



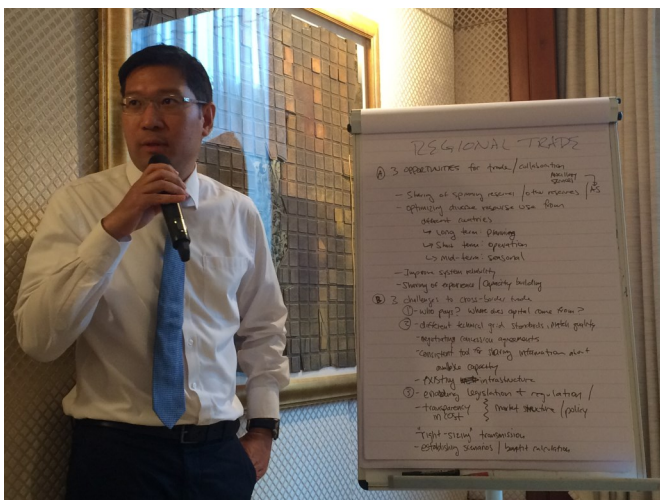
Bureau of Energy Resources
U.S. Department of State



National
Association of
Regulatory
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Commissioners

FEATURE STORY

Southeast Asian Regulators Work to Advance Energy Security



Phuwanart Choonhapran of the Energy Regulatory Commission of Thailand speaks on regional trade during a 2015 workshop in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

“After the Lower Mekong workshop [in 2014], we saw the problem of regulators not being involved in the utilities’ updates to the ASEAN Power Grid structure and standards. ERC communicated with the ASEAN Energy Regulators Network to ensure that regulators could attend the meetings with utilities to work side-by-side as the structure and standards are developed.”

— Phuwanart Choonhapran, senior official with Thailand ERC.

The countries of Southeast Asia are working to develop a regional power market that will drive economic growth and enhance energy security, paving the way for the region to respond to the challenges of climate change and build a more sustainable future. Success depends in part on effective and consistent rules of the road for how the system will operate, and regulators are now playing a pivotal role in ensuring that occurs.

With the support of the U.S. Department of State, the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC) identified that regulators did not have a formal channel to convene and share information in support of cross-border trade and regional grid optimization. NARUC created workshops to supplement the dialogue already occurring in the region by ensuring that regulators had a platform to collaborate to advance regional market development.

At an April 2014 workshop, NARUC explained the importance for regulators to engage more fully to help determine the technical

requirements needed to build a grid capable of regional energy connectivity. Regulators’ engagement in the dialogue – the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Power Grid Project – was one of the important results achieved in support of the Energy Sector Pillar of the Lower Mekong Initiative (LMI), a cross-cutting multinational partnership to spur cooperation between the U.S. and Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam.

Following the Lower Mekong workshop in 2014, regulators worked to formally engage in the ASEAN Power Grid Project. Senior ASEAN officials, along with the utilities, agreed on the need for alignment between power entities and government and regulatory officials as the project moves ahead. The project now includes a designated role for the ASEAN Energy Regulators Network to address regulatory issues within the broader effort.

Regulatory involvement supports the development of a high-level framework to guide the project and thereby ensures that non-discriminatory access to the grid, consumer protections, and clear and transparent energy pricing factor into the future ASEAN power grid.

Work now continues on creating a more robust power system in Southeast Asia, and regulators are working to develop framework guidelines to ensure that the grid of the future is built to last. Together with its partner at the Department of State, NARUC remains committed to fostering energy security and economic competitiveness through its programs in the Lower Mekong.

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