

Stockholm+50 Thailand National Consultations

A Roundtable Discussion on Accelerating Biodiversity Action: Our Opportunity, Our Responsibility Towards a Healthy Planet for the Prosperity of All

Date: Thursday 12 May 2022 (9:00-13:00)

Chateau De Erawan (2nd Floor), Erawan Phang-nga Hotel, Khok Kloi, Takua Thung, Phang-nga
Hybrid Meeting (In-person and ZOOM, with English-Thai and Thai-English Interpretation)

Summary Report

On 12 May 2022, the roundtable discussion on Accelerating Biodiversity Action: Our Opportunity, Our Responsibility Towards a Healthy Planet for the Prosperity of All was conducted in a hybrid mode, both in-person (at the Erawan Phang-nga Hotel) and virtually on Zoom meeting with simultaneous translation and live streaming to UNDP Thailand Facebook. The third of a series of Stockholm+50 National Consultations in Thailand was hosted by the Embassy of Sweden in Thailand and UNDP in Thailand, in collaboration with the Embassy of Kenya in Thailand. This event aimed to inform key actors and the general public about Stockholm+50, set in motion the multifaceted process of national consultations, and facilitate the sharing of views and expectations of people, particularly those in the southern region of Thailand, that can be taken forward in the High-level Leadership Dialogue discussions at the Stockholm+50 international meeting scheduled on 2-3 June 2022.

The event Master of Ceremonies was Mr. Kesrat Sukasam from UNDP Thailand. The keynote session was addressed by the Deputy Governor of Phang-nga Province, the Ambassador of Kenya to Thailand, and the UNDP Resident Representative in Thailand. The keynote session was followed by three roundtable discussions. The first roundtable focused on the urgent need for actions to achieve a healthy planet and prosperity of all, the second discussed a sustainable and inclusive recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, and the third discussed the implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development in the context of the decade of action. The event was closed by the UNDP Deputy Resident Representative in Thailand. The live streamed video of the event can be accessed at: https://fb.watch/dILYFuI_Av/.

There was a consensus that the Stockholm+50 could be the time to take the bold steps towards the action needed. The sessions echoed that pressure on nature and human environment will only be truly reduced through, among others, reconciliation partnership and networking, enabling access to knowledge and innovation, improved and more inclusive data management, increased opportunities for community-based and nature-based solutions,

more equitable sustainable financing and incentive measures, and better coordinated sustainable development initiatives.

Keynote Addresses

Mr. Thalerngsak Nuchpraharn, Deputy Governor of Phang-nga Province delivered a welcome and keynote address via Zoom. He mentioned that Phang-nga is a province with diverse nature, ethnic, and culture as well as unique agricultural and food products. The provincial strategic development aims to transform toward a happy province through integrated development plan for economic, social and environmental aspects. Phang-nga focuses on cleanliness in terms of mind, nature and safety. This is to facilitate a safe and pleasant province for tourism, organic food, and “Andaman Wellness Corridor.” He thanked all for introducing biodiversity conservation as a key discussion topic for the roundtable discussion.

The next inspiring Keynote Address was delivered by H.E. Mr. Kiptiness Lindsay Kimwole, the Ambassador of Kenya to Thailand, stressing that this is a time for national consultation in Thailand and moving towards the meeting in Stockholm in June. Our responsibility is to conserve the nature for the prosperity of all. The environment is crucial, particularly when we face with pollution that affect our health. They said forests are our supermarkets, but we have denied biodiversity as important. We need to limit our greet and bad action to the nature. Our natural resources are always enough for all if we use them sustainably. Ambassador Kiptiness called on the whole of society to accelerate our work to conserve out nature for our children, women, and all groups. While the government need to drive conservation of biodiversity, they must also engage all stakeholders to take the leadership, including the private sector. People (particularly, the private sector) do not see the profit of conserving biodiversity, so we need to create an enabling environment to help them concern more about biodiversity. He shared Kenya’s experience and actions in adopting an initiative on river biodiversity that led by communities, to empower children and teacher to community groups to clean up and restore the rivers. The Ambassador expressed his keen interest in cooperating with Thailand on campaigning to ban a single use plastic, through train the trainers and site visit to exchange experiences and come up with an innovation to cope with the problem.

Later, Mr. Renaud Meyer, UNDP Resident Representative in Thailand, delivered a keynote address. Mr. Meyer stated that we were gathering here to listen and articulate lessons we had learned since Stockholm 1972. The gathering in Phang-nga was timely, and he thanked Sweden and Kenya for the opportunity. The one message to come to the southern region was the quality of the nature and the connectivity between the nature and people’s livelihoods. We had seen how fragile the relations were between the nature and people particularly the beautiful landscapes and seascapes. The balancing between Chow Lay’s livelihood and the coastal environment is very fragile and need to be carefully managed. It’s time to rethink about this relationship, with guidance from the local government, local communities and other stakeholders are crucial. The meeting aimed to listen to all how to improve the quality and look forward to how we sustain the environment and biodiversity quality which is a foundation to allow people’s livelihood, spiritual relations between people and the nature to build longer good connections on this planet. Mr. Mayer stressed that UNDP and its partners were keen to learn from the participants’ perspectives and lessons to inspire for our future.

He emphasized that this was not a one-time visit, but to establish a relationship with local governments toward better environment; and that UNDP would continue working with all in the region to implement a biodiversity-based tourism initiative that link local economic activities in the areas.

Summary of Key Messages from the Roundtable

The first roundtable discussion was moderated by Ms. Sukanya Thongthumrong from UNDP Thailand. The topic of discussion was ‘reflecting on the urgent need for actions to achieve a healthy planet and prosperity of all’.

Ms. Thanaporn Trakuldit, Royal Forest Department, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, expressed her views on restoring and regenerating a positive relationship with nature. She mentioned that, as a government official as well as a conservationist, her goal was to link people with the nature, to live in harmony with all forms of life. We should see think as connected – planetary health, which means good health, good food, good air, good environment, and good people. Environmental changes in a negative way affect our life, particularly the mental health of youth which reflect on them in terms to hopeless thinking for the future. Through an active hope foundations training, youths receive knowledge and encouragement to become more positive and engage more on the nature conservation. Ms. Trakuldit emphasized that people need to understand the five domains of planetary health (i.e., emotion, senses, compassion, meaning, beauty); seeing the nature as having the rights to live healthier; nature connectedness is based on having an opportunity to live with and understand the nature, using all ways to learn and understand about the nature. She called on all to embed the nature into our life, expressing love and care to the nature, to start our action to engage youths toward sustainable nature. We need to use all public channels to communicate the importance of people-nature relations and impacts amongst, leading to the responsibilities for the nature.

Mr. Maitri Jongkrajak, Manager, Chumchon Thai Foundation, expressed his views on building and restoring sustainable and resilient relationship with nature for marginalized and vulnerable groups. He stressed that a challenge is to think about the nature in the context of people’s livelihood, “we need to realize about the mindset of the people who live with and in the nature.” In the southern Thailand, there are local and ethnic peoples that need to be understood about their livelihoods, and it is crucial to live in harmony with their way of living and culture. Putting different perspectives on the local ways of living is to destroy people’s traditional way of living in harmony with the nature. Covid-19 has brought the marginalized and vulnerable people to a more vulnerable condition – meaningful support from the policies is urgently needed. He also emphasized that it is crucial to understand and build trust, social status (citizenship), know how to work effectively with the people (livelihood zone), and bring out their inner capability and value (including power structure – development must not affect the people’s rights to live in their way of life).

During the discussion, the participants called on all sectors to act now. People’s dependence on the nature and natural resources is the way to conserve the nature because it’s the way they can sustain their living. The government’s policies have affected the people’s way, and

UN needs to lead proper action. In southern Thailand, nature-based tourism has been initiated by local communities that focuses on biodiversity-based livelihoods and conservation. All sectors need to engage and take necessary actions to regenerate a positive relationship with the nature. Another participant mentioned that, considering himself as an ethnic minority, coastal communities have a way to live in harmony with the nature, through effective conservation of coastal environment, saving people from impacts of Covid-19 and focusing on food security (need to transform from tourism to coastal fisheries). In his opinion, development means changing the nature, particularly tourism activities that are not nature-friendly. There was another view that we need to think more about renewable energy that fits to local condition and cost accessibility.

Mr. Meyer stressed that we had heard a few important view points from national consultations: firstly, there is the need to redefine the relationship between people and planet. Secondly, it is crucial to reconsider the relations between citizen and state. A consultation in Chaing Mai province revealed the participants' voice about the crash between ethnic minorities and government versus the way to manage for the quality of the nature/biodiversity. Thirdly, concerning tourism and economic development, tourism becomes more broader than the nature, but interaction with communities (footprint is less with the quality of relationship between people and the nature if tourism transform to visiting to learn about local people's way of life).

The second roundtable discussion was moderated by Dr. Anuk Serechetapongse from UNDP Thailand. The topic of discussion was 'achieving a sustainable and inclusive recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic'.

Mr. Tara Buakamsri, Thailand Country Director, Greenpeace Southeast Asia, reflected on shaping an equitable, inclusive and sustainable recovery. He mentioned that Thailand has adopted policies on biodiversity. There are so many MEAs that Thailand has committed, including CBD, RAMSAR, FAO's Code of Conducts. However, these MFAs should take into consideration the people's way of life and social justice. He stressed that biodiversity should not be seen as physical but also economic and culture. Mr. Buakamsri emphasized three important points: firstly, the safe and just space for humane welfare is crucial for recovery from the crises. Local self-management is a solution to the crisis. Secondly, economic incentives are crucial to encourage more economic activities. Thirdly, the concept of one health must be integrated.

Asst. Prof. Dr. Chayanon Phucharoen, Deputy Dean for Research and Graduate Studies, Faculty of Hospitality and Tourism, Prince of Songkla University (Phuket Campus) shared his views on better performing industries and supply chains for a just transition. He mentioned that Thailand's economic development (particularly tourism) has been hit hard particularly in the southern region due to Covid-19. Income decreased significantly, even with the sandbox initiative. Sensing has been used to count the number of people in economic areas in Pa Tong, showing the impacts of crises; and graphic technologies were used for establishing a relative wealth index to measure economic impact during covid-19. In addition, hotels in the tourism areas are using SDGs to improve the quality of their business.

The audience voiced their views on linking economic development with nature conservation in a more meaningful way. This included (a) applying a polluter pay principle to reduce waste and subsidizing for the communities to clean up or conserve natural resources; (b) protecting the ecosystems for people's livelihoods, particularly those who affected by Covid-19 and returned home to earn their living by exploiting natural resources; (c) seasonal closing fishing areas during the spawning season, while restricting certain types of fishing gears; (d) rethinking a way to further conserve the nature and biodiversity that was less disturbed during the Covid-19 pandemic and how to engage younger generations; (e) calling on a harmonized and just public policies and initiatives, benefiting local business and communities; (f) encouraging UNDP to work with local government and people to further elaborate more on area-based, nature-based and sustainable solutions for promoting local people's livelihoods (i.e., agriculture, coastal fisheries, and tourism); and (g) zoning economic interventions that fit the local conditions and balanced development (nature-economic-social), as well as rethinking about preventive measures to protect local business from large investors.

The third and last roundtable discussion was moderated by Ms. Sukanya Thongthumrong from UNDP Thailand. The topic of discussion was 'accelerating the implementation of the environmental dimension of Sustainable Development in the context of the Decade of Action'.

Dr. Boripat Siriaroonrat, Faculty of Environment and Resources Studies, Mahidol University, presented on challenges in the Decade of Action. He emphasized on challenges on conserving biodiversity and identified key enabling environment as including: values of biodiversity communicated and demonstrated; multisectoral collaboration, national and local authorities buy-ins, continuous support and long-term commitment from lead and supporting partners; non-state financing such as GEF; financial support for local business and communities; and pride and ownership. He further elaborated on specific case studies on cranes story, banteng reintroduction, and Parakeets and durians. He concluded with the following key messages: (a) biodiversity conservation is for every life on the planet; (b) utilitarian, esthetics, ecological and moral values need to be regularly and effectively communicated to stakeholders and general public; economic values play important role in balancing use/conservation balance; public is crucial partner in biodiversity conservation; and central governments and national policies can be both strengthening forces and threats to biodiversity conservation.

Mr. Wuthichai Sithipreedanant, Advisor, Global Compact Network Thailand, expressed his views on partnership for a green, inclusive and sustainable economic transformation. He presented GCNT's activities based on the global cooperation both with private and public sectors. Mr. Sithipreedanant provided some examples on the private sector's initiatives on biodiversity actions focusing on food industry. He mentioned that food industry relies on biodiversity – therefore the business has to take good care of business impacts on sustainable food and biodiversity in line with the global standards. Key strategies focus on conserving the nature and natural resources, and contributing to circular economy. Issue of plastic is a concern, aiming to reduce the use of single-use plastic, food packaging has to be reuse, recycle and degradable, as well as safe for consumption. Another issue concerns food loss

and food waste to reduce releasing methane to the environment. To cite an example, the Charoen Pokphand Foods Public Company Limited (CPF), has a policy to enrich biodiversity through several initiatives around the country. This includes supporting the commitment for zero deforestation in Lopburi Province and restoring mangrove areas in Samut Sakhon, which brings back a variety of aquatic species, coastal ecosystems and improved community's livelihoods.

The audience discussed an enabling environment for delivery on the ground and follow-up activities from Stockholm+50. They focused on the Bio-Circular-Green Economic Model or BCG introduced by the research community and promoted by the Thai government as a new economic model for inclusive and sustainable growth. A challenge is to communicate and decentralize the concept and action to engage local communities and reflect the reality on the ground. According to a participant, the BCG implementation should lead to SDGs achievement. Government is still thinking in silo and lack of connectivity. Local people may not know about the term BCG, while they may be practicing the concept on their own way. The challenge to link and connect all parts together. Another recommendation was to start with rubber plantation (key commodity in southern Thailand) and youth in the context of SEP and BCG. There was an opinion that the way of local self-reliance practices (such as circular or shifting cultivation) has been interrupted by government policies, so we need to think holistic and prioritized development policies through stakeholder consultations, just as in the case of Kenya.

The discussion also focused on an opportunity for transition in coastal fisheries, in which coastal ecosystem can be protected while respecting the rights of local people. If the government needs to intervene, they need to understand about community wellbeing and create awareness. Studies have been conducted on ecosystems to see the actual prices and how to move forward to sustainability and SDGs into practice. Regarding the EU's IUU fishing policy, Thailand received a yellow card. Some NGOs are of the opinion that it's useful for restricting illegal fishing and controlling demand on the resources, while fostering good practices and partnership building among public-private-community stakeholders.

Closing

The closing remarks was delivered by Ms. Lina Eidmark, Counsellor, Embassy of Sweden in Thailand. Ms. Eidmark expressed her gratitude to the participants for their valuable views and recommendations. She stressed that the national consultation process in Thailand has reflected the importance of partnerships between the embassies, UNDP, and all stakeholders including local communities. It is crucial to continue working together beyond Stockholm+50 to conserve the nature for people's prosperity, use lessons from Covid-19 to think ahead for recovery and sustainability, and cultivate strong and bold government policies for bringing people and companies together toward sustainable development.