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Contribution by Thailand

to the CSTD 2020-2021 priority theme on “Using science, technology and innovation to close the gap on Sustainable Development Goal 3 on good health and well-being”

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1. Thailand and STI for early warning, risk reduction and management of national risks

Thailand is one of the countries which succeeded in controlling spread of COVID-19 because of the following factors: our Universal Healthcare Coverage (UHC) system; prompt and coordinated management of the crisis; the collaboration from Thai people, and the global collaboration. To cope with COVID-19, Thailand's public health system offers accessible and affordable medical treatment, combining with community health volunteers who monitor and communicate COVID-19 knowledge for locals. Thai people are courageous and very cooperative in complying with stay-at-home orders, wearing face masks, and physical distancing observation. "The Center for COVID-19 Situation Administration (CCSA)" has been set up and chaired by the Prime Minister. The National Research Council of Thailand, Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation is designated as "Emergency Operation Center on Medical Innovation, Research and Development", to support all activities regarding research, development and innovation, and to provide prompt and comprehensive situation analysis at the national level. Thailand's cautious measures which have enabled Thailand to effectively control the spread of COVID-19, emphasise the importance of human security, exchange of experiences and best practices in combating COVID-19, and international cooperation on the development of vaccines while ensuring its equal access to all.

Recently, Thailand has been ranked number one in the world out of 184 countries for its ongoing COVID-19 recovery efforts by the Global COVID-19 Index (GCI). Thailand received an index score of 82.06, putting it on top of the global chart as an example of best practices in tackling the ongoing global pandemic. Johns Hopkins University's 2019 Global Health Security Index ranked Thailand as the world's 6th best prepared country for confronting the pandemic, reflecting the country's public health care system's preparedness for coping with major public health emergencies such as the pandemic of the Covid-19 virus.

2. Thailand's policies and initiatives aimed at strengthening national health innovation systems

Healthcare is one of the fastest growing sectors in Thailand and will be a driving force of the Thai economy in the future. The Thai government has given the healthcare industry top priority, as seen in the government's expenditure on healthcare, and the Ministry of Public Health has created a roadmap as guideline toward making Thailand the medical hub of Asia within 2025.

The **Universal Healthcare Coverage** has been to a great degree responsible for enhancing national health innovation systems in Thailand since it was established by the government in 2002. It provides a comprehensive health services from ante-natal care and child delivery to dental services, diagnosis, medicines listed under the national essential drug list and other preventive healthcare services as well as rehabilitation services. Supported by the country's world-class medical facilities, Thailand is among the first in Asia to have hospitals accredited by the Joint Commission International (JCI) which is considered the gold standard in global healthcare. It also has the highest number of JCI accredited organisations in Southeast Asia, currently at 66.

Thailand's Medical Hub Policy is one of progressive policies in place to help the country attain the position of "Thailand, a Hub of Wellness and Medical Services" within a ten-year timeframe (2016-2025). The plan focuses on four major areas: wellness, medical services, academic and medical centre, and health products. Thailand identifies medical and healthcare, including affluent medical and wellness tourism, amongst ten targeted industries to be given a boost in accordance with the government's "Thailand 4.0" policy. This vision aims to transform the country into a value-based economy driven by innovation, technology and creativity. The Thai government is developing the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) which covers three provinces (Chachoengsao, Chonburi and Rayong) to be a new growth hub for Thailand 4.0 or innovative-based economy. In addition, the Thai government strongly promotes investment in **Biotechnology R&D and Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients Projects** which have been supported from various organisations under the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation such as the National Science and Technology Development Agency in terms of technical assistance and R&D grants, Thailand Science Park for the ecosystem, and Thailand Center of Excellence for Life Sciences (TCELS), if to establish bioscience companies.

Furthermore, in response to COVID-19 and health security, Thailand has been working to enhance cooperation under bilateral, regional and multilateral frameworks by 1) emphasising the importance of protection of our people, cooperation on R&D of medicines and vaccines, innovation activities as well as human resource development as part of emergency measures and recovery packages; 2) promoting digital technology in order to help control the spread of COVID-19, mitigate its adverse impacts and promote our economic recovery sustainably; 3) supporting a systems approach to policy-making that includes natural sciences, engineering, social science and humanities as well as promoting cross-ministries collaboration and public-private partnership; 4) intensifying cooperation in the areas of medical and health security, particularly R&D; and 5) ensuring international cooperation and coordinated policy responses to strengthen global health security, help lessen the economic and financial impacts, as well as building resilience system to cope with national and global health risks and crises in the future.

3. Thailand's regional and international cooperation that has strengthened health capacities

Promoting Universal Healthcare Coverage (UHC) has become a common goal of ASEAN member states as it grants people access to healthcare without any barriers and hence improves their health conditions and wellbeing. According to data collected by the International Health Policy Programme (IHPP), each ASEAN nation has a different level of health expenditure. ASEAN countries have been classified into three groups based on their progress in UHC development. First, the countries that have succeeded in setting up UHC, namely Brunei, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand. The entire populations of these countries are covered by healthcare insurance. Second, the countries that are moving closer to UHC, namely Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam. Their governments have passed laws to guarantee healthcare access to citizens, but their health insurance programmes do not cover every citizen at this stage. Finally, the countries with limited resources, namely Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar. The governments of these countries lack financial resources to fund free healthcare for citizens.

Noting that Thailand is a middle-income country that can achieve UHC without getting rich first, the success of introducing UHC owes to two main factors: infrastructure readiness and long-term commitment from the government. Prior to the introduction of UHC in 2002, the Thai government allocated large budgets to improve health facilities including building hospitals in every district and

increasing the numbers of rural doctors. The government, though led by different political parties in each term, made a strong commitment to improve UHC and expand its benefits. As achieving UHC is one of the main targets in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the United Nations is strongly encouraging the leaders of every country to introduce UHC for the good health and wellbeing of their citizens, Thailand continue to work with ASEAN and international community to put every effort into addressing health issues across all dimensions and reaching SDGs' target.

4. Contact persons of the agency responsible for projects/policies related technologies and international collaboration in this context

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