

National Dialogue on the Urban Nexus in Thailand

Meeting Room 4, UNCC, Bangkok, 19 March, 2015

Dear Dr. Storey, Dear Ms. Erlbeck, Dear Representatives from the Ministries and Municipalities in Thailand,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am very happy to open the first

National – Subnational – Municipal Dialogue Forum in Thailand today organized by UN ESCAP and the GIZ Urban Nexus Project.

On behalf of the German Government, I cordially would like to welcome you to this event.

The Urban Nexus Project, implemented by GIZ and UN ESCAP and financed by the

German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development, is a Regional Project executed in 6 countries in 10 cities.

2 of these 10 cities are located in Thailand and represented in this dialogue forum”: they are Chiang Mai and Nakon Ratchasima (Korat), two cities, that are – after Bangkok – of the highest relevance for Thailand's economic development.

The Nexus approach is about seeing things as a whole. Not just parts of a challenge with narrowed solutions.

No, Nexus is promoting planning and implementation of resource management in a holistic way.

This concerns the areas of water/sanitation, energy and food security.

Nexus identifies concrete pilot projects together with the Municipalities. The goal is to try out, to demonstrate innovative technological solutions that could be to be scaled up in the near future.

These demonstration projects are supposed to “close the loop” between water, energy and food security as well as urban agriculture, while considering trade-offs between the sectors.

I am not an Expert in this field, I am only a Government official, but I dare to say, that maybe just as relevant as the technical details and the hardware of this project

is the “software” in this process. The thinking and ideas, the motivation and courage of the people concerned.

But ... also the administrative hurdles, issues of framework conditions and mandates hindering integrated resource management and multi sectorial infrastructure projects.

All this is also analysed.

At times, a communication gap becomes apparent between the national and the local level and sometimes also between the provincial and the national as well as between the provincial and the local level.

This, of course, does not only hold true for Thailand.

That is why UN ESCAP and the GIZ started organizing dialogue forums in the context of the Nexus Project to further analyse the situation and propose new approaches where necessary.

In order to reach sustainable development with regard to water, energy and food security, we need innovative engineering technologies as well as more communication between the different levels.

However, the local governments alone cannot always deal with these comprehensive and partially costly tasks of making their cities resilient.

Support from the national and provincial government as well as from the private sector might be required.

It is not only about finance,

but also about mandates and framework conditions, adequate tariff structures and incentive mechanisms to economize on the dwindling water, land and energy resources.

Holistic, multi sectorial approaches are the need of the day. But what does this actually mean? Sometimes it means that what is the problem for one partner is the solution for the other: transforming waste or waste water into energy for example. To connect waste and Energy. To

connect both to urban agriculture – to make each other see what every one of us does and how we can help each other.

I think Thailand is the perfect country for this. The attitude of helping each other of looking after each other of caring about each other and the environment is deeply rooted and at the same time very modern and up to date here in Thailand. It is a general concept of being happy to be one part of the solution of being part of a solution where all federal levels and Municipalities amongst each other joining hands to solve problems.

With this attitude – I am convinced Thailand can be spearheading a development in South-East-Asia that will in the long run become not only beneficial – but also highly necessary for the social and environmental challenges of today

This national dialogue is an unique chance for the local governments (Municipalities) to enter into an intensified exchange with their respective Authorities on national and provincial level.

It is moreover an excellent opportunity for the national level to receive first-hand information on problems and worries of local governments with regard to municipal autonomy, their mandates and their infrastructure development on the basis of case studies.

But maybe it is also a chance to exchange experiences on good practice on examples of what worked really well.

I am happy to see that so many of you followed the invitation to this workshop, that so many of you are happy to work on the issues with all your personal engagement. Thank you. Khop khun kha.

For now I would like to stop here with one more word:

I would like to thank the project managers and technical directors for their effort so far, for pushing forward the initiative, for leading the project, for organizing the workshop on behalf of the German Government. Thank you.