

**Opening Remarks by  
H.E. Mr. Don Pramudwinai  
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand  
at the 4<sup>th</sup> High-Level Brainstorming Dialogue on Enhancing  
Complementarities between the ASEAN Community Vision 2025  
and the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development  
Thursday, 4 June 2020 at 14.00 hrs. (Video Conference)**

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Good afternoon to you all.

May I start by extending my greetings to all present from different sides.

Madame Co-Chair, Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Executive Secretary of ESCAP,

His Excellency Dato Lim Jock Hoi, Secretary-General of ASEAN,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. Welcome to the 4<sup>th</sup> HLBD, the High-Level Brainstorming Dialogue on Enhancing Complementarities between the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. And thank you for your continued support, which reaffirms our shared commitment to promoting synergies between regional and global SDG efforts under the “**Complementarities Initiative**”.

2. I certainly would also like to express my appreciation to my Co-Chair, Madame Executive Secretary, and her team from ESCAP for the excellent collaboration in co-organising this Dialogue. Your unwavering support is indispensable to further strengthening the ASEAN-UN partnership for sustainable development.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

3. The **SDG Decade of Action** began amidst the COVID-19 outbreak. The pandemic is taking a heavy toll on our economies, societies, and peoples’ well-being. The ADB, in its report in April 2020, projected that, this year, **Southeast Asia** will post a **GDP growth rate** of only **1 per cent**; and according to the World Bank, an additional **11 million people will fall into poverty** in the East Asia and Pacific region.

4. A world statesman once said, “Never let a good crisis go to waste.” We must therefore work together to **turn the challenges of COVID-19 into opportunities to rethink our development path and chart the course for the realisation of the SDGs**. Doing this will also **shape the future directions of the HLBD** forum, where we could start with “**what**” and then we go forward by “**how**”. Now, I will start with the “**what**” question first by highlighting three important elements.

5. **First is truly putting a focus on the people’s well-being.** We need to further strengthen **regional and global public health cooperation** to facilitate immediate and effective COVID-19 response, and increase resilience to future public health emergencies. This includes investing in Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and R&D of vaccines and medicines which, once available, should be **global public goods**, accessible to all and at an affordable price. ASEAN is also in the process of establishing the **COVID-19 ASEAN Response Fund**, for which we welcome support from our external partners.

6. To ensure good health and well-being, we also need to enhance **food security**. ASEAN should harness its clear strengths in the areas of agriculture and food production to become a “**food hub**” for peoples in the region and other parts of the world.

7. **Second is “promoting human capital development”**-- simply because people are the keys to development in all aspects. We should therefore promote **quality education** that produces knowledgeable and understanding individuals. We also need to promote **STI, enhance digital literacy** and **ensure a skilled and competitive work force** to meet the changing demands of the labour market, especially the internet-based economy.

8. **And third is “finding a balance between economic and social development and environmental impact”**. ASEAN must continue its efforts to promote **sustainable and green economies in tandem with human security**, whether in terms of health, education, livelihood or the digital sphere. Furthermore, we should encourage the exchange of **homegrown development philosophies and approaches** to promoting sustainable development. The **Sufficiency Economy Philosophy**, or **SEP** in short, which prioritises moderation, reasonableness and self-immunity, can be **an alternative approach** to promoting **sustainable socio-economic development** in ASEAN and building **regional resilience** against future challenges and disruptions. A “**culture of caring and sharing**” should also be cultivated to ensure that no one is left behind.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

9. With only ten years left, we must have a **clear game plan or** a workplan, if you like, to accelerate implementation of the SDGs. This is where the HLBD comes in. Allow me to suggest now the “**how**”.

10. We can start by **compiling best practices** corresponding to each priority area of cooperation under the **Complementarities Roadmap** and seek to translate them into concrete projects. This could be done in the first two years, supported by the ACSDS and other relevant ASEAN Centres. After that, we should **monitor and evaluate** each project to identify gaps along the way. In the context of timeline, a **mid-term review** could be done in 2025, which coincides with the conclusion of the Roadmap and the ASEAN Community Vision. This process will help identify what we should do more to step up our efforts towards the SDGs. And in the final year of the UN 2030 Agenda, we can summarise what we have achieved and what we should continue to work on. Success stories and lessons learned could become **practical development models** that contribute to a sustainable future for ASEAN. And this is what I believe can be the **legacy of the HLBD**. The time for **implementation** is now, beginning with this 4<sup>th</sup> HLBD.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

11. The road to sustainability is long and challenging, and COVID-19 may be making it more difficult. But there is no way back for us now. Instead, we must continue forward on this road together with the **SDGs as our beacon**, guiding us in the right direction and keeping us on the right track.

12. And so we go forward in a **comprehensive and multi-stakeholder partnership**, with public, private, people as well as South-South and Triangular cooperation. All are crucial for advancing our progress on the SDGs. And as the **ASEAN Coordinator on Sustainable Development Cooperation**, Thailand is ready to work with you all in this endeavour.

13. A cliché has it that, “*None of us is as smart as all of us.*” This has reminded me of Henry Ford’s quote which is most fitting for us today, this is how it goes,

*“Coming together is a beginning, keeping together is progress, working together is success.”*

Pouring our hearts and minds together is a happy fulfillment. Let the HLBD start fulfilling our dreams and achievements.

14. I thank you.

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