

Why Facts and Think Tanks Matter: Focus on Building a Sustainable Future

Forum to launch the **2018 Global Go to Think Tank Index Report***

31 January 2019

10.30-12.00 MR A, UNCC, Bangkok

Co-organized by

UN ESCAP; ARTNeT; Chula Global Network, Chulalongkorn University; International Institute for Trade and Development and Mekong Institute.

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With the release of the 2018 rankings of think tanks around the world on January 30, more than 150 think tanks are sponsoring forums to discuss the role of think tanks in today's world where often the lines between "alternative" facts, and actual facts get blurred and fuzzy, so that policymaking by governments as well as decision making by producers, consumers, voters - simply all of us- becomes very difficult. Think tanks and policy institutes have a critical role in analyzing, developing, and promoting policy options, particularly in these times of disruption and change. In fact, the importance of think tanks and policy institutes has never been more than at present when these organizations operate in information-flooded societies where facts, evidence, and credible research are often ignored—and where "alternative facts" and "fake news" proliferate. To remain relevant and impactful, think tanks and policy institutes have to simultaneously and equally pursue relevance, rigour, innovation, accessibility, and accountability.

ESCAP is fortunate to be able to join forces and work with many think tanks and policy institutes at national, regional and international levels. With us today are three of such partners, Chula Global Network, International Institute for Trade and Development and Mekong Institute, the last two associated with ESCAP-led Asia-Pacific Research and Training Network - ARTNeT. We are all pleased to collaborate in this forum which also serves as the Bangkok launch of the Global Go To Think Tank Index 2018 Report rankings. Of course, we are all working towards improving our institutions' rankings in Go To Think Tank Reports and would like to thank those who spare time to cast their votes. The forum, in addition to discussing the role of think tanks and policy institutes in providing a public service of shifting through falsehood and truths, in being policy shapers, will in particular look at the role of "factfulness" in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Programme

10.30 - 10.35	Welcome	Mia Mikic, ARTNeT Coordinator/ Director, Trade, Investment and Innovation Division, ESCAP
10.35 – 11.35	<p><i>Round table discussion:</i></p> <p>Why Facts and Think Tanks Matter: Focus on Building a Sustainable Future</p> <p><i>Opening speech and moderating by:</i></p> <p>Hong Joo Hahm, Deputy Executive Secretary, ESCAP</p>	<p><i>Panelists:</i> Suthipand Chirathivat, Chula Global Network; Piyaporn Aeimtitawat, ITD Watcharas Leelawath, Mekong Institute; Surichai Wun'Gaeo, Chulalongkorn University; Gemma Van Halderen, Statistics Division, ESCAP; Mia Mikic, ARTNeT /ESCAP</p>
11.35 - 11.55	General discussion	Panelists and participants
11.55 – 12.00	Closing remarks	

Some of the questions and issues to be addressed by the panelists:

- What facts do we need to guide sustainable development?
- Are “statistics” facts? (Can we still say “Lies, Damned Lies and Statistics”?)
- Who -in addition to think tanks- should be responsible to critically evaluate data and facts being fed as evidence for policymaking? In this respect, are local and international think tanks playing the same role?
- What is the future role of think tanks amidst growing privatisation of public information which will have broad implications on policy decisions affecting human lives?
- What is the place of UN entities, such as ESCAP, among other think tanks?
- How important are international cooperation and knowledge partnerships for addressing the critical policy challenges in our pursuit of sustainable future?

We would like to take this opportunity to invite you to participate in the event and share your frank opinions on how to improve our activities. To register for the event please click:

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1BEf_qqELT6q-E_dfMHdQluUqwD_Grdj1

Co-organizers:

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) serves as the United Nations' regional hub promoting cooperation among countries to achieve inclusive and sustainable development. The largest regional intergovernmental platform with 53 Member States and 9 associate members, ESCAP has emerged as a strong regional thinktank offering countries sound analytical products that shed insights into the evolving economic, social and environmental dynamics of the region. The Commission's strategic focus is to deliver on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which is reinforced and deepened by promoting regional cooperation and integration to advance responses to shared vulnerabilities, connectivity, financial cooperation and market integration. ESCAP's research and analysis coupled with its policy advisory services, capacity building and technical assistance to governments aims to support countries' sustainable and inclusive development ambitions.

More information <http://www.unescap.org>

ARTNeT is an open regional network of research and academic institutions and think-tanks with a keen interest in addressing international trade and investment policy and facilitation issues in the context of sustainable development. The Secretariat — provided by the Trade, Investment and Innovation Division of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) — facilitates interactions and communications between policymakers and research institutions at the regional level. The Secretariat at the same time provides access to global trade-related institutions and other important stakeholders in trade and investment policymaking and research. Since 2018, ARTNeT has launched ARTNET on STI and ARTNeT FDI initiatives to bridge all key means of implementation (trade, investment and innovation) for the Sustainable Development Goals.

More information <https://artnet.unescap.org>

Chula Global Network (CGN) was established in 2009, with the aim of combining the various disciplines and aspects of knowledge within Chulalongkorn University and putting them to good use in order to serve as a platform and forum for the exchange and integration of expertise within the University and to provide support for curriculum development, teaching and research, the organization of meetings and academic services. The Network not only coordinates activities in the University, but also has the important mission of mobilizing the University's resources thus allowing it to be recognized internationally in terms of standards and the quality of its academic performance. Its mission is to promote the University's status as the source of creation, collection and dissemination of knowledge in area studies and to facilitate the study and analysis of key issues at a local and global levels. It seeks to support the production of high-quality graduates and to serve as the "Thai-Asian-World Educational Gateway".

More information <http://www20100324.chula.ac.th/chulaglobal>

The International Institute for Trade and Development (ITD), is a regional trade and development policy based institution (non-partisan, politically neutral) established in May 2002, as part of the UNCTAD 10th Session Meeting in Bangkok on 17 February, 2001. ITD's primary mission is to provide technical policy capacity building support and assistance in areas relating to promoting sustainable trade, investment and development policies to countries within the Asia-Pacific region under the United Nations SDG 2030 Goals. ITD's core activities include conducting regional training or workshops, regional public forums, commissioning research papers, organizing expert meetings through our network of regional and international experts. ITD collaborates with various international and regional development organizations (e.g. UNCTAD, WTO, ESCAP, UNDP, APEC, ASEAN, APO, BIMSTEC) and various governments in the region. ITD is also home to the Thailand's Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (or PECC) chapter since 2018.

More information <http://www.itd.or.th/about-us/background-of-itd>

Mekong Institute (MI) is an intergovernmental organization founded by the six member countries of the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS), namely Cambodia, P.R. China (Yunnan Province and Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region), Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam. We provide, implement and facilitate integrated human resource development, capacity building programs and development projects related to regional cooperation and integration. Managed by GMS national and international staff and supported by international academics, subject-matter experts and consultants, we work with and through various local government authorities, development partners and local organizations to deliver, implement standardized and customized learning programs, workshops, seminars, policy consultation, and research and development projects. MI goals and strategies support the GMS Cooperation Program and the ASEAN Economic Community, emphasizing enhanced physical connectivity in the GMS economic corridors and the realization of the GMS/AEC target of a single market and production base, equitable growth, and sustainable resource management. Currently, our programs and activities focus on three main thematic areas: Agricultural Development and Commercialization, Trade and Investment Facilitation, and Innovation and Technological Connectivity.

More information <http://www.mekonginstitute.org/who-we-are/about-mi>