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## SEAMEO College Module 2: High Officials Country Case Study (HOCCS) 10-12 May 2016, Bangkok, Thailand

*“Forum on Promoting Harmonization and Mobility in Higher Education Focusing on Health Professions in Southeast Asia”*

### Background and Rationale

In Southeast Asia, governments, private sector and all stakeholders have been working together towards the full realization of the ASEAN Community 2015 which is envisioned to be “politically cohesive, economically integrated, culturally harmonious and socially responsible.”<sup>1</sup> Various efforts of governments in support of integration in ASEAN have focused on various aspects such as comprehensive security, common identity, free-trade areas, education harmonization, people mobility, and others.

SEAMEO as the leading organization in education, science and culture cooperation in the region has initiated several projects in support of ASEAN integration and the ASEAN Community 2015. The SEAMEO College is one of SEAMEO’s initiatives under the 2011-2020 SEAMEO Strategic Plan that aims to strengthen SEAMEO’s capacity to promote education and social development in Southeast Asia and support regional platforms on innovation in education and human resource development towards an integrated ASEAN Community. SEAMEO College consists of a series of forums targeting 4 groups (4 Modules): education ministers, high officials, education leaders, and youth leaders. Module 2 or the High Officials Country Case Study (HOCCS) performs a dual function: (a) to support the Strategic Dialogue for Education Ministers in preparing the SDEM agenda and generating innovative solutions and policy interventions (if required) in implementing the decisions reached by the SDEM; and (b) to deliberate on the inputs provided by the policy research, in-depth case study and other sources and propose innovative solutions and necessary actions and interventions.

The health sector, in particular, the health professionals in higher education in Southeast Asia has received limited attention in terms of student mobility, establishment of a credit transfer system and provision of qualifications standardization/framework. It is within these parameters that Module 2 focuses its theme on mutual recognition and

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<sup>1</sup> Excerpt from the statement of HE Le Luong Minh, Secretary-General of ASEAN during the diplomatic briefing on the outcome of the 22nd ASEAN Summit, Jakarta, and 29 April 2013.

harmonization of higher education in general and in particular, on health professionals in Southeast Asia. To fully achieve one of the main objectives of Module 2 in its aim to harmonize higher education in general, specifically for health professionals, SEAMEO Regional Tropical Medicine and Public Health Network (SEAMEO TROPMED) was tasked by the SEAMEO Secretariat, the Executing Agency for the implementation of the SEAMEO College Project, to lead Module 2.

Module 2 Round 1 Forum was organized last 11-13 March 2015 and was participated by high education officials of the 11 Member Countries of SEAMEO as well as officials of relevant line ministries, officials of health professional regulatory boards, nursing and medical training institutions, international partner institutions of SEAMEO, selected SEAMEO Centres, and officials of SEAMEO Secretariat. A total of 59 participants attended the forum.

The first forum aimed to:

- Provide a platform for SEAMEO high officials to share and discuss national and regional higher education frameworks with particular focus on nursing and medical professions;
- Identify common areas of cooperation on higher education with particular focus on medical and nursing professions and in support of further development of SEAMEO RIHED's AIMS programme and ASEAN's MRA; and
- Recommend steps to promote greater higher education harmonization and student mobility in SEA with particular focus on medical and nursing professions.

The next steps that were recommended by the body to move the harmonization process in medical and nursing education within the country and in SEA included:

- Development of a Regional Database for Higher Education, Medical, and Nursing professional education
- Undertake a Comparative Study of Higher Education, Medical and Nursing Professional Education in SEA countries and the harmonization process taking place within the countries.
- Organization of a Regional and National Task Force on Higher Education, Medical and Nursing professions.

This second forum is one of the follow-up actions on the results of the recommendations of the first forum. The initial results of the comparative study undertaken will be presented for discussion and validation as well as for the development of policy directions and recommendations.

## **Objectives of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Forum**

Specifically, SEAMEO College Module 2 Forum 2 aims to:

- To provide a forum for high officials to discuss the current efforts undertaken towards harmonization of medical and nursing professions within the country and within SEA;
- Identify the challenges on harmonization efforts in relation to qualifications standardization/framework, credit transfer system and student mobility;
- Analyse cross-sectoral policies that influence harmonization within the countries and within the region;
- Recommend approaches and policy directions to enhance harmonization in medical and nursing professions within the countries and within the SEA region.