

**Keynote Speech**

**by**

**H.E. Mr. Chaiwut Thanakamanusorn  
Minister of Digital Economy and Society  
Thailand**

**at the opening ceremony of  
the Fourth Session of Committee on Information and  
Communications Technology**

**30 August 2022, at 10.00 hrs.**

**UNCC, Bangkok**

**(10 minutes)**

**Excellencies,  
Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana  
Under-Secretary General of the United Nations and  
Executive Secretary of ESCAP,  
Distinguished delegates,  
Ladies and gentlemen,  
Good morning สวัสดีครับ**

On behalf of the Ministry of Digital Economy and Society of Thailand, it is my pleasure to address the Opening Remarks at the Fourth Session of the Committee on Information and Communications Technology, Science, Technology, and Innovation.

I would like to begin by extending my sincere appreciation toward the important work underway in this Committee and to Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana (อาร์มิดา ซัลเซียฮะฮ์ อาลีฮะฮ์บานา), Under-Secretary General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP, for your kind invitation.

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic delivered a global shock to our socio-economic systems and affected the quality of people's lives all over the world, leaving millions of lives lost and livelihoods destroyed. The pandemic also drove Member States to accelerate digital adoption at an unprecedented speed and scale.

With digital technologies becoming a focal part of all aspects of socioeconomic policy planning and process implementation, the Royal Thai Government as the case for many other governments have had to quickly adapt policies and regulatory frameworks in a more flexible way.

The key element to this new paradigm is the digital transformation process. It is not simply about providing access to digital connectivity, but also to find an optimal approach for an effective management through leveraging new techniques. One issue that Thailand is facing is the "digital divide"

Thailand has continued to reduce the digital divide through the Net Pracharat, Village Broadband Internet project, which provides access to fixed broadband internet to over 24,700 villages throughout the country. In addition to mobile broadband coverage, this has allowed Thai people to have an internet penetration ratio of 85 percent.

With over 68 percent of the population buying some items online weekly, Thai people are also at the forefront in e-commerce, and over 75 percent have access to mobile banking.

However, with increased access to the internet, there is also an increase in cyber-related crimes. Thailand has therefore issued three new legislations, which are the cybercrime act, the personal data protection act, and the digital assets act, which all aim to help regulate this new shift toward digitalization.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I believe that the Fourth Session of the Committee will provide us with a unique platform to agree on coordinated policy responses across Asia and the Pacific.

The Committee will discuss how Asia-Pacific countries will use digital transformation as a new opportunity to promote the productivity of industries and the competitiveness of nations. Digital transformation, therefore, provides people with improved services and new societal values and demands.

I fully support the ESCAP initiatives which emphasize digital cooperation among Member States, and the call of the Executive Secretary to strengthen digital cooperation for accelerating digital transformation through regional cooperative platforms such as the Action Plan 2022-2026 of the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway Initiative.

In addition, I call on members and associate members of ESCAP and regional organizations to continue working together and support the AP-IS initiative for effective digital transformation in this region.

Once again, I would like to thank ESCAP for organizing this important meeting. I am confident that by all of us working in partnership, for the greater common good, the Asia-Pacific region will continue to rise as a global leader in technological innovation.

With this, I wish you all great success.

Thank you.

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