

ASEAN Federation of Endocrine Societies (AFES): 1981-2011 *Renewing Our Commitment to the ASEAN Region after 30 Years*

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The year 1963 marked a very special time in the Federation's history. PSEM, then in its second year of existence, hosted the 3rd Asia-Oceania Congress of Endocrinology in Manila, where about 200 participants from 11 countries gathered. It was in this meeting that the idea of a Federation of Endocrine Societies in the Region was adopted.¹

It took several years for this idea to re-emerge in July 1979. The opportunity to meet the various physicians arose during the 14th Singapore-Malaysia Congress of Medicine. Prof. Lim Pin of Singapore convened a meeting of endocrinologists from the ASEAN region on July 22, 1979. Preliminary inquiries had elicited strong interest from all the national endocrine societies to participate in this regional professional and academic enterprise. A management committee was formed to explore the idea. This committee consisted of Dr. Syafril Syabuddin (Indonesia), Prof. Mustafa Embong (Malaysia), with Prof. Lim Pin (Singapore) as Chairman and Dr. Peter P.B. Yeo (Singapore) as Secretary.²

In 1980, Prof. Thanpuying Srichita C. Bunnag of Thailand had the opportunity to meet with her colleagues, Prof. Utoyo Sukaton of Indonesia, Prof. B.E. Mustafa of Malaysia, Prof. Augusto D. Litonjua of the Philippines and Prof. Peter P.B. Yeo of Singapore on several occasions concerning the effort of attracting more physicians to be interested in the field of Endocrinology. There was, as expected, unanimous agreement and strong endorsement for the formation of an ASEAN association of endocrinologists. At that meeting, Prof. Mustafa Embong was nominated as Chairman of the Steering Committee while Prof. Augusto D. Litonjua volunteered to undertake the task of drafting a constitution for the Association. They also agreed to organize an ASEAN endocrinology conference on a regular basis to promote exchange of knowledge and closer cooperation among endocrinologists in the region. The conference was to be held every two years. They also unanimously agreed that the first conference would be held in Indonesia in the following year (1981), so that Prof. Utoyo Sukaton—in deference to his being the most senior member in the group—would be elected the first president of the ASEAN Federation of Endocrine Societies (AFES).³ After a lengthy discussion of benefits and risks, the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Federation of Endocrine Societies (AFES) was finally established and officially formed during a meeting at the Merlin Hotel in Kuala

Lumpur, Malaysia. The Executive Committee was composed of two representatives from each component endocrine society.⁴

The draft constitution of AFES prepared by Prof. Augusto D. Litonjua was adopted and endorsed by representatives of member societies from the five ASEAN countries.³ The 1st AFES Convention and signing of the AFES constitution was held in November 27 to 28, 1981, in Jogjakarta, Indonesia, beneath the shadows of the great Asian temple in Borobodur.⁵ The theme of the 1st Congress was *ASEAN Diabetes Update '81*.⁶ The five component societies that signed the constitution were: The Indonesian Society of Endocrinology headed by Prof. Utoyo Sukaton and Dr. Slamet Suyano; the Malaysian Endocrine and Metabolic Society represented by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mustafa Embong; the Philippine Society of Endocrinology and Metabolism represented by Prof. Augusto D. Litonjua; the Endocrine and Metabolic Society of Singapore represented by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Peter P.B. Yeo; and the Endocrine Society of Thailand headed by Prof. S.C. Bunnag and Dr. Yong Uahwatanasakul. It was agreed that the Secretariat of the Federation shall be based in a country determined by the Executive Committee, which was to be reassigned every two years.

The first Executive Committee meeting of the Federation was held in conjunction with the Federation's first scientific meeting. Prof. Utoyo Sukaton of Indonesia was the first President of the AFES and organized the first AFES Congress. The Secretary was Dr. Slamet Suyono. It was the first opportunity among member nations to share and exchange knowledge in the field of Endocrinology. Since then, the AFES has been held every two years, with the host country being rotated according to alphabetical order.⁴ The Journal of the ASEAN Federation of Endocrine Societies (JAFES) was subsequently initiated and circulated to all members of each nation's society, with Prof. Mustafa Embong serving as its initial Editor-in-Chief.

After the very successful inaugural year of the Federation, the seat of office of the Executive Committee was transferred to Thailand. The 2nd AFES Congress and the Pre-Federation Course themed *Diabetes Mellitus in General Medicine* were held on November 26 to 29, 1983, at the Bangkok Palace Hotel as part of the bicentennial celebration of Bangkok, the capital of Thailand. The course was under the auspices of the Joslin Diabetes Center,

Harvard Medical School, International Diabetes Federation, AFES, and the Endocrine Society of Thailand under the leadership of Prof. Thanpuying Srichita C. Bunnag. Prof. Bunnag became the second President of the Federation.⁴ During the preparation for the 2nd Congress, the ASEAN Diabetes Prevention and Control Project was proposed. This ASEAN-Australian collaboration, led by Prof. Mustafa Embong, dealt with primary health care in diabetes.⁶

Subsequent AFES Congresses were held every two years, rotating in the different member countries. Each Congress presented unique themes representative of the host ASEAN country. Participants started to grow each year, with delegates coming from countries well beyond the AFES borders.

The AFES official logo was approved in 1987 during the Congress in Manila. The logo serves to unify the different ASEAN countries and is currently used in all its official functions and publications.

In 1995, during the cultural night at the AFES Congress in Manila, each country was asked to give a song and dance performance. It was a fun-filled and memorable night. The tradition continues up to the present time and is eagerly anticipated by all.

October 26, 2002 was a historic day as the five presidents of the AFES member societies gathered at the Bailey Room of the Raffles City Convention Center in Singapore. The

meeting was hosted by the President of the AFES and the Endocrine and Metabolic Society of Singapore, Dr. Daphne Khoo. Included in the agenda was a discussion on Vietnam Association of Diabetes and Endocrinology's entry into the AFES. It turned out to be a fruitful and enjoyable day as each member nation presented individual programs and shared the concerns and problems of each society.⁷ On November 18, 2002, the Vietnam Association of Diabetes and Endocrinology (VADE) was officially admitted into the AFES, the first new member since AFES's inception in 1979.⁷

In June 2005, the AFES Executive Committee, composed of Dr. Roberto Mirasol and Dr. Rosa Allyn Sy (Philippines), Dr. Sidartawan Soegondo (Indonesia), Dr. Wan Mohamad Wan Bebakar (Malaysia), Dr. C. Rajasoorya (Singapore), Dr. Wannee Nitayanant (Thailand) and Dr. Tran Duc Tho (Vietnam), convened in Manila to draft the Mission and Vision of the Association. The mission of the AFES is: *Recognized and respected premier regional Endocrine Federation committed to improving the quality of endocrine care.*

Its vision is: *Our Patients are our Reason for Existence. We commit to provide quality, cost-effective and preventive endocrine care.*

The mission and vision shall provide direction for the AFES for the coming years.

During the Executive Committee Meeting in the 15th Congress of the AFES held in Bangkok in November 2009,





the Myanmar Society of Endocrinology and Metabolism was officially admitted into the AFES as its 7th and youngest member country.

The AFES was established with the goal of strengthening the cooperation and understanding among member scientists of ASEAN countries, to provide better medical care in the field of endocrinology and metabolism in each of the member nations. Years since its inception, the AFES remains a viable venue for sharing knowledge, collaborating in research, and creating networks of practitioners who share a common passion for excellence in this field.

As we re-launch the Journal of the Asean Federation of Endocrine Societies (JAFES), the official publication of the AFES, it is most fitting to look back at our organization's beginnings. The next AFES meeting will be held in November 2011, in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. The members look forward to this opportunity to strengthen old friendships, meet new friends and be grateful for the past fruitful years.

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