Honourable,  
Distinguished participants,  
Ladies, and Gentlemen,

Assalamualaikum  
Very good morning,  
Sawadee Kaap.

At the outset, allow me to congratulate UN-ESCAP for hosting the Sixth South-East Asia Multi-Stakeholder Forum on: “Accelerating the Recovery from COVID-19 while Advancing the Full Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.” I would also like to thank UNESCAP for inviting Centre for Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Subregional Cooperation (CIMT) to take part in this important session, and engage IMT-GT member countries, i.e. Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand to showcase their efforts, progress and achievements towards a sustainable subregion by 2036.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Water is fundamental to many other aspects of sustainable development and it became increasingly prominent during the COVID-19 pandemic and during natural disasters, that safely managed drinking water, sanitation and hygiene services are vital to human health. Demand for water is rising due to rapid population growth, urbanization and increasing pressure from industries particularly from agriculture, industry agriculture, industry and the energy sector.

Clean, safely managed water, sanitation, and hygiene are recognized as priority interventions for primary health prevention and are estimated to reduce the global disease burden by almost ten percent according to World Health Organisation (WHO). The 2019 outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19) solidified this reality as the world witnessed firsthand the contribution water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) has in disease prevention. While there has been significant progress against SDG 6 targets in the past 20 years, the Asia Pacific region including the IMT subregion is not on track to meet any of the targets for clean water and sanitation. The Asia-Pacific region is
home to only 36 percent of the world’s water resources with the lowest per capita water availability globally.¹

In ASEAN, 90% of people have access to improved water sources, whilst 72% have access to improved sanitation sources.² The coverage of the water resources in IMT subregion are more than 96%, however, there are several issues exist like inadequate piped water supply at times, poor water quality and inadequate waste-water treatment.³ Access to clean water and sanitation remains a challenge as Southeast Asia is prone to frequent and severe natural disasters particularly flooding and landslides. The number of flooding and landslides in IMT subregion have increased substantially due to climate change. Consequently, the risk of communicable diseases and poverty will indirectly surge in areas that have been affected by natural disasters.

This is one of the reasons why IMT-GT prioritise natural resources management, including water, in our Vision 2036. The IMT-GT Vision has guided its member countries to achieve an integrated, innovative, inclusive, and sustainable subregion by 2036. In order to materialize the vision the Environment Pillar was established in 2021 to outlines two main elements. The first, to prioritise low carbon economy, including, but not limited to, sustainable urban development, and promotion of renewable energy, energy efficiency and green mobility. Second, to prioritise sustainable management of natural resources and protection and conservation biodiversity.

In addition to the Vision 2036, the IMT-GT has formulated environmental blueprint Sustainable Urban Development Framework (SUDF), covering seven (7) priority areas of cooperation, namely transport, energy, solid waste management, biodiversity, circular economy, carbon literacy, and education for sustainable development. The SUDF addresses the implementation of actions for sustainable development goals (SDGs) in the cities and provinces of IMT-GT member countries. SDG 6, provision of clean water and sanitation is at the heart of our SUDF priorities under biodiversity sector. The SUDF targeted to implement infrastructure interventions starting 2023 to achieve non-revenue water reduction and continuous water supply daily.

To support this strategic action, IMT-GT has endorsed revitalization of Chief Ministers and Governor Forum (CMGF) as an important platform to materialize global agenda in local action. IMT-GT in its vision has put local government in the heart of our subregional cooperation. Today, IMT-GT has 35 States / Provinces cover the whole Island of Sumatera in Indonesia; peninsular Malaysia; and Southern part of Thailand.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

³ Source: IMT-GT SUDF, 2019-2036
During its 29 years of cooperation, we have witnessed that the IMT-GT survived several economic shocks. The global disease has adversely impacted the subregion, as shown by the GDP drop of 1.3% from 2019 to 2022, followed by the increase in poverty incidence and unemployment rate. Once again, we are called to overcome the challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic.

To improve the subregion’s resilience as part of IMT-GT post-COVID-19 pandemic recovery, we maintain our strong relationship with our Development Partner and other strategic partners. In the environment sector, we are expecting new project collaboration with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN ESCAP) under the Urban-Act programme. To date, we have identified two potential projects to be collaborated with, namely Comprehensive Mobility Plan, and Electric Mobility.

Honourable guests,

As I have highlighted the importance of clean water provision and safe sanitation in our subregion, IMT-GT member countries Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand are very relevant and good example for the topic that we are currently discussing. We look forward to hearing from our panelist today to share their experience and best practices on how IMT-GT member countries manage water resources and provide Clean Water and Sanitation for more than 90 million in the subregion.

I do appreciate and thank UN-ESCAP again for conducting this forum, look forward to a fruitful discussion.

Thank you.