

REPÚBLICA DEMOCRÁTICA DE TIMOR LESTE
INSTITUTO NACIONAL DE CIÊNCIAS E TECNOLOGIA
(INCT)



REPORT OF THE ASEAN-INDIA WOMEN SCIENTISTS CONCLAVE (AIWSC) 2026

“Building an Inclusive Science, Technology and Innovation Community”

Hotel Sun & Moon, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

8–10 July 2026

Prepared by :

Leonel Da Costa Xavier
National Director social science and Humanity
Direção Nacional de Ciências Sociais e Humanas

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A. INTRODUCTION

This report is prepared to provide a comprehensive summary of the 2nd ASEAN-India Women Scientists Conclave (AIWSC), which took place from 8 to 10 July 2026 at the Hotel Sun & Moon in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. This conclave was a follow-up to the first successful conclave held in Singapore in 2024.

Organized under the theme "Building an Inclusive Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) Community", the event served as a strategic platform for women scientists, researchers, and policymakers from ASEAN Member States and India to strengthen collaboration, promote women's leadership in STEM, and translate research into tangible solutions for regional challenges.

B. GENERAL INFORMATION

- Event Title: 2nd ASEAN-India Women Scientists Conclave (AIWSC)
- Theme: Building an Inclusive Science, Technology and Innovation Community
- Date: 8–10 July 2026
- Venue: Hotel Sun & Moon, Phnom Penh, Cambodia
- Number of Participants: 135 delegates, of which 90 were women research scientists from India, ASEAN Member States, and Timor-Leste
- Organizers:
 - Ministry of Industry, Science, Technology & Innovation (MISTI), Cambodia
 - Department of Science and Technology (DST), India
- Supported by: ASEAN Secretariat, ASEAN-India Science & Technology Development Fund (AISTDF), and the Indian Institute of Technology Gandhinagar

C. AGENDA AND MAIN ACTIVITIES

Over the three-day period, the conclave featured various sessions aimed at strengthening capacity and research networks:

1. Day One (8 July 2026): Opening Ceremony and Plenary Sessions

The event was officially opened by representatives of MISTI Cambodia, who emphasized Cambodia's commitment to knowledge-based economic development through the *STI Roadmap 2030* and the *Pentagonal Strategy – Phase 1*. The national target to achieve at least 50 percent female graduates in STEM at the university level was highlighted as a key point.

H.E. Dr. Nhim Khemara, Permanent Secretary of State of MISTI, stated: *"A nation cannot innovate effectively while leaving its talent behind, particularly the women. We must empower women to be active driving forces in scientific advancement."*

On the first day, a panelist from Timor-Leste, Dra. Rosa Iilman as Director INL-UNTL (Universidade Nacional Timor Lorosa'e), spoke for 15 minutes regarding the educational aspects in Timor-Leste.

The first day also featured 10 multilateral roundtable discussions and an innovation pitching session, during which 55 women scientists presented their scientific and technological solutions before an international panel of judges.

2. Day Two (9 July 2026): Discussions and Technical Sessions

The focus was on four global priority areas:

1. Food Security
2. Sustainable Energy
3. Equitable Education
4. Emerging Technologies

Delegates engaged in discussions to address the systemic barriers faced by women in science careers and explored research commercialization through university-industry partnerships.

On the second day, the Timor-Leste delegation participated in a pitching presentation session in the field of food security, which took place in the morning by Dra. Odete Guterres as Assessor II to the Vice Prime Minister, while Dr. Aderita T. Dos Santos delivered a presentation on sustainable energy. Dr. Leonel Da Costa Xavier from INCT served as a judge for the presentation activities. A total of 25 participants made presentations during the session

3. Day Three (10 July 2026): Academic Site Visits and Closing Ceremony

On the final day, more than 100 delegates conducted site visits to two leading higher education institutions in Cambodia, showcasing the country's research and innovation progress:

- Institute of Technology of Cambodia (ITC): Delegates explored agricultural research units and biomass conversion facilities, underscoring Cambodia's efforts to develop local solutions for food security and sustainable energy.

The Closing Ceremony was led by the Minister of MISTI, H.E. Hem Vanndy, who stated: *"Investing in women's knowledge and technological capacity is an investment in the future of our generations. When society unleashes the potential of women in STEM or STI, we don't just empower individuals, but we unlock the keys to solving the most complex challenges facing humanity."*

ASEAN Secretary-General, Dr. Kao Kim Hourn, in his address at the awards ceremony, emphasized that this conclave strengthened people-to-people ties and opened new opportunities in digital technology, AI, biotechnology, and sustainable development.

D. KEY OUTCOMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The conclave produced several concrete commitments and policy recommendations to drive collaboration and inclusive innovation:

1. New Research Funding:

- Cambodia announced plans to establish a National Research Foundation that will prioritize joint international research projects.
- The Indian delegation announced a new joint funding scheme to support collaborative research networks between ASEAN and Indian institutions.

2. Strengthening Networks and Infrastructure:

- It was recommended to establish a joint ASEAN-India scientific hub and expand laboratory exchange programs to prevent brain drain and ensure equitable distribution of research infrastructure.

3. Policy Roadmap:

- The conclave produced a policy blueprint expected to guide the regional science strategy under the ASEAN Plan of Action on Science, Technology & Innovation (APASTI) 2026–2030.

4. Statement of Support:

- H.E. Vanlalvawna Bawitlung, Ambassador of India to Cambodia, described the conclave as *"a shining example of the growing breadth and depth of the ASEAN-India Comprehensive Strategic Partnership."*

E. CONCLUSION

The 2nd ASEAN-India Women Scientists Conclave in Phnom Penh successfully strengthened the joint commitment between ASEAN and India to build an inclusive science, technology, and innovation ecosystem. More than just a dialogue forum, the conclave produced tangible funding commitments, measurable policy recommendations, and strengthened research networks expected to drive the central role of women in addressing the region's development challenges.

The success of this event also reaffirms Cambodia's position as a host capable of advancing the regional STI agenda, in line with its national vision to transform towards a knowledge-based economy

Documentation



