

Statement by
H.E. Mr. Rongvudhi Virabutr
Ambassador, Deputy Permanent Representative of Thailand and chargé d'affaires a.i.
to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva
at the Sixty-Eighth Session of the Trade and Development Board
Item 2(a) – High-level segment: Extraordinary times call for extraordinary measures:
Preparatory meeting on the road to UNCTAD 15 and LDC5
Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Trade and Development
21 June 2021

President of Trade and Development Board,
Acting Secretary-General of UNCTAD,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Participants,

First and foremost, Thailand wishes to thank the honorable panelists for their insights which have set the basis for our discussions and further wishes to align ourselves with the G77 and China Statement.

At present, we only have eight years remaining in our Decade of Action to deliver the SDGs, which has further been delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic. We do not wish to further belabor the point on how COVID-19 affected the global economy or exacerbated the imbalances and vulnerabilities of the world before the pandemic. We, however, must stress how it obliges us to change the way we think about trade and development and offers an opportunity to correct the remnants of our wrongs past strategies such as social disparity, environmental degradation, climate change.

Albert Einstein supposedly said that “We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them”. As such, we cannot and must not conduct business as usual. The COVID-19 pandemic has offered us a rare opportunity to transform our economic infrastructure and design new types of economic institutions.

In doing so, STI is the obvious key to resolving past problems. The report “*Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Trade and Development*” notes how STI policies used in the pandemic response can be further applied by developing countries to increase their innovation and productive capacities. The study also mentions how we can support the building of productive capacities for structural transformation, diversification and sustainability.

Thailand has integrated STI in our new paradigm of trade and development. The Thai government adopted the “Bio-Circular-Green Economy Model (BCG Model)” as our national agenda and post-COVID-19 national recovery strategy. Guided by the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP), Thailand’s homegrown development approach that emphasizes human empowerment and resilience-building, the BCG Model looks to “build back better” towards a sustainable and inclusive future and beyond recovery towards achieving the SDGs by 2030.

The BCG Model offers an innovative path for development as it promotes optimal use of existing resources developing economies and LDCs possess in abundance. It then applies a ‘whole-of-society’ approach and involves integrating biocircular economy, and green economy with advanced technologies and innovations throughout the supply chains to boost

competitiveness, enhance resource efficiency, transform waste into value, and mitigate impacts on the environment. As such, it offers LDCs and developing countries the tools and way of thinking - a business model and transformative institutions which add value to our resources in a sustainable manner.

UNCTAD Members can consider the BCG Model as a way to become more competitive, deliver a better quality of life, and foster green growth in the post-pandemic world. To provide practical examples, we can optimize the rich resources, with which developing countries and LDCs have been gifted, by cooperating on STI initiatives based on our national contexts. Such initiatives include (1) STI cooperation on future food, functional food, biotechnology, and biopharmaceuticals; (2) adoption of low-carbon technologies, blockchain technologies, and traceability mechanisms in agricultural and food value chains; (3) development of eco-innovations on circular packaging, energy and resource efficiency; (4) capacity-building for the integration of SMEs and farmers into eco-friendly global supply chains; and, (5) green skills trainings for businesses and workforce in BCG industries, where UNCTAD has vast experience and expertise.

Thailand hopes that this new way of thinking, and advancing technical cooperation on BCG in these areas with UNCTAD Members, can complement global efforts to rebuild competitive economies in the post-pandemic world and advance a more balanced and sustainable growth that leaves no one behind.

Thank you.

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