

Welcome Notes
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Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of Government of Thailand and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, it is my great pleasure to welcome you all to the 2nd High Level Seminar on Environmentally Sustainable Cities.

First of all, I would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere condolences for Japan and those that are affected by the recent earthquake and tsunami. We do wish the country a prompt recovery and restoring the livelihood of the people to normalcy soon.

Distinguished guests,

As we all are aware that the current patterns of rapid industrialization and urban development in the region are economically and environmentally unsustainable. These have placed overwhelming burdens on the environment, rising global climate concerns, as well as increasing constraints on urban services. The formation of Environmentally Sustainable Cities (ESC) is, therefore, a priority agenda in the region.

Thailand recognizes the importance of sustainable development in achieving economic prosperity as well as ensuring environmental protection. The national development strategies under the current National Economic and Social Development Plans and the National Environmental Quality Plan encompassed the strategies for managing

natural resources and environment to attain sustainability, and support green growth and low-carbon economy.

With respect to urban environment and infrastructure, the national policies aim to reinforce management system by designing cities and urban plans taking into account social, cultural, and ecological aspects, and investing in sustainable infrastructure by emphasizing on rationalization of resource use and minimizing impacts on the environment and communities. The development paradigms of consumption behaviors as well as the production and service sectors are also shifting towards the environmentally friendly society.

The national government has put immense efforts in implementing ESC strategies and programmes, based on decentralization approach and strengthening the roles of local governments and communities, for examples, in the areas of air and water quality management, waste management, environmentally sustainable transport, energy efficiency, as well as sustainable consumption and production programmes, such as green public procurement and green building projects. Several local governments and major cities also actively participate in the ASEAN ESC programmes and initiatives.

However, similar to many developing countries in the region, we are still facing challenges in terms of resources and capacity to implement and translate comprehensive ESC policies into actions at all levels in order to achieve concrete environmental sustainability as well as socio-economic co-benefits.

Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

This seminar, therefore, will be a good opportunity for us to share experiences and good models for policies and practices on development of environmentally sustainable cities in the region. The forum also provides an opportunity to strengthen networking and partnership among national and local governments as well as relevant international partners in the development and implementation of Country-based ESC Model Cities programmes. With that, Thailand would like to express our commitment to cooperate and continue working with all partners in this area.

On this occasion, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the Ministry of Environment-Japan, Kitakyushu City, the Governments of Australia, Cambodia, and Malaysia, for collaboration and efforts in holding this high-level seminar. I would also like to thank the member countries, international partners and all involved in the regional ESC development programmes for your continuing support and cooperation. Special thanks to the Institute for Global Environment Strategies (IGES) for your commitment and hard work in coordinating and organizing this important seminar.

In closing, I wish that this high-level seminar be successful and reach its intended outcomes. With our strong efforts, partnership and commitments, I believe that we can achieve our shared vision of environmentally sustainable cities for a clean and green region in the coming future.

Thank you very much.