

Country Statement
by Mr. Nadhavathna Krishnamra,
Permanent Representative of Thailand to ESCAP
at the General Debate of the 77th Session of the Commission
27 April 2021 via Videoconference

Mr. Chairman,
Madam Executive Secretary,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

1. COVID-19 has exacerbated our world's vulnerabilities and inequalities within and among countries.
2. Yet, we believe that with collective resolve, we will ultimately overcome this threat. Thailand stands firm with the global community to build back better and stronger, and would like to share a few thoughts on the way forward.

Realising the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

3. First, Thailand strongly believes that to recover and build back better from the COVID-19 crisis, we must stay on course and intensify efforts in achieving the 2030 Agenda. This means cooperation with, and assistance to, nations and all stakeholders to get back on track on the SDGs during this Decade of Action and Delivery.
4. Indeed, this is easier said than done. Recent data has shown that this crisis has disproportionately reversed hard-won development gains across the globe. Thailand's five-year review of the SDGs has indicated that while we have made good overall progress on the SDGs, some Goals and targets have faced constraints due to the pandemic.
5. Yet, the silver lining has been an impetus for meaningful change. COVID-19 has compelled us to step back and re-examine our inextricable relationship with nature and the environment. It has thrust us, the global community, to be more attune to environmental concerns while being collaborative, efficient, and innovative.
6. Realising that our formula for economic growth needs to change, Thailand is pursuing the BCG Economy Model which draws strength from the concepts of Bioeconomy, Circular Economy and Green Economy. In line with the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP), this BCG model prioritizes a development path that is more balanced, resilient, and sustainable, while being environmentally and climate responsive. It is our hope that this will not only contribute to the attainment of the SDGs, but will also leverage the interlinkages and minimise trade-offs across all the Goals and targets.

Strengthening health systems

7. Second, the COVID-19 crisis has exposed the gaps and vulnerabilities of our health systems. The economic impacts of the pandemic further hinder the abilities of many who are already in vulnerable situations to receive quality health treatments, and highlights the importance of social protection measures.
8. Thailand strongly believes that Universal Health Coverage (UHC) is key to building health resilience and to responding effectively to future health crises. It helps ensure inclusive access to health services among all groups, including the poor and vulnerable communities. In calling upon countries to accelerate efforts towards achieving UHC by 2030, Thailand reiterates our readiness to share our experiences on UHC with interested countries.
9. Meanwhile, our health systems must also be prepared for times of disasters resulting from hazards such as earthquakes, cyclones and floods. It is crucial that countries in the disaster-prone Asia-Pacific region pay due attention to the health aspects of the Sendai Framework. We believe that the solid recommendations stated in the Bangkok Principles can be beneficial for countries in their efforts to bolster coherence between health and disaster risk management.
10. Thailand looks forward to the discussions among Member States and relevant stakeholders on enhancing the health dimension of disasters at the thematic meeting to be convened in conjunction with the Seventh Session of the Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction this August.

Reinforcing multilateralism

11. Third, Thailand's faith in multilateralism remains unwavering as we mark our 75 years in the United Nations. COVID-19, poverty and hunger, climate change and other countless challenges we face today cannot be solved without collective efforts.
12. As ESCAP approaches its own 75th Anniversary next year, Thailand wishes to see ESCAP intensify its role in harnessing the common but diverse strengths of countries in the Asia-Pacific. In particular, ESCAP should identify innovative ways and means to help countries make up for lost time in achieving the SDGs. This includes promoting South-South and Triangular cooperation, and the sharing of locally-driven development approaches and pathways among countries.

Distinguished Delegates,

13. The Asia-Pacific has seen significant losses from COVID-19, which must not be in vain. Let us all ^{rise} from this crisis, and let our cooperation mark renewed hope for a sustainable and resilient future.

I thank you.
