



D53 Asian Forensic Sciences Network - Report on New Regional Collaboration

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After attending this presentation, attendees will have an appreciation of the Asian Forensic Sciences Network and developments in the forensic sciences scene in Asia.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by providing a better understanding of the network, which will help to open up collaborative and co-operative opportunities, and promote closer interaction between counterparts in the North American continent and those in Asia.

Regional associations, such as the American Society of Crime Lab Directors (ASCLD), the Academia Iberoamericana De Criminalistica Y Estudios Forenses (AICEF), Senior Managers of Australian and New Zealand Forensic Laboratories (SMANZFL), and the European Network of Forensic Science Institutes (ENFSI) have been formed over the years to bring forensic science communities in various regions together to discuss common issues.

In 1999, the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP), forerunner of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), organized a regional Consultative Meeting for the Heads of Drug Testing Laboratories in Southeast Asia in Hong Kong SAR. This led to the publication of an annual regional newsletter *DrugNetAsia*, this newsletter has served as a platform for information sharing among the drug testing laboratories in the region.

In 2006, DNA scientists in the region met at a regional Symposium on Forensic DNA and Population Statistics Workshop held in Singapore, and discussed issues of common interest. This was followed a year later, by the formation of a regional Forensic DNA Profiling Workgroup arising from the perceived need to share information efficiently after the 2004 Asian tsunami. In the same year, Dr. Barbara Remberg of UNODC vetoed the idea of forming a regional forensic science network during a regional UNODC project workshop on precursors and illicit drugs.

In October 2008, representatives from six national forensic institutes in the region converged in Singapore to discuss the issue of the formation of a regional forensic science network. The six institutes are: Department of Scientific Services, Brunei Darussalam; Department of Chemistry, Malaysia; National Bureau of Investigation, Philippines; Central Institute of Forensic Science, Thailand; Forensic Science Institute, Vietnam and Health Sciences Authority, Singapore. Dr Barbara Remberg of UNODC and Prof Jose Lorente, International Liaison Officer of AICEF were also present at the meeting. This meeting gave birth to Asian Forensic Sciences Network (AFSN) which will henceforth serve as a collective voice for the forensic science community in Asia.

In November 2009, the network was formally inaugurated in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia with adoption of a formal constitution and election of the AFSN Board. Three technical working groups (DNA Workgroup, Illicit Drugs Workgroup, and Trace Evidence Workgroup), and the Quality Assurance and Standards Committee were formed.

The Second Annual Meeting of AFSN was successfully organized in Brunei Darussalam in May 2010. The program included a number of workshops and scientific meetings, with poster sessions as well as the business meetings and the annual general meeting. At the AGM, AFSN signed a memorandum of understanding with the International Forensic Strategic Alliance (IFSA), to work together with other regional networks to further strengthen collaboration and co-operation in the forensic arena globally. A toxicology workgroup was also formed to promote technical discussion and advancement in this discipline. The membership of the network has grown from the initial six institutes to a total of eighteen covering eleven countries in Asia.

The presentation will elaborate on the goals and objectives of the network, and a general introduction to the profile of its members and the ongoing work of the workgroups. The presentation will also discuss the challenges that members of the network face in providing quality forensic scientific services to their communities.

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