PRESS RELEASE

Regional conference on water opens, emphasizes youth participation

CHIANG MAI – More than fifty (50) international participants from across the region have gathered in Chiang Mai, Thailand to participate in the Asia-Pacific Youth Water Forum (APYWF) on May 13 to 18, and the 1st ASEAN+3 Youth Leaders for Climate Change Forum (AYCC 2013).

The APYWF is part of the 2nd Asia-Pacific Water Summit that aims to facilitate and engage Asia-Pacific leaders in discussions on water security and disaster issues. As its youth counterpart, the participants will be engaged in technical workshops and other capacity-building activities that aim to enhance their understanding of the region’s water issues.

To learn more about the role of astronomy in climate change study, the participants will also participate in AYCC 2013 to be held at the Doi Ithanon National Park for a combination of stargazing and workshop activities.

Both events launch the ASEAN+3 Future Leaders for Water (AFLW) program of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) TUNZA South East Asian Youth Environment Network (SEAYEN).

It aims to produce an empowered generation of young people working to achieve water security and sustainability in Asia-Pacific by building the capacity of future leaders of water sustainability for the region; strengthening the capacity of youth organizations in implementing local projects on water; and increasing the awareness and understanding among ASEAN’s youth on the region’s challenges and solutions for water sustainability.

Other than the APYWF and the AYCC, participants will also be developing regional youth action plans on water and conducting an awareness campaign for the region.

Selected based on their knowledge and activities in water issues or environmental sustainability, the participants came from the 10 South East Asian countries, plus South Korea, China, Japan, India and Kazakhstan.

The ASEAN+3 Future Leaders for Water program is supported by the Singapore National Youth Council, Asian Development Bank, Network of Asian River Basin Organizations and the National Astronomical Research Institute of Thailand.

Speaking in front of the participants during the Opening Ceremony on May 14, Professor Wasan Jompakdee, Chairman of the Coordinating Committee for the Protection of the Ping River Basin and the Environment, emphasized the commonality of water issues in the region despite the cultural and geographical differences of the countries.

“Water issues are still there for us to all address. We are here to learn from each other,” he said, “Don’t take fresh water for granted. Right now, we have fresh water but if we don’t take care of it—if we don’t manage them properly, we will run out of fresh water.”
UNEP TUNZA South East Asian Youth Environment Network (SEAYEN)

He further emphasized that securing sustainable water for all through the participation of all especially the youth, through networking and other means, was crucial.

Selected youth participants also represented SEAYEN in the actual opening ceremony at the International Convention and Exhibition Centre.