

Opening Statement

By

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Minister of Energy of the Kingdom of Thailand**

At

**The 72nd Commission Session of the Economic and Social Commission
of Asia and the Pacific – ESCAP**

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Excellencies,

Executive Secretary,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. It is my pleasure to welcome you to day on behalf of His Excellency General Prayut Chan-o-cha, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand, at the opening of the 72nd session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific today.

2. This year's theme topic is timely and of great significance to all member states of ESCAP. Science, technology and innovation known as STI are indeed a key enabling factor for sustainable development. They cut across most issues of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The question is how can we ensure STI development?

3. As governments, we need to ensure an ecosystem that supports STI. We need an educational system that can produce human resources that can work in STI. We need to promote talent mobility to move human resources between governmental and business sectors so they can learn more from one another. R&D products must not remain on academic shelves, but must be commercialized for the market, for practical use and for development. We need policy framework that encourages STI. We need to invest money in STI development. We need public and private partnership in making STI work for development.

4. In education and human resources development, leveraging STI in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda will not be possible without

streamlining STI into national human resources development strategies. Both are mutually reinforcing and lead to a beneficial circle of economic growth and sustainable development. My government has increased its budget for education, particularly Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics or *STEM* education, at all levels in order to cope with the increasing demand for human resources in STI.

5. On policy framework, Thailand is set to become an innovation-driven economy. In April 2012, the first 10-year national STI policy and plan was announced. This master plan was designed to address the economic, social, and environmental challenges, in which STI could play a significant part in their solutions. By the end of the Master Plan, we hope that the amount of R&D investment will have increased to 1% of the GDP, with the private sector's contribution amounting to 70% of such investment.

6. On public and private partnership, my government aims to build a robust STI ecosystem through public-private-people partnership, which is called ประชากริฐ (Pracharat) in our Thai language. With a focus extended to 'the people', this "4P" is expected to enhance STI governance and management, stimulate innovation efforts, and upgrade the education system. The government provides incentives for industry to invest in R&D and innovation as well as offer support for SMEs and startups. The Food Innopolis mega-project, for example, is a pilot collaboration project between the Ministry of Science and Technology and the private sector. This project is aimed at promoting Thailand as the central hub for food related research and development, stressing its role as the Kitchen of the World. We have invested in world-class facilities at the Thailand Science Park in Bangkok. Today it is ready to accommodate food product research and innovative activities by domestic and international firms.

**Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

7. Allow me to cite a few examples of on how Thailand has used STI to serve our developmental purposes. Thailand is making the most out of

today's rapid digital advancement to improve the well-being of the Thai citizens. Digital economy will serve as a basis in the enhancement of performance of other economic and social activities in the country, including retail business promotion, healthcare and education.

8. Another good example is the Thai government's plan to make use of STI to improve the nationwide financial infrastructure. The 'National e-Payment Master Plan' was recently introduced to streamline and develop the national electronic payment platform. This new system helps reduce transaction costs and increase security and transparency. At the same time, the government is able to compile population-specific information, so that social benefits become more targeted. As a result, better social infrastructure will be achieved.

9. Thailand has introduced several initiatives in the use of STI, including climate change adaptation, and disaster risk reduction. Techniques include telemetry system to receive water and weather-related information, management of excess water for relief of flood and drought, integrated farming, agroforestry, and S&T for planning crop calendar and land reform.

10. Also, the ICT Foundation and Fund under the royal patronage of Her Royal Highness Princess MahaChakriSirindhorn has used ICT to help the disadvantaged, particularly rural school children, sick children in hospitals, prison inmates, and persons with disabilities. The role of ICT comes in the form of rehabilitation engineering and technology. They enable independent daily living and increase employment opportunities.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

11. As we know, not all countries are equipped with STI capacity. For many developing countries, STI though recognized as a necessity, is still in fact a luxury. Challenges of the STI gap and the digital divide are still prevalent. That is why countries in Asia and the Pacific must seek to step



up cooperation to close the STI gap and the digital divide. We must learn from one another. And we must help each other.

12. For our part, Thailand is ready to share these responsibilities. For example, in disaster risk reduction, our Ministry of Science and Technology's Hydro and Agro Informatics Institute (HAI) recently signed a Statement of Cooperation on Science and Technology for Disaster Risk Reduction with UNISDR. It aims to promote the application of STI in the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. This partnership focuses on fostering coherence and linkages between climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction and sustainable livelihoods at the community level and beyond.

13. On a final note, let me say that, during our journey towards sustainable development, our strength will come from tackling common challenges together and making use of shared knowledge and know-how. STI must be shared for the benefits of humanity, the environment and the planet.

14. I thank you for your kind attention and I wish you all a constructive and successful conference.

