Opening Remarks by
H.E. Mr. Don Pramudwinai
Deputy Prime Minister and
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand
at the 5th High-Level Brainstorming Dialogue on Enhancing Complementarities
between the ASEAN Community Vision 2025
and the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
Wednesday, 31 March 2021, 13.00 hours
Conference Room 3, UN Conference Centre, Bangkok

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Madam Co-Chair, Executive Secretary
Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana (อาร์มิดา ซัลเซียะฮ์ อาลิสจะฮ์บานา),
Dato Lim Jock Hoi, Secretary-General of ASEAN,
Distinguished Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. I am delighted to participate again in this High-Level Brainstorming Dialogue. Indeed, our collective effort to organize the HLBD for the fifth year running demonstrates our shared commitment to promote the “Complementarities Initiative.”

2. I wish to thank my Co-Chair, Madam Executive Secretary, and her team for the excellent collaboration in co-organizing this annual Dialogue over the years. The strong support by ESCAP is indispensable for advancing the partnership towards sustainable development in this region.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

3. Although the COVID-19 vaccination is underway globally, the world continues to grapple with the unprecedented and multi-faceted challenges of the pandemic. Last year, ASEAN’s GDP contracted by 4.4 percent. Millions lost their livelihood. MSMEs and other vulnerable groups have also been hit hard. This phenomenon has dampened our progress towards SDGs realization.
4. Based on ESCAP’s analysis, even before COVID-19, we would need an additional annual investment of 1.5 trillion US Dollars to realize the SDGs. With the pandemic, we need extra efforts to meet both the SDGs and recovery objectives.

5. Against this backdrop, we must work together to turn the COVID-19 crisis into collective SDGs action and “build back better and stronger”. Robust post-COVID-19 recovery and the SDGs can and should be pursued together in a synergized manner.

6. Last year, we embarked on the implementation of the Complementarities Roadmap, and I am pleased that some concrete cooperation is already underway. For such cooperation to bear tangible outcomes, I wish to put forth the following ideas for the HLBD as our way forward.

7. **First, a paradigm shift is needed in our everyday life.** The “New Normal” can actually give us a clean break from our unsustainable and unbalanced way of living. COVID-19 is a wake-up call for the need to attain a better-balanced relationship between humans and every aspect of our life. Thus, striking a “Balance of Things” is a must for our sustainable future, and for us to live in harmony with nature.

8. To this end, the “Bio-Circular-Green or BCG Economic Model” can be part of the solution. Thailand has been entrusted by ASEAN to examine the BCG Model as an alternative strategy for the region’s post-COVID recovery process. The BCG Model builds on the region’s rich biodiversity and natural resources, focusing on economic growth based on efficient use of resources, waste reduction and low-carbon emission. It can be applied in various sectors such as smart farming, biopharmaceuticals, bioenergy and sustainable tourism, to name a few.

9. This brings me to my second point on innovation and digitalization. The BCG Model will employ technology and innovation to achieve an environmentally sustainable economy. This will help enhance our capacity not only in adding value to products and services for a robust recovery, but also in finding ways to increase the efficiency of our resource use and to delink environmental cost from GDP growth.

10. **Digitalization** is essential in offering innovative solutions to various social and environmental issues. With it, we can create smart cities that have timely monitoring of air pollution and urban climate, as well as promote a healthy population through predictive healthcare and telemedicine. Advancements in digitalization will shape our approach to global challenges. We must embrace and harness digital technologies in response to the evolution of our ecosystem and way of life.
11. **My third and final point** is enhanced partnership. In order to advance the sustainability agenda, the BCG Model will harness partnership from all sectors in the form of “Public-Private-People Partnership.” A multi-stakeholder partnership on mobilizing funds for environmentally friendly investments such as “green bonds” and “blue finance” should be further promoted.

12. Equally important is fostering cooperation and partnership among States to serve the interests of the people. Right now, we see a lot of stories about confrontations in the news. The world would have a lot more to gain if we can turn the energy wastefully expended in perpetuated conflict into collaboration. That way, we can create a peaceful environment which is conducive to economic recovery, where we can achieve an equitable, balanced and sustainable growth.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

13. **We should not let this pandemic discourage us from taking a more balanced and sustainable path.** I hope that what I have shared with you could offer some food for thought for today’s discussions and future concrete joint actions. Sustainable development means our way of life should not compromise the needs of future generations. The time is now for us to take less from our children and grandchildren, and leave them a legacy where they can enjoy a good, if not better, quality of life on this planet.

14. I wish this Meeting every success and look forward to its fruitful outcome. Thank you.

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