

Joint Press Communiqué:

56th SEACEN Governors' Conference / High-Level Seminar and the 40th Meeting of the SEACEN Board of Governors

Autoriti Monetari Brunei Darussalam hosted the 56th SEACEN Governors' Conference / High-Level Seminar and the 40th Meeting of the SEACEN Board of Governors (BOG) on 1 December 2020.¹ In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the SEACEN BOG Meeting was convened virtually for the first time.

The year 2020 saw unprecedented challenges for the SEACEN community, with the ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic affecting all areas of policymaking. Governors and Managing Directors as well as delegates from SEACEN member Central Banks and Monetary Authorities first acknowledged the deep economic and financial impact of the pandemic, as well as its traumatic effects on the global economy. Governors also re-affirmed their commitment to support the fight against COVID-19, through leveraging the SEACEN community to enhance their respective policy responses on macro, fiscal, financial and structural fronts.

Following the welcome remarks by Yang Mulia Dayang Hajah Rokiah binti Haji Badar, Managing Director, Autoriti Monetari Brunei Darussalam, Mr. Chen Yulu, Deputy Governor, People's Bank of China (PBC) delivered the Conference / High-Level Seminar Address on "Opportunities and Challenges in Adopting CBDC". The COVID-19 pandemic has hastened ongoing central bank research on central bank digital currencies (CBDCs), and progress on this issue is reaching the point where several CBDC designs are being trialled around the world. Mr. Chen briefed Governors and Managing Directors as well as delegates from SEACEN member Central Banks and Monetary Authorities on the progress of China's CBDC project. Despite being in the pilot run phase, the Chinese experience so far can provide valuable insights to other central banks in the region on the efficacies of adopting CBDCs. Mr. Chen outlined several benefits of CBDCs including making currency operations more cost-effective, improving money velocity, and making payments more user-friendly and secure. That said, he underscored that the issuance of CBDC in big countries is a complex project and calls for prudence. Finally, he highlighted some future issues of interest of policymakers, including cross-border issues and the potential implications for monetary sovereignty of a country.

During the BOG meeting, members expressed their appreciation to the outgoing Chairman, Mr. Ravi Menon, Managing Director, Monetary Authority of Singapore, and to the Autoriti Monetari Brunei Darussalam for the excellent virtual arrangements in hosting this year's Meeting of the SEACEN Board of Governors. Governors acknowledged Yang Mulia Dayang Hajah Rokiah binti Haji Badar as the new Chair of the SEACEN BOG. In addition, the BOG approved the 2021 SEACEN financial budget as well as the programme of training, research, and other activities for 2021.

Governors accepted with appreciation the offer of the State Bank of Vietnam to host the 57th SEACEN Governors' Conference/High-Level Seminar and the 41st Meeting of the SEACEN Board of Governors in 2021.

¹ SEACEN comprises the 19 member central banks and monetary authorities of Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Hong Kong SAR, Korea, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Chinese Taipei, Thailand and Vietnam, as well as eight Associate Members and eight Observers.