

The 2nd ASEAN Japan Criminal Justice Seminar MLA session  
“Enhancing Mutual Legal Assistance in the ASEAN Region:  
Training on the Use of the New Template”

1. Duration and Participants

- From 12 to 18 December 2025
- 9 participants from 9 ASEAN countries

2. Programme Overview

The main theme of the 2nd ASEAN-Japan Criminal Justice Seminar’s Mutual Legal Assistance (MLA) Session was “Enhancing Mutual Legal Assistance in the ASEAN Region: Training on the Use of the New Template”. The participants were mainly officials from the central authorities of ASEAN countries. 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 developed model templates for MLA requests under the ASEAN-MLAT, which were endorsed at the SOM-MLAT in October 2025. In this Session, in collaboration with UNODC, the participants drafted MLA requests and reviewed each other’s MLA requests using the model templates, based on a cryptocurrency-related fraud and money laundering case scenario.

3. Lectures

Lectures were delivered by the Director of the International Affairs Division of the Ministry of Justice, UNAFEI faculty members, as well as the following visiting experts overseas:

- Mr. Jumpon Phansumrit  
Senior Public Prosecutor, ASEAN Center for International Legal Cooperation, International Affairs Department, Office of the Attorney General Thailand  
“Mutual Legal Assistance in ASEAN”
- Mr. Scott Simeon  
U.S. Department of Justice Attaché, U.S. Embassy in Manila, Philippines  
“Obtaining Foreign Evidence”
- Mr. Hayato Shigekawa  
Principal Solutions Architect, Chainalysis  
“Crypto investigation fundamentals”
- 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”

4. Feedback from the Participants

Many participants were officials responsible for reviewing MLA requests drafted by competent authorities. They commented that they themselves first need to become

familiar with the newly adopted model templates. Some participants commented that they plan to deliver training sessions using the case scenario for officials of the competent authorities.

As this year's case scenario required a basic understanding of cryptocurrency, some participants commented that they had difficulty in understanding the scenario prior to the seminar but gained a clear understanding through the lecture.

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

This seminar was unique among UNAFEI's training programs, as this seminar is devoted exclusively to MLA practitioners. Therefore, its contents are designed to be advanced and highly practical. Furthermore, as the seminar did not seek participants from a broad range of institutions, careful consideration was necessary in terms of participant recruitment and selection. Although the duration of the seminar was shorter than that of many other training programs, it presented various challenges in its planning and implementation.

Although this seminar targeted central authority officials responsible for MLA, police officers also participated. At the outset, I had some concern as to whether they would be able to fully benefit from the seminar. However, they made substantial contributions to the discussion by sharing their practical knowledge as investigators. I felt that this represented the genuine ideal of MLA, in which central authority officials, who know the legal systems of requested states, and competent authority officials, who possess detailed knowledge of the facts of the case and investigative methods, cooperate to facilitate effective mutual legal assistance requests. This ideal was realized in the UNAFEI conference room.

As mentioned above, some participants commented that they plan to provide training to junior officials based on the knowledge and materials gained through this seminar. It would be a great pleasure to contribute to the dissemination of the templates through participants' activities.