

Country Statement by
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at the 8th Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD)
“Sustainable and resilient recovery from the coronavirus (COVID-19)
pandemic in Asia and the Pacific”
14:45 hrs. (TBC) 23 March 2021

Madam Chair,
Executive Secretary, Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

1. Thailand commends ESCAP once again for organising this regional forum. Amidst the current COVID-19 pandemic and our efforts to build back better, this regional gathering is more important and timely than ever.
2. The COVID-19 crisis has so far claimed over two million lives and disrupted countless more. Its accompanying socio-economic impacts are just as far-reaching and devastating.
3. But as affirmed by our Deputy Prime Minister earlier in the Forum: **there is an end in sight for us**. Most countries have begun to vaccinate their people, Thailand included. We must ensure that vaccines are **global public goods** so that they are equally accessible for all without discrimination. In this phase, international cooperation is key, and Thailand and ASEAN have taken the lead in promoting mechanisms to enhance cooperation in this regard, be they the **ASEAN Centre for Public Health Emergencies and Emerging Diseases (ACPHEED)**, **ASEAN Regional Reserve on Medical Supplies** or the **ASEAN COVID-19 Response Fund**.

Madam Chair,

4. Since the outbreak of the pandemic, Thailand has implemented measures aimed at containing transmissions and alleviating the socio-economic impacts on the people. The Government has developed a COVID-19 Masterplan under the National Strategy in order to help the country **“cope, adapt, and transform”**.

5. However, COVID-19 vaccines do not mean our struggle is over. With the New Normal, our way of life will never be the same again. Recovery should not be simply rapid. Rather, it should be **sustainable, inclusive, and resilient**. **Most importantly, this can be done by putting ourselves back on track to achieve the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.**

6. This year, Thailand will present our second **Voluntary National Review (VNR)** to the High Level Political Forum (HLPF). We have determined that our VNR will not only examine progress made on all 17 Goals from the perspective of all sectors of society, but will also highlight our efforts to meet the challenges the pandemic has placed on our path towards SDG achievement.

7. As we adapt to the New Normal, **new inequalities and challenges will arise**. Human empowerment should therefore be at the forefront of our efforts. For when people are empowered, communities and societies become more resilient against future shocks.

8. For Thailand, **Universal Health Coverage** has proven to be key in our efforts to battle COVID-19. And the work of over 1 million village health volunteers joined by numerous volunteers backstopping delivery of essential services over the past year is another piece of evidence of the power of humans and volunteerism. Ordinary citizens have played a central role in the identification of cases, awareness-raising, and in providing local quarantine enforcement and support. Human empowerment and a **whole-of-society approach** have enabled Thailand to manage COVID-19.

9. Asia-Pacific countries are affected by COVID-19 in different ways. But one thing we do have in common is that we all need to adapt if we are to achieve the SDGs by 2030. This is why **homegrown development approaches**, in particular those that emphasise human development, will be of particular significance.

10. Thailand's homegrown development approach, the **Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP)**, underlines the importance of moderation, resilience, and a balance between nature and human activity. The SEP represents an approach that prioritises human development, local wisdom and solutions, and the application of modern technology and innovation to unlock the most intractable challenges. We will soon launch, in partnership with UNDP, the **Sixth Thailand Human Development Report**, which will focus on the intrinsic linkages between the SEP, Human Development, and the 2030 Agenda.

11. Inclusive and balanced growth requires us to place more importance on the environment. As such, Thailand promotes the **Bio-Circular-Green Economy Model** to maximize synergies from an environmentally-friendly and innovation-

based economy that leverages the country's rich biodiversity and natural resources. The model is but one application of SEP principles.

12. As we strive towards sustainable development, Thailand stands ready to work with all partners in the common endeavour of making the growth of our countries and the Asia-Pacific region sustainable, balanced and inclusive, leaving no one behind.

I thank you.

682 words (approximately 5 mins at 136 words/min)