

(Unofficial Translation)

Remarks by

His Excellency Gen. Prayut Chan-o-cha (Ret.), Prime Minister of Thailand,
at the Opening Ceremony of the 79th Session of the United Nations Economic and
Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)
on Monday, 15 May 2023, at ESCAP Hall, United Nations Conference Center, Bangkok

Madam Chair,

Madam Executive Secretary,

Distinguished Delegates,

1. I am honoured to take part once again, in this annual session of the ESCAP Commission, and I am pleased to learn that a large number of high-level representatives from Member States are attending the meeting here in Bangkok in person. This signifies readiness of countries to reconnect and resume close consultation on our region's priorities.

Distinguished Delegates,

2. Climate Change is a common challenge for all countries. It has caused compounding crises and affected our efforts toward post-COVID-19 recovery. Many areas across the Asia and Pacific region have faced climate-related disasters that are becoming more frequent and more severe. Climate change is hindering progress toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in the region.

3. Therefore, we need to scale up climate action and regional cooperation to strengthen our capacities in responding and adapting to climate change. This would enhance the resilience of communities and countries, and in turn create an enabling ecosystem for balanced, sustainable and inclusive growth. I would like to thank the ESCAP for the theme topic of this Commission Session to underscore the acceleration of climate action in the region.

4. On our part, Thailand embraces the Sufficiency Philosophy Economy as guidance for the country's development and climate action, which promotes resilience of our communities. Furthermore, we revised our Nationally Determined Contributions and Long-Term Low Emissions Development Strategies (LT-LEDS) to meet our climate targets to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050 and net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2065. Thailand supports cooperation in combating climate change at

the regional level which is key to solving this problem.

5. I wish to propose three priorities to support climate action in the region.

6. First, ESCAP's work should be in synergy with and complement other regional and sub-regional cooperation frameworks, such as the "Bangkok Goals on the Bio-Circular-Green Economy", which builds on the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy, Thailand's pathway towards sustainable development. The Bangkok Goals, adopted at the APEC Leaders' Summit in November last year, aim to create a more balanced and environmentally-friendly economic growth, which help accelerate the implementation of the SDGs in tandem with climate action.

7. Second, We should leverage science, technology and innovation in our climate actions. Thailand utilizes our earth observation satellite to monitor greenhouse gas emissions in the forestry sector, as well as to identify droughts and hotspots to avert fires and transboundary haze pollution. Thailand stands ready to elevate our cooperation through mechanisms at all levels, such as our consultations with neighboring countries in the Mekong sub-region to address PM 2.5 air pollution. Accurate data and information will help formulate policy-making decisions. Strengthening of multi-stakeholder cooperation will also enable us to tackle the problem in a more targeted and effective manner.

8. Third, health risk management and public health preparedness will help us minimise and adapt to the impacts of climate change. In this regard, it is important to implement the health aspects of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction to reduce the vulnerability of communities to climate and disasters risks. Through harnessing its expertise, the ESCAP is in an ideal position to bolster the region's strengths by enhancing the capacity of its Member States and supporting them in their implementation of the health aspects of the Sendai Framework.

Distinguished Delegates,

9. At this halfway point in implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals, we need to collectively review and expedite our actions to move forward the SDGs in all dimensions in an inclusive manner while leaving no one behind. This is our common aspiration under the Bangkok Declaration adopted last year on the occasion of the 75th Anniversary of ESCAP.

10. This year's Commission Session provides us with a good opportunity to reinforce regional cooperation on climate action, which is also a critical part of the SDGs. We hope that the outcomes from the session this week will be built upon at the SDG Summit and Climate Ambition Summit, during the 78th Session of the United Nations General Assembly this September so as to reflect locally-driven development approaches of countries and accelerate climate action in a concrete manner.

11. Despite the current political transition, sustainability will continue to be Thailand's top priority. This is the reason why Thailand presented our candidature to host the Specialised Expo 2028 in Phuket under the theme "Future of Life: Living in Harmony, Sharing Prosperity" to showcase practical solutions for sustainable development in Phuket, with a focus on eradicating social, public health and environmental disparities.

12. I would like to commend and lend my support to the ESCAP in promoting multi-stakeholder partnerships in the region. As host country and Member State of ESCAP, Thailand reaffirms its support of the constructive efforts of the ESCAP.

13. In closing, I wish to extend my best wishes to all participants today. I am convinced that the 79th Commission Session will be a success. At the same time, I sincerely hope that the warm hospitality of the Thai people will impress you during your stay.

Thank you and Sawasdee Krub.

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