Opening Remarks by
H.E. Mr. Don Pramudwinai
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs
of the Kingdom of Thailand
at the 6th HBD
Monday, 30 May 2022, 14.30 hours
Conference Room 1, UN Conference Centre, Bangkok

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Madam Co-Chair, Executive Secretary Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana,
Dato Lim Jock Hoi, Secretary-General of ASEAN,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. It gives me great pleasure to preside over the 6th High-Level Brainstorming Dialogue. It is heartening that our collective efforts in promoting sustainability in ASEAN has culminated in the organisation of this Dialogue for six years running, which clearly reflects our shared commitment to advance the sustainability agenda in the region.

2. I wish to thank my Co-Chair, Madam Executive Secretary, and her team for the excellent collaboration in co-organising
this annual Dialogue over the years. I would also like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to the successful 78th Session of the Commission coinciding with the 75th Anniversary of the UNESCAP commemorations. Indeed, UNESCAP has been instrumental in advancing partnerships for sustainable development in the region.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

3. The COVID-19 pandemic was a Black Swan event that has exposed the fault lines of the current exploitative economic practices. In fact, even before the pandemic, the world was reeling from the challenges of environmental impacts, caused by human actions as much as our inactions. And we have sadly come to passively accept these practices as a by-product of economic growth.

4. Needless to say, the pandemic has rolled back hard-won gains and progresses made in pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals. This calls for a renewed sense of urgency in recovering lost progresses by mainstreaming pathways to sustainable development and further integrating sustainability into all models of economic growth. It is a call-to-action that human activities can no longer be in direct conflict with nature, nor economic growth achieved at the expense of the environment. The post-pandemic world will
undoubtedly require this paradigm shift towards a more sustainable and resilient future, and ASEAN must change with it.

5. On Thailand’s part, as I briefly touched upon at the Dialogue last year, we have adopted the **Bio-Circular-Green Economy Model**, or a “whole-of-BCG” approach as an alternative strategy for sustainable and inclusive growth. The BCG Model is an approach to divert from further natural, economic, and social degradation, to better safeguard both the ecosystem and human security, and to strike a balance between human and nature. Balance leads to sustainability and should therefore form the main thrust behind our thinking.

6. The BCG concept is applicable to all the five priority areas under the Complementarities Initiative. We hope that it can be another disposable tool that complement our efforts to advance ASEAN Community building and the Sustainable Development Goals towards a more sustainable and resilient future.

7. In this regard, I wish to put forth the following ideas for the High-Level Brainstorming Dialogue as some of the pathways we can opt to chart our course.
8. **First**, as the BCG model aligns with many of ASEAN Member States’ and external partners’ sustainability and green policies, there are a myriad of opportunities for us to work together to reinforce and strengthen the ASEAN Community that is truly green and leaves no one, nor the environment, behind. This can be done through **exchanges of best practices and lessons learnt, transfers of technological and scientific resources** to enhance capacity of ASEAN in rebuilding competitive economies and advancing a more balanced and sustainable growth.

9. This brings me to my **second point** - mainstreaming **sustainable development and sustainability** into ASEAN’s cooperation with external partners. Sustainable development can be an area of **win-win cooperation**, as everyone, every country, will benefit from a liveable and more sustainable world. After all, our livelihood, our lives are connected, no matter where we are in the world.

10. It is therefore in the interest of all counties in the region to cooperate even more closely in this endeavor and **make the Indo-Pacific a region of development and prosperity** through dialogue and cooperation. I hope that the ideas and inputs that we will gather during the panel discussion today will bring about constructive
cooperation which will in turn help build strategic trust in the region and support the implementation of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific.

11. My third and final point is to put a stronger emphasis on youth empowerment and engagement. The future belongs to today’s youth and to future generations, as they will reap the benefits or stand to lose from the actions we take today on sustainability issues. It is high time that we listen and involve members of the youth in our decision-making process so as to ensure their participation in determining our collective future.

12. To this end, we plan to work with ASEAN colleagues and interested external partners to create an ideation space for youths across the region to play a leading role in driving sustainable changes in their hometowns and communities. This is also in line with the spirit of the BCG approach that calls for community-level engagement and inclusion.

13. My fourth and final point is the need to create a peaceful environment conducive to the advancement of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and the UN 2030 Agenda. All of us are severely hit by
both the pandemic and the challenges arising from conflicts around the globe. We therefore do not want to see competition and confrontation, but rather we must enhance partnerships among all key players to ensure the human security of our people, global peace and prosperity, as well as the sustainability of our planet.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

14. **This pandemic should serve as a call to arms to accelerate our actions towards a more balanced and sustainable path to growth.** 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 current ways of life should not compromise the needs of future generations. The time is now for us to take less and do more to leave our children and grandchildren a legacy where they can enjoy a better quality of life on this planet.

15. May I take this opportunity to wish this Meeting every success and look forward to its fruitful outcome.

I thank you very much.
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