

Opening Remarks
by
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at the Meeting on ASEAN Way Forward for SDGs and COP21
thru Social and Sustainability Sciences
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Pathumwan Princess Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand

Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am delighted to be with all of you today at this significant gathering. First of all, let me welcome you all to Bangkok and to the Meeting on ASEAN Way Forward for SDGs and COP21 thru Social and Sustainability Sciences. This meeting demonstrates our effort to kick-off one of the projects under Sub Goal 5 of the ASEAN Work Plan on Education (2016-2020) which was endorsed by the ASEAN Ministers of Education in May 2016. It also emphasizes ASEAN efforts in supporting the United Nations post-2015 development agenda and UNESCO Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The project's goal is to establish an ASEAN scholars' network on social and sustainability sciences. The said network will consist of policy makers, scholars, and experts in the areas of science and technology, natural sciences, and social sciences. Not only does it facilitate knowledge exchange, cross-disciplinary learning and collaborative policy-relevant research, but it will also bridge academic gaps between different disciplines. Additionally, this network will allow policy makers and academia in ASEAN Plus Three countries to collaborate and work as a team, the ASEAN Team.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The SDGs cover various issues, for instance, climate change, energy, urbanization, poverty reduction, agriculture and rural development. These issues are, by nature, interdisciplinary and complex. Let me cite Thailand as an example.

There has been an attempt to construct the coal power plant in Thailand. On the one hand, this power plant will ensure energy security and economic development in the southern part of Thailand. On the other hand, it may cause air pollution, affect marine biodiversity, and distort people lifestyle. So, the power plant construction is considered not only its involvement with technology and economic development but also engaging with the elements of public policy, sustainable lifestyle, and biodiversity.

Addressing the complexity of the SDGs issue truly requires support from the education sector, particularly higher education. However, the limitation of resources does not allow the education sector to deal with every SDGs issue at once, particularly on the ASEAN Plus Three scale. Thailand, therefore, has decided to tackle this challenge by identifying four priority issues that ASEAN should address in the period of the ASEAN Work Plan on Education. They are 1) health and risk management, 2) urban life, sustainable city, and people mobility, 3) energy and transformative change, and 4) agri-food systems, rural sustainability, and green

consumption. However, additional ideas and proposals are also most welcome. We will have time to discuss these issues and opportunities for partnership in the next two days.

I would like to conclude my remarks by expressing my sincere gratitude to all delegates for sparing your time to be with us. My appreciation also goes to the ASEAN Secretariat and all the speakers for their kind support and contributions. Last but not least, I would like to thank Chulalongkorn University and UNESCO Bangkok for co-hosting the meeting, and to the Philippines for being a co-leading country of this project. I look forward to a constructive discussion and expect to see concrete outputs from the meeting.

Thank you