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Thailand and CICA:

Advancing Peace, Stability and Prosperity through Confidence-Building Measures

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In today's globalised and interdependent world, states increasingly cooperate and participate through various international frameworks, designed to address shared challenges and promote common interests. These cooperative platforms can be in the form of formal international organisations such as the United Nations or Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), established through binding international treaties and governed by permanent institutions. Alongside these full-fledged international organisations, more flexible and issue-specific mechanisms have emerged to encourage cooperation without entanglements of formal treaties. One

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such framework is the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA).

CICA as a platform for peace and cooperation in Asia

Founded in 1992 at the initiative of Nursultan Nazarbayev, the first President of Kazakhstan, CICA is a multilateral and intergovernmental forum aimed at building trust and promoting peace, security, and stability across the Asian continent. Its establishment followed the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, a period during which newly independent states, including the five Central Asian nations, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, emerged and faced significant challenges in consolidating their sovereignty and stability. Recognizing the need for a regional framework that encourages dialogue and cooperation to ensure peace, security and stability in Asia, President Nazarbayev proposed on 5 October 1992 during the 47th Session of the United Nations General Assembly for the establishment of CICA.

CICA serves as a platform where countries, large or small, can work together to address both traditional and non-traditional security challenges. Currently, CICA comprises 28 Member States, representing nearly 90 percent of Asia's territory and population. Its membership reflects the continent's vast diversity and includes Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Egypt, India, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, the Kyrgyz Republic, Mongolia, Pakistan, Palestine, Qatar, Korea, Russia, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Thailand, Türkiye, the United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan and Viet Nam. This diverse composition underscores Asia's complexity as a continent of multiple civilisations, political systems, and development trajectories. Consequently, the establishment of CICA reflects the recognition of the need for a regional cooperative framework that promotes dialogue, mutual understanding and

confidence-building among states, which is an essential foundation for lasting peace, security and stability across Asia.

The key driver of cooperation among CICA's Member States lies in the Catalogue of Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs), CICA's primary operational mechanism for translating political dialogue into practical action. Serving as a comprehensive blueprint for cooperation, the CBMs guide Member States in implementing initiatives that enhance transparency, predictability and collaboration across diverse areas of mutual interest. Structured around five dimensions, economic, environmental, human, military-political and new challenges and threats, the Catalogue embodies a holistic approach to security that extends beyond traditional military concerns to encompass socio-economic and human development. Each dimension is coordinated by one or more Member States that voluntarily assume leadership in designing and implementing activities such as training programmes, workshops, technical exchanges and joint research projects. This participatory mechanism enables Member States to contribute according to their capacities and strengths, fosters cross-sectoral cooperation, and reinforces the principle of shared ownership in regional peacebuilding. The flexible design of CICA's CBMs also allows adaptation to emerging regional challenges such as climate change, cybersecurity, terrorism, and health security, making CICA a dynamic framework that evolves with Asia's complex and rapidly changing context.

Thailand's Constructive and Proactive Role in CICA

At the second meeting of CICA Ministers of Foreign Affairs on 22 October 2004, Thailand was officially admitted as the 17th Member State of CICA, reaffirming its commitment to regional peace, dialogue, and multilateral cooperation in Asia. Thailand's accession reflected its broader foreign policy objective of strengthening engagement with Asia's emerging regional architectures

beyond ASEAN, particularly in Central Asia, a region of growing strategic and economic significance. Since then, Thailand has remained an active and constructive participant, serving as coordinator and co-coordinator in the priority areas of sustainable development and SMEs development under CICA's CBMs environmental and economic dimensions, respectively. By assuming these leadership roles, Thailand has diligently engaged with CICA Member States through its pragmatic and partnership-based diplomacy in training programmes, workshops, seminars and technical cooperation projects.

Under the priority area of sustainable development, Thailand's firm commitment is clearly demonstrated. On 19 April 2023, the CICA Senior Officials Committee, one of the Conference's key decision-making bodies, adopted the Concept Paper on CICA's CBMs in the Area of Sustainable Development, which was proposed by Thailand. This milestone document has since served as a roadmap for CICA's activities and projects in sustainable development, reflecting Thailand's vision of linking environmental protection with inclusive economic growth to promote peace and prosperity in Asia. Thailand's implementation of CICA's CBMs initiatives draws upon its homegrown development models, the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP) and the Bio-Circular-Green (BCG) Economy Model, as practical tools to help achieve the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals. Over the past five years (2021 - 2025), the Thailand International Cooperation Agency (TICA), under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, together with the Royal Thai Embassy in Astana, has initiated and implemented several workshops, online training programmes and in-person study visits designed to share best practices in sustainable community development, waste management, sustainable tourism, circular economy and climate resilience, thereby making substantive contributions to long-term environmental security and sustainable growth across Asia.

Within the priority area of SMEs development under CICA's CBMs economic dimension where Thailand serves as the co-coordinator, the emphasis has been placed on empowering entrepreneurs, enhancing digital competitiveness, and fostering inclusive economic growth among CICA Member States. One recent milestone was the organisation of the Seminar on Women's Role and Contribution to SMEs Development in CICA Member States, held in Bangkok in August 2025. The event brought together representatives from more than 15 Member States, providing a platform for women entrepreneurs to share best practices, exchange experiences, and explore initiative approaches for SMEs development among CICA Member States. The Seminar is a visible manifestation of Thailand's dedication and commitment to advancing prosperity and partnership across Asia through the CICA's CBMs. Table 1 highlights Thailand's contributions in voluntarily organizing a wide range of activities, reflecting the country's strong commitment to cooperation and partnership with CICA Member States through its role as coordinator and co-coordinator in CICA's CBMs economic and environmental dimensions.

Table 1 Thailand-led and Thailand-hosted sustainable development and SMEs development initiatives from 2021 to 2025

Year	Event	Main Focus/Theme
2021	Online Training Course on Sustainable Community Development Applying Sufficiency Economy Philosophy from Theory to Practice (organised by TICA on 20-27 September 2021)	Applying Thailand's SEP to community-based sustainable development (as part of CICA's CBMs environmental dimension)
2022	Online Seminar on Sufficiency Economy in Microfinance for SMEs Development (organised by TICA on 22 August to 2 September 2022)	Applying Thailand's SEP to microfinance & SME growth (as part of CICA's CBMs economic dimension)
	Online Training Course on Sustainable Waste Management in a Circular Economy (organised by TICA on 3 to 22 November 2022)	Applying Thailand's BCG Economy Model to waste management and circular economy practices (as part of CICA's CBMs environmental and economic dimensions)

2023	Online Training Course on BCG Immunisation for Tourism Industry: Features, Insights and Perspectives for the New Era in CICA Countries (organised by TICA on 7-11 and 14-16 August 2023)	Applying Thailand's BCG Economy Model to strengthen sustainable and resilient tourism (as part of CICA's CBMs environmental and economic dimensions)
2024	Online training course on Sustainable Creative & Responsible Tourism Development based on BCG Model for CICA Countries (organised by TICA on 3-14 June 2024)	Applying Thailand's BCG Economy Model to sustainable tourism and creative industries (as part of CICA's CBMs environmental and economic dimensions)
	In-person Project of Promoting Sustainable Development between Thailand, Central Asian Countries, and the CICA Secretariat (organised by the Royal Thai Embassy in Astana on 19 - 30 June 2024)	Knowledge sharing on eco-tourism, food security, green energy, reforestation (as part of CICA's CBMs environmental dimension)

2025	In-person International Seminar on Women's Role and Contribution to SMEs Development among CICA Member States (organised by the Royal Thai Embassy in Astana on 1 - 10 August 2025)	Women's entrepreneurship, integration of Thailand's BCG Economy Model into SMEs development (as part of CICA's CBMs economic dimension)
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Thailand's Strategic Gains from Active Engagement in CICA Framework

Being a proactive CICA Member State, consistently participating in the CICA mechanisms, and taking an active leadership role in sustainable development and SMEs development priority areas, where Thailand has demonstrated strong expertise, can be highly beneficial for Thailand in several ways. One of the most distinct benefits is the recognition that Thailand gains as a policy leader in translating global agendas, particularly the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals into practical regional cooperation. By applying national development models, SEP and BCG Economy Model, as key instruments for partnership with CICA Member States, Thailand has enhanced its international image as a constructive, development-oriented country committed to promote peace and prosperity, rather than engaging in power competition. Another key advantage of Thailand's participation in CICA is the opportunity to showcase its national homegrown development models, SEP and BCG Economy Model, as adaptable tools and practical approaches for achieving sustainable development, balanced growth, poverty eradication and environmental sustainability. By sharing SEP and BCG Economy Model within CICA's CBMs framework, Thailand enhances its position as a source of knowledge and technical cooperation in Asia.

Moreover, Thailand's engagement in CICA has enabled the country to strengthen its relations with CICA Member States, particularly with Kazakhstan, the founder of CICA and host of its Secretariat. Through various initiatives under CICA's CBMs, Thailand has reaffirmed its commitment to supporting Kazakhstan's vision of a stable, interconnected, and prosperous Asia, thereby deepening bilateral ties and reinforcing its image as a trusted and constructive partner in advancing regional peace and prosperity. This engagement also provides Thailand with an opportunity to advance its national interests bilaterally with Kazakhstan and other CICA Member States, while gaining broader support within other multilateral frameworks. Through these interactions, Thailand enhances its diplomatic visibility in Central Asia, positioning itself as a bridge between Southeast Asia and the broader Eurasian region. Such active participation not only strengthens mutual trust but also underscores Thailand's development-oriented diplomacy. Furthermore, with major and middle powers such as China, India, Iran, Russia, and Türkiye among CICA's Member States, Thailand benefits from the platform as a valuable venue to articulate its positions on key regional and global issues while advancing agendas that align with its national interests at the international level.

Ways Forward for Thailand's Role in CICA

Thailand can continue to advance cooperation among CICA Member States by applying its extensive experience in sustainable development and SME promotion, sharing best practices in green innovation, circular economy, eco-tourism, renewable energy and waste management through the SEP and BCG Economy Model. Since 2003, more than 35 SEP projects have been implemented in over 20 countries across Asia, the Pacific, and Africa, from the Kyrgyz Republic to Timor-Leste and from Mozambique to the Solomon Islands. SEP has been translated into action

in these countries by promoting self-reliance and community-driven development while conserving local knowledge and wisdom. This has been achieved through two key approaches: the establishment of SEP Learning Centres that serve as comprehensive databases and community learning hubs with designated experts providing technical guidance, and the development of SEP Sustainable Communities that serve as role models for balanced and inclusive development.

In Asia, successful SEP initiatives exemplifying Thailand's practical leadership include the Learning Centres for Sustainable Development in Agriculture at Dongkhamxang Agricultural Technical School and Khammouane Technical-Vocational College in the Lao PDR, which promote sustainable agriculture and vocational training. The "Sufficiency Economy Village for Sustainable Development" in Koh Kong, Cambodia, emphasises eco-tourism and community livelihoods, while the Model SEP Village in Hera, Timor-Leste, focuses on sustainable agricultural products that ensure food security and self-reliance. In Bhutan, SEP principles have guided the development of community products through the localisation of Thailand's One Tambon One Product (OTOP) initiative into the One Gewog One Product (OGOP) scheme in Haa and Tsirang Districts, supporting organic farming and rural entrepreneurship in line with Bhutan's Gross National Happiness philosophy. Similarly, in Indonesia, SEP-based programmes have strengthened ecological agriculture, integrated farming and sustainable rural education, empowerment, and development. These examples illustrate how Thailand's homegrown development models can be effectively adapted across diverse national contexts, offering valuable insights for future CICA cooperation on sustainable and inclusive growth.

SMEs development presents a significant opportunity for Thailand's cooperation with CICA Member States. SMEs are the backbone of national and regional economies across Asia,

including within the CICA framework, where they serve as vital engines of growth, employment, and innovation, providing livelihoods for millions, fostering entrepreneurship, and contributing substantially to GDP. In Thailand, SMEs account for about 99.5 percent of all registered firms, contribute approximately 35.3 percent of the country's GDP, and employ 69.5 percent of the national workforce, underscoring their crucial role in job creation and economic vitality. To further advance Thailand's role in promoting collaboration among CICA Member States in SME development, Thailand can build on the success of the August 2025 Seminar on Women's Role and Contribution to SMEs Development and link it with successful initiatives such as the UN Women-supported We RISE Together programme and the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs), which promote gender-inclusive business environments and policy design supporting women's entrepreneurship as a pathway to sustainable economic growth among CICA Member States. Another initiative is to draw on Thailand's One Tambon One Product (OTOP) model as a proven approach for empowering SMEs and local producers through training, branding, and export promotion. Likewise, the Bank of Thailand's Green Finance for SMEs initiative, which encourages SMEs to adopt sustainable business practices and low-carbon operations through preferential loans, technical assistance, and financial incentives for investments in renewable energy, resource efficiency and cleaner technologies, provides another promising avenue for Thailand's contributive role under CICA's CBMs.

Although Thailand does not lead in CICA's CBMs human dimension, the country can offer valuable expertise in health diplomacy and public health capacity-building. Thailand's Universal Health Coverage scheme, introduced in 2002, is globally recognised as a successful model among developing nations, providing equitable healthcare access to over 99 percent of the population. Anchored in a strong primary healthcare system and supported by more than one million village

health volunteers, it demonstrates how community participation and decentralised management can ensure inclusive and sustainable healthcare. These experiences, together with Thailand's ongoing efforts in hospital management, pandemic preparedness, and occupational health present practical areas for cooperation with CICA Member States. Thailand's model shows that investing in universal and community-based healthcare not only strengthens human security but also advances peace, stability, and prosperity across Asia, fully reflecting the founding principles of CICA.

Conclusion

Thailand's active participation in the CICA demonstrates its unwavering commitment to advancing peace, stability and prosperity across Asia. Since joining CICA in 2004, Thailand has evolved into a proactive and constructive partner, leveraging its roles as CICA's CBMs coordinator for sustainable development and co-coordinator for SMEs development to translate CICA's vision into tangible cooperation. Through the application of Thailand's homegrown development models, SEP and BCG Economy Model, Thailand has offered practical pathways toward achieving the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, emphasising balance between economic progress, environmental protection, and social well-being. Its initiatives, ranging from sustainable community projects in Lao PDR, Cambodia, Timor-Leste, Bhutan, and Indonesia to the empowerment of women-led SMEs among CICA Member States through the 2025 Bangkok Seminar, have positioned Thailand as a regional leader in promoting inclusive and sustainable growth. Moreover, Thailand's engagement in CICA plays a vital role in strengthening its bilateral partnership with Kazakhstan, the organisation's founding country, and helps enhance its relations with other Member States, while also underscores its role as a bridge between Southeast Asia, Central Asia and beyond. Thailand's health diplomacy, particularly its globally recognised

Universal Health Coverage model, further enriches CICA's human dimension by offering best practices in public health resilience and community-based security. Moving forward, as CICA progresses toward becoming a full-fledged international organisation, Thailand's active engagement, expertise, and collaborative spirit will continue to advance cooperation and foster regional trust. By aligning its national strengths through various initiatives under CICA's CBMs, Thailand reaffirms its enduring commitment to fostering dialogue, mutual understanding, and shared development, which are essential foundations for building a peaceful, stable and prosperous Asia.

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