

The 1st ASEAN Japan Criminal Justice Seminar MLA session
“Enhancing International Cooperation within the ASEAN Region:
Utilizing New Tools for Effective Mutual Legal Assistance”

1. Duration and Participants

- From 13 to 19 December 2024
- 10 participants from 9 ASEAN countries and the ASEAN Secretariat

2. Programme Overview

The main theme of the 1st ASEAN-Japan Criminal Justice Seminar’s Mutual Legal Assistance (MLA) Session was “Strengthening International Cooperation in ASEAN: Utilizing New Tools for Effective Mutual Legal Assistance”. Although ASEAN Member States concluded the Treaty on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters (ASEAN-MLAT), the increasing sophistication and internationalization of crimes in recent years requires more effective implementation of the treaty and enhanced cooperation. Against this background, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Regional Office for Southeast Asia and the Pacific (Bangkok) and the ASEAN Secretariat are currently developing model templates for use in requesting MLA under the ASEAN-MLAT. In this Session, in collaboration with UNODC, the participants drafted and mutually reviewed each other’s MLA requests using the latest drafts of the model templates based on a cross-border drug smuggling case scenario.

3. Lectures and study visit

(1) Lectures

The following visiting experts from overseas, as well as UNAFEI faculty members, gave lectures as follows:

- Mr. Scott Simeon
“Obtaining Foreign Evidence”
- Mr. Hiroshi Suda
Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Officer, UNODC ROSEAP
“The Project for the Development of a Model Template for MLA Requests Based on the ASEAN MLAT”

(2) Study visit

Tokyo District Public Prosecutors Office

4. Feedback from the Participants

The Seminar participants positively commented on the practical nature of the curriculum, including the drafting exercises using the draft model templates, information exchange and consultations before and after the drafting, and frank exchange of opinions on the draft model template. We appreciate all the feedback from the participants and will take it into consideration when planning our future training programmes.

5. Comments from the Programming Officer

In this session, young and mid-career practitioners involved in MLA practice in ASEAN countries participated in drafting exercises and exchanging opinions, thereby contributing to the development of the ASEAN-MLAT Model Templates, which are

aimed to be adopted at the coming ASEAN meetings. The session also contributed to the efforts to combat transnational organized crime such as drug trafficking and money laundering in the ASEAN region.

We hope that the experiences of the participants in this session and the personal networks among practitioners from the central authorities in each country will contribute to more effective implementation of mutual legal assistance in ASEAN.