders and staff of the SEAMEO regional centers for the warm hospitality. But he noted that together, they should accomplish more, particularly in education. “SEAMEO, as a forum for regional understanding is in the best position to demonstrate the commonalities and celebrate diversity which is the region’s strength. Building a community does not have to mean losing individual identities and morphing into a plastic, faceless, shapeless Southeast Asian. Rather, through our individuality, we can bring forth a rich mosaic or tapestry of the best that the region can offer.”

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