

**Opening Remarks by Pisan Manawapat
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“Ensuring Sustainable Development: A Common Challenge for
Asia and Europe”
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Introduction

- Thank you Shada. I am grateful to the European Policy Center for focusing on the Topic of *“Ensuring Sustainable Development: A Common Challenge for Asia and Europe”*.
- Often when politicians in Europe meet with their Asian counterparts, they are terribly keen to discuss Burma more than the issues they have adopted a leadership role for themselves such as the environment.
- The EPC is, by highlighting this issue in the context of ASEM in the capital of Europe where ASEM8 will be held in less than four months, making a meaningful contribution to the ASEM process as a whole.

Review of Efforts

- The issues before us today, namely sustainable development, food & energy security and environmental protection are hardly new in our inter- as well as intra-regional dialogues.
- For inter-regional dialogues, ASEM 6 in Helsinki 4 years ago already identified sustainable development as key policy areas of ASEM for action in the next decade.
- The Beijing Declaration on Sustainable Development called for, among other things, increased development cooperation in support of agricultural production, trade facilitation and technology transfer. I wonder how many of us bother to check how much progress has been implemented in these areas.
- The Yogyakarta Conference in May 2010 assembled 200 high level officials and experts, representatives of international organizations, and civil societies to discuss climate change and low-carbon economy, social cohesion, and policy coherence.
- The Madrid ASEAN-EU Ministerial Meeting last month recognized the need to pursue low-carbon technologies and green economy solutions to mitigate climate change impacts and identified

biofuel sustainability, energy efficiency and energy security as key issues in the ASEAN-EU energy relationship.

Efforts at Regional Level

EU

- On efforts in Europe, the EU since 1997 has included sustainable development in the Treaty of Amsterdam as an overarching objective of the EU policies. The EU, the renewed 2006 Sustainable Development Strategy remains one of cornerstone policy tools for the EU to engage with the rest of the world on this matter.
- The EU, through this Strategy, has exerted tremendous efforts to lead the world in terms of a global partnership on poverty alleviation, sustainable development, biodiversity conservation, as well as climate change. The ambitious economic, social and environmental objectives set by the EU have, as a result, changed the behaviour of many governments, private sector and ordinary citizens all over the world. They are now paying greater attention to the issue of sustainability, including the habitats, ecosystem, biodiversity, food and drinks, health, environmental standards and international trade.

ASEAN

- On efforts within ASEAN, the recent Summit in Ha Noi issued a strong Statement on Sustained Recovery and Development. It reaffirmed ASEAN's commitment to address environmental issues and socio-economic disparities and poverty in the region. More importantly, ASEAN Leaders agreed to develop and implement the ASEAN Roadmap towards realizing MDGs through the participation of all key stakeholders, including the public and private sectors, civil societies, and UN specialized agencies.
- In economic area, ASEAN emphasized that all countries should refrain from imposing conditionality or new barriers to trade and investment which may impact on the socio-economic development of developing countries and their efforts to address global environmental challenges.

Challenges

- All in all, it is safe to say that sustainable development and the discussions on the path to achieve it are hardly new to both Asia and Europe. Political leaders are familiar with their talking points on these topics. Their summit declarations have been noble in objective and consistent in policy substance. The difficulties that stand in a way toward achieving more concrete results are the common challenges

confronting both EU and Asia alike. I will mention three and I know our panalists and experts today will have more to say on others:

- Firstly, sustainable development transcends many state agencies and hence requires great discipline and constant focus in terms of coordination, interaction and follows up. The problem is a normal bureaucratic mechanism is neither good at coordination nor doing a follow up action.
- It would also involve a multitude of stakeholders such as public officials, national and local politicians, the private sector, NGOs and civil society groups, as well as farmers. The decision to implement a policy over another often leads to frictions among these various stakeholders. The EU free emission allowance for instance gives big profit to some of the most energy intensive sectors at the expense of the rest of the EU business.
- Moreover, there is always a question on the right balance between increased industrial activities and related pollution in the name of growth on the one hand, against the need to conserve natural resources, ecosystem and energy on the other. Thailand is experiencing that at the Eastern Seaboard Industrial Estate right now.
- Secondly, protecting the environment will become even more complex and often create high tensions among various constituents when it interacts with international trade and industrial policy objectives.
- There has always been growing concern among developing countries and LDCs that environmental issue tends to create both direct and indirect opportunities for new barriers to trade in goods and services such as air transport.
- Environmental measures and requirement in the name of policies and strategies to achieve sustainable development by developed countries such as standards, taxes, subsidies, charges and labeling etc. often create adverse impacts for its developing country trading partners in terms of reduced international competitiveness, extra cost burden, market uncertainty and limited market access.
- The roles and relationship in deciding on new policies between main stakeholders of the EU institutions, relationship between EAS and the Commission for diverse EU's external policy areas such as development, environment, energy, transport, trade and agriculture, to name a few, will create impact on the overall coherence and synergies among various EU's policies and strategies. It would also

define international conditions for international trade, environmental protection and energy and food security between Europe and the rest of the world.

- From the perspective of EU's trading partners, especially developing countries, they would wish that EU has a single clearing house, a single phone number which could give an early warning to the rest of the world on any new European directive or standard in none-trade areas that would eventually affect trade and market access. In the past, directives such as the ETS, IUU Fishing, REACH and WEEE, and GHG reduction often resulted in new technical measures on developing countries' goods and services to the EU. Thailand for one understands the need to protect environment, for safety standard etc, but when new directives are introduced, we would like EU to give us, not financial aid, but time and manpower to explain the complication so that we can comply with the new rules as soon as possible. Surely, this should be in the interest of the EU and its consumers as well.
- Let me leave a final observation on the current state of affairs in Europe in relations to the ongoing crisis. On the one hand, it is clear that the EU has all the intentions to remain as the global frontrunner on sustainable development, conservation of biodiversity, and the pursuit of green economy. At the same time, there is clearly the need for Europe to quickly deal with fiscal deficits in line with the Stability and Growth Pact, reform economic and financial governance, as well as ensure euro's stability in order to facilitate a solid economic and financial recovery.
- How can the EU balance and weigh the need to pursue tightened macroeconomic policies, resisting the risk of raising protectionist pressure on the one hand amidst rising victim of nationalist parties in various member states, against the need to provide global leadership on sustainable development that takes more account of developing countries and to provide support they need with sustainable financial resources, technology transfer and capacity building in the pursuit of green economy and low carbon pathway.
- In other words, what would be the most practical way forward in reconciling "ambitious policies and targets, tightened fiscal policies and financial consolidation on the one hand, against the need for policy space and level of development" on the other. I leave this to my panelists to address.

Thank you.
