All the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are interconnected and a balanced approach to development in all dimensions is necessary. Thailand considers all the six entry points, as elaborated in the 2019 Global Sustainable Development Report and adapted by ESCAP for the Asia-Pacific region, to be an effective means in accelerating progress towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The COVID-19 outbreak has disrupted global development efforts, and has affected all sectors of society. Collective progress on sustainable development has been hindered. The socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 are likely to last. Therefore, the fight against COVID-19 should encompass both short-term and long-term measures. People-centred sustainable development must be the way forward.

While the COVID-19 crisis poses a challenge to most of the SDGs, it provides an opportunity for all countries to accelerate SDG implementation as an integral part of their effort to recover from the crisis and to “build back better”. This would require a change in mindsets and a search for new and transformative ways of working which prioritise sustainability, place humans at centre, and leave no one behind.

In our search for post-COVID transformative pathways towards sustainable development, Thailand would like to propose the following:

First, efforts must be made to ensure that pathways towards Sustainable Development are inclusive. Volunteers have played significant roles in the development process in many countries by localising the SDGs and reaching those furthest behind. Thailand encourages ESCAP member States to share their experiences and good practices on volunteerism with others. Women are vital in the pursuit of sustainable development. Women’s equality and empowerment not only comprises one of the SDGs, but is an integral part of all the Goals. Appropriate approaches are needed to unlock the full potential of women. Thailand will continue to work closely with ESCAP and other member States to reinforce women’s vital role in sustainable development.

Second, Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI) represent one of the key accelerators in increasing productivity and ensuring social and economic development. Enhanced cooperation in STI in the Asia-Pacific is required.
Thailand encourages ESCAP to continue to work with member States and other stakeholders to provide countries with special needs with technical and other necessary support to help strengthen their STI capacities essential for building back better and staying on track towards the SDGs. ESCAP could also assist member States in their efforts to address the existing inequalities and the digital divide. The benefits of STI will not be felt by many unless they are provided with the tools to access those advancements.

Third, Thailand’s path toward sustainable development is guided by the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy, which places people at the core of our development efforts. SEP focuses on empowering people and communities, building resilience, and elevating human well-being and capabilities. Crucially, it emphasises sustainability in all dimensions. As such, with sustainability comes resilience, which is much needed to respond to crises and shocks. Thailand has been working with countries and UN agencies in the application of SEP through bilateral, trilateral and South-South cooperation. Thailand hopes to expand this cooperation and share experiences with others and looks forward to learning from the experience of others their development approaches. Thailand stands ready to share its experiences with SEP with all, and encourages ESCAP to provide member States with appropriate fora and platforms whereby innovative home-grown development approaches could be exchanged for the benefit of countries in the region.

Amidst the COVID-19 crisis, multilateralism and multilateral cooperation is needed more than ever. COVID-19 knows no borders. Last Year’s ESCAP resolution on “Advancing partnerships within and across regions for the sustainable development of Asia and the Pacific” provides a basis for enhanced cooperation among ESCAP member states. Thailand invites all countries, with the support of ESCAP, to unite efforts to build back better by identifying best practices and new ways of working and approaches, and sharing them with other member States. No other forum is better suited for this endeavour.

In this Decade of Action, the Voluntary National Review (VNR) process has an even more critical role to play. The VNR not only helps States to identify the progress made and the remaining challenges, but the process of drafting the VNR itself also assists States in building capacities necessary for the achievement of the SDGs and their targets. Thailand highly values the VNR as a process that helps States to take stock of their implementation of the SDGs and to identify the remaining challenges in moving forward.

Due to the importance that Thailand places on the VNR process, the country has conducted a VNR report on a yearly basis since our first VNR presentation at the HLPF in 2017. This year’s Thailand’s VNR will highlight the contribution of volunteerism in delivering sustainable development. Thailand also plans to present its VNR at the HLPF for the second time in 2021.
In this regard, the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) plays a key role in providing regional space for member States to discuss their VNRs, identify and exchange good practices, bridge concerted efforts of all stakeholders in the region, as well as to prepare for their review at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) later on in the year.

Thailand believes that future VNRs should reflect how each country addresses the socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 in the immediate term as well as the strategies to build back better in the longer term. The sharing of experiences, lessons learned and strategies on the COVID-19 response through the VNR process will be invaluable to all.

Multi-stakeholder engagement is crucial for sustainable development. The National Committee for Sustainable Development, chaired by the Prime Minister, has identified the private sector, the academia, the civil society organizations, and relevant international development agencies as vital associate development partners in the process of planning and implementing the SDGs under Thailand’s SDGs Roadmap. Everyone in the society has a role to play.

Thailand takes further note of the progress made in the implementation of the regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific, and commends the launch of ESCAP’s online SDG Help Desk, which will serve to advance South-South and trilateral cooperation and accelerate progress towards the SDGs within the region. It is crucial for ESCAP to continue to support member States’ pursuit of sustainable development through regional cooperation in the set priority areas. Thailand encourages ESCAP to study ways of integrating the VNR process into the SDG Help Desk platform to enhance knowledge sharing and encourage peer learning, based on whole-of-society and multi-stakeholder approaches.

Lastly, Thailand commends the close collaboration between ESCAP and ASEAN on the Plan of Action to Implement the Joint Declaration on Comprehensive Partnership between the ASEAN and the United Nations (2016-2020). Thailand encourages ESCAP to continue to inspire other regional commissions to forge close partnerships with regional and sub-regional organisations in their respective region to ensure effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda and to strengthen the links between national, regional and global follow-up to and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in an integrated manner.

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