

(Unofficial Translation)

Special Remarks

**by His Excellency Gen. Prayut Chan-o-cha (Ret.), Prime Minister of Thailand,
at the Opening Ceremony of the 78th session of the United Nations
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)
and in commemoration of the 75th anniversary of ESCAP
on Monday, 23 May 2022,
at ESCAP Hall, United Nations Conference Center, Bangkok**

Mr. Chair,

President of the United Nations General Assembly,

President of the United Nations Economic and Social Council,

**Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of the United Nations
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific,**

Excellencies and Distinguished Participants,

1. I am honoured to take part in this seventy-eighth session of the Commission, and I am delighted that high-level representatives from Member States and the United Nations are here in person for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic struck. Most importantly, this session marks the 75th anniversary of the establishment of ESCAP.
2. Looking back to 1947, ESCAP was founded in the midst of efforts by countries in the region to rise from ashes of war and pursue their development with the hope of lasting peace. When ESCAP relocated to Bangkok in 1949, the Royal Thai Government offered the “Sala Santitham” or “Hall of Peace” to ESCAP to be used as an office building, reflecting the importance of the United Nations and ESCAP in fostering dialogue and cooperation among nations to uphold peace and promote inclusive development in the region.
3. Today, the world and the region are once again confronted with various pressing challenges, which are more diverse and complex. The COVID-19 pandemic remains a grave threat, and its widescale impacts have exacerbated the disparity within and among countries. Efforts to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have been stalled. In addition, the worsening of the crises of the environment, climate change and energy have the potential to severely impact future generations if not swiftly addressed. At the same time, the hard-won peace that we have cherished is on the brink of crumbling if we do not engage in dialogue and work hand in hand.
4. I wish to reaffirm that Thailand is steadfast in our confidence in and commitment to multilateralism, the United Nations and ESCAP just as we have always been throughout our 75 years of membership in the United Nations. The efficiency and effectiveness of the United Nations and ESCAP is crucial, now more than ever, to help us navigate the immense challenges of the present and future.

5. Looking forward, as we transition from post-COVID-19 recovery to sustainable development in the region in the “Next Normal” era, we should emphasize on three aspects of growth, namely – balanced growth, resilient growth, and comprehensive and inclusive growth. It is our common agenda to build a region, a world and a future that are secure for everyone while leaving no one behind.
6. First, balanced growth can be achieved through transformative changes towards development that is environmentally friendly, climate responsive and adaptive, such as promoting clean energy and circular economy, including addressing plastic pollution, as well as promoting investment in green infrastructures. These actions lead to the reduction of greenhouse gases, efficient use of limited resources, including the restoration and conservation of natural resources, and the promotion of their sustainable use.
7. Second, we must build resilient growth by strengthening the capacities to handle external shocks such as emerging diseases and disasters, especially for vulnerable groups. Human security is key. This can be achieved through Universal Health Coverage, accessible, strong and inclusive social protection systems, as well as the effective implementation of the health aspects of the Sendai Framework.
8. Third, comprehensive and inclusive growth require promoting inclusive connectivity in all dimensions. We must facilitate trade and investment and strengthen regional and global supply chains. Importantly, in the 4IR era, we must seek transformative changes in the development and apply science, digital technology, and innovations to drive forward regional economy, especially digital technology which has inevitably become an essential part of our lives to expand opportunities for all. In this regard, essential digital infrastructures and industries, as well as the promotion of MSMEs and start-ups are of utmost importance.
9. Yet, these efforts will be futile if we neglect the most important resource – people. Human development, especially for our children and youth, including lifelong learning through all forms of education and skills training are key to driving forward sustainable growth with the engagement of all sectors in the society.

Distinguished Participants,

10. Thailand has adhered to these three aspects of growth in our national development and in shifting to the “Next Normal” era. The Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP) remains at the heart of our development with the BCG Economy Model as our sustainable development pathway from this time onwards. As well, Thailand looks to a post-COVID-19 Asia-Pacific region that is open, connected, and balanced which are the cornerstones of Thailand’s hosting of the APEC this year.

11. Thailand's Eastern Economic Corridor or the EEC promotes and supports the development of low-carbon industries, as well as fosters diverse, connected, and robust regional supply chains in industries of the future such as electric vehicles or EVs. Thailand strives to be a world class EV manufacturing base, and we are pursuing our target of increasing the production of EVs by 30 per cent of total domestic vehicle production by 2030. In addition, the "Thailand Digital Valley" within the Eastern Economic Corridor of Innovation (EECI) is promoting the development of digital businesses that have the potential to expand regionally.
12. Furthermore, Thailand has been promoting access to essential public services and expanding its coverage to all groups, including migrant workers, under the Universal Health Coverage scheme. This has helped us cope with the pandemic effectively, and has contributed to Thailand being placed fifth in the world and first in Asia for health security according to the Global Health Security Index. Thailand stands ready to work with the international community to the best of our abilities to strengthen global public health security.

Distinguished Participants,

13. Achieving this common agenda is easier said than done. But I trust that ESCAP can play an integral role in enhancing cooperation among Member States and the various sectors in the region. ESCAP is also in an ideal position to collect and disseminate knowledge and best practices, as well as mobilize the necessary resources to accomplish our collective goals.
14. Thailand sees ESCAP as the think tank of the region, and wishes to see ESCAP develop its potential into an organisation that harnesses its wealth of knowledge and expertise, as well as innovation and new digital technologies, to strategically forecast and provide timely warning to countries in the region of possible future crises. The science-based forecast of such crises will more effectively build resilience of Member States and the region, thereby allowing them to better prepare and respond to crises.
15. I wish to reaffirm Thailand's commitment to support the work of ESCAP and our readiness to be a constructive partner in achieving our common agenda for the well-being of all generations. This is our common responsibility.
16. In closing, I wish to congratulate ESCAP in its 75th anniversary and to welcome all delegates to Thailand. I sincerely hope the renowned smiles and warm hospitality of the Thai people will impress you during your stay.

Thank you and Sawasdee Krub.
