

Thailand Intervention

Dr. Pichet Durongkaveroj

**Secretary General, Thailand National Science Technology and Innovation
Policy Office**

12 May 2014

Thank you Mr. Chair and thank you CSTD for inviting me to this important meeting. Having heard this morning the distinguished panel speakers and interventions, confirmed a few beliefs I have had while raising a number of questions that can be complex given the different local contexts we are operating in.

Coming from science, technology, and innovation policy office, I can be a witness to the morning comment that STI is more often than not forgotten or neglected when national agenda or mega projects are discussed or planned. It is thus important if not critical that we as policy planners must look for and hang on to the “strategic linkages”

In the case of Thailand, we currently must connect to the so-called “Country Strategy” which comprises 3 pillars of growth namely competitive growth, inclusive growth, and green growth. Fortunately, our own STI 10-year plan was well-designed prior to the country strategy and can easily be incorporated in these growth models and more. For example, we can be competitive through STI only if we prioritize our real sectors inclusive of agriculture for which one-third of the population are farmers, service sector for which we are quite good as a hospitality and tourism destination, and industrial sector for which we are hubs to many manufacturing such as automobile and hard disk drive.

The inclusive part even though difficult, complex and less than pro-active, has tremendous social implications for which STI policy makers sometimes have little knowledge of. The bottom line is to create social awareness of the importance of science for common man and way of life while embarking on progressive journey

such as the introduction of inclusive innovation for the bottom of the pyramid. As for green growth which implies a lot on sustainable development, it is useful purposes for both GDP and environment to address key STI policies on energy efficiency and renewables and no doubt in connection to climate change which not only pushing for mitigation but more importantly the adaptation part especially in agriculture which is a useful social safety net in times of financial crises in the past.

It is not to be ignored as Professor Heuer clearly voiced loud and clear, the importance of human capital. We need to bring back attention in science to our youth. We need STEM education not only in education sector but the workforce deploying all we can both formal and informal approaches. We need to produce more quality researchers not only to fill the gap of what we do not know through research but to produce enough for brain circulation. I believe the battle for talents have begun and it could be a zero-sum game if we are not being careful. It is also important to introduce STI to strengthen our workers otherwise with the ageing workforce we will most certainly have lower productivity. In this regard, we must show to our government the correlation between STI and productivity then GDP contribution.

Lastly, we need to work hand-in-hand with our private and business sector who understand more the need of innovation for their companies' survival and growth. We cannot expect the invisible hand to function for the public private partnership, at least at this stage of development in my country, but the business do need incentives, facilitating platforms and innovative human resource to succeed. We need to communicate with them that they must think STI as an investment for the future and not the expenditures of today.

I would just end by saying that in all, it is the understanding of the government especially the head of state and the budget people to understand the role of STI for development and the strategic budget allocation that recognizes the medium to long term nature of STI development. When that happens, we will have good chances to succeed our STI for development grand mission.

Thank you for your attention.