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High-level roundtable on "Eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions through promoting sustainable development, expanding opportunities and addressing related challenges"

Statement submitted by

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Initial Intervention

by the Minister of Science and Technology of Thailand

In the High-level Roundtable on *"Eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions through promoting sustainable development, expanding opportunities and addressing related challenges"* at the 20th Session of CSTD on 8 May 2017

Thank you for giving me the floor,
Mr. Chair, Mr. Ruijun Wang (รุยจุน หวาง),

Mr. Secretary-General,
Dr. Mukhisa Kituyi (มูคิซา คิตูยิ),

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, let me thank UNCTAD and CSTD for organizing this very important meeting for us to discuss and share our perspectives on this important issue of eradicating poverty.

We are determined to achieving SDGs for the future generations of humankind, and eradicating poverty is the first priority.

In my speech, I will give you four points--FIRST, Thailand's perspective on the path to sustainable development; SECOND the status of poverty and food security in Thailand; THIRD, our effort to address poverty and food security through science, technology and innovation, and FOURTH, our view on fostering global partnership.

FIRST: Thailand and its path toward sustainable development

Thailand is committed to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Government has appointed the National Committee for Sustainable

Development and issued roadmaps for achieving SDGs—guided by the *Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy*, introduced by His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej.

The *Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy* stressed the importance of self-reliance from the grassroots level and prudent economic development that is in harmony with nature and leaves no one behind. Knowledge and ethics, guided by moderation, rationality, and prudence, constitute important foundation for economic development according to the philosophy.

Sufficiency Economy has been put into practice through royal development projects to improve the livelihood of rural people. Royal development study centers serve as the sites for research, development and demonstration of integrated farming and conservation.

Following His Majesty's footsteps, researchers and practitioners work to ensure that knowledge and technology are appropriately developed and applied to solve context-specific problems with an aim to achieve inclusive, sustainable development.

SECOND POINT: The status of poverty, hunger and food security in Thailand

Over the past decades, Thailand has put a great effort to eradicate poverty and hunger. At national level, Thailand has achieved the MDGs of reducing by half the proportion of population living in extreme poverty and suffering from hunger. The poverty incidence decreased significantly from 34% in 1990 to less than 10% at present time.

However, poverty incidence differs considerably between subnational regions and demographic

groups, and there is prevalence of undernourished population. More than 80% of the poor population live in rural areas. It is a challenge for both policymakers and researchers to address this *social disparity* through science and policy that expand opportunities for the rural poor and improve their livelihood through *agricultural innovation* in accordance with *Sufficiency Economy Philosophy* to achieve the SDGs of "no poverty" and "zero hunger".

My THIRD POINT is Ensuring food security by 2030 through science, technology and innovation.

To ensure food security by 2030, from Thailand's perspectives, three policy actions involving science and technology deserve attention.

First, ***ensuring sustainable agriculture***, that is coping with increasing demand for food without burdening the environment

The Thai Government has implemented agricultural zoning for economic crops to improve farmers' productivity and income by growing the most suitable crops in their land. Digital mapping technology has been used for the development of the online Agri-Map system for adaptive management of agricultural zones.

Research has been geared towards increasing yield through efficient use of natural resources and crop improvement. Under my leadership, the Ministry of Science and Technology is leading the way to conduct and support research and development in science and technology for sustainable agriculture. As a result over 400 appropriate technologies are

ready for transfer to farmers, communities and SMEs.

- One example is integrated community water management technology, which has been transferred to more than 600 villages nationwide. As a result, smallholder farmers in rural communities have better tools for community planning to increase productivity and income.
- Another example is precision farming technologies from tailor-made fertilizer to low-cost sensor networks for smart farms.
- Another element of sustainable agriculture is biodiversity and ecosystem conservation research, which is critical to secure future food stability. Biodiversity is important to bio-economy, which improves the livelihood of local villagers. Herbal products is an active

area of research and development in my ministry to add value to community products.

The second policy action is ***ensuring resilience to changes***.

It is important to ensure the stability of our local food supply chains and the resilience of our farmers, especially smallholder farmers, to *climate change* and extreme weather phenomena, such as severe drought and floods.

We have conducted a technology needs assessment and subsequently formulated technology action plan for adaptation in agricultural sector, which prioritized three areas of technologies, namely.

- Forecasting and early warning system,
- Crop improvement, and
- Precision farming

Besides climate change, *demographic change* as a result of aging farmers and *lifestyle change* as a result of digitalization present both threats and opportunities. My ministry has responded by initiating the InnoAgri program to develop *agricultural innovation* through ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND smart farmers, FIFTEEN THOUSAND innovative entrepreneurs, and a number of model villages for *agricultural innovation*.

All of these will contribute to strengthening grassroots economy in the long run. We believe that strong grassroots economy are the basis of strong national economy which is inclusive and sustainable.

The third policy action concerns *ensuring sufficient nutrition to all people at all ages* especially the poor and marginalized. Science and technology

play role in developing formula and diet for mothers and children as well as functional foods for adults and the aging population at an affordable price to ensure inclusive accessibility.

MY LAST POINT: Fostering global and regional partnership

Eradicating poverty and hunger has been a significant challenge for humanity. Global partnership is very important. We need to encourage resource mobilization through the circulation of experts or talent flow and the transfer of appropriate technology to the places in need through Technology Facilitation Mechanisms.

As a country that has achieved a significant reduction of poverty and trying to eradicate poverty and hunger

totally by 2030 through science, technology and innovation, Thailand is willing to contribute our expertise and infrastructure to join the global partnership for SDGs.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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