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Press Statement

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**Tackling Transboundary Haze:
Strengthening the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution**

It has been announced that Malaysia will be meeting with its ASEAN neighbours in Singapore in early June 2023 to discuss the transboundary haze issue and develop a new roadmap for the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution (AATHP) 2002.

While this meeting and the roadmap development are positive steps, the question remains whether the criticisms and weaknesses of the AATHP will be adequately addressed. Despite being in place for over 20 years, transboundary haze problems persist year after year.

The AATHP faces two major criticisms: weak enforcement mechanisms and limited legal bindingness.

Weak enforcement mechanisms undermine the ability of the AATHP to hold accountable those responsible for transgressions at the ASEAN level. Without stringent enforcement, non-compliant parties can escape responsibility, perpetuating the cycle of haze-causing activities. To address this, the new roadmap must include stronger enforcement measures. By ensuring that member states are held accountable for their actions, the effectiveness of the agreement can be significantly enhanced.

Limited legal bindingness is another concern. Although the AATHP is intended to be legally binding, its impact relies on individual member states translating its provisions into domestic legislation. Inconsistent implementation weakens the agreement. The new roadmap should prioritize the harmonization of laws and regulations among ASEAN countries, promoting uniform implementation and enforcement of the agreement.

It is crucial that these critical weaknesses of the AATHP are given due attention during, what will be, the 24th meeting between these few ASEAN countries. The Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP) asks that our government representatives advocate for stronger enforcement measures and increased legal bindingness during the meeting in June. Addressing these weaknesses is essential to establishing a more effective framework that will hopefully put an end to the annual transboundary haze problems plaguing Malaysia and the ASEAN region.

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President
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