

*(As delivered)*

**Keynote Speech**  
**by**  
**H.E. Mrs. Pornpimol Kanchanalak**  
**Advisor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand**  
**at the 1<sup>st</sup> ASEM Youth Dialogue of the 4<sup>th</sup> ASEF Young Leaders Summit**  
**on Friday 14 May 2021 at 17.00-18.15 hrs. (Thailand Time) via WebEx**

Your Excellency Under-Secretary of State SAMHENG Bora of the Ministry of Commerce of Cambodia,  
Ambassador MORIKAWA Toru, Executive Director of ASEF,  
ASEF Young Leaders,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. On behalf of the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Don Pramudwinai, greetings from Bangkok, Thailand. If there is anyone who has a firm conviction and is a believer in the youth, it is Deputy Prime Minister Don. About 20 years ago, he was instrumental in the founding of the Young Ambassadors of Virtue Foundation at time when such things were not popular. It is always a pleasure for me to meet with young people such as yourselves. I wish to commend ASEF for keeping the interaction between the youth and the Leaders of Asia and Europe going, which will help ASEM Leaders to remain seized of the issues that matter most to their people.
2. The topic of our Dialogue is SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being, which is particularly relevant given the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Indeed, COVID has affected us all, in ways both big and small. It is a collective experience that, instead of bringing us together, has forced us apart.
3. So, these are difficult times - being together in this, but still alone. For many then, these are times of anxiety, isolation, disorientation and disruption.
4. But we have not gathered here today to dwell on “doom and gloom”. Instead, we are here to exchange views to spark solutions for achieving SDG 3, both in terms of keeping us all disease-free and ensuring our well-being, particularly our mental health and ultimately our happiness.
5. So how can we achieve SDG 3? For governments, the key is the right policy mix, created with the inputs and ideas of all sectors of society.
6. For Thailand, achieving SDG 3 is guided by “**the 4 I’s**”.

7. The first “I” is the **Inclusivity**. At a minimum, this means that everyone should have access to affordable and quality healthcare services. Hence, Universal Health Coverage (UHC) is the benchmark. Almost 20 years ago, Thailand made the intentional policy choice and commitment to advance UHC for our people and those who live and work on our soil. This is because healthcare is a basic human right. In addition to UHC, we have the so-called village health volunteers, who operate country-wide, even in the most remote areas. Their efforts help to ensure that local communities have access to essential healthcare services. And they have been recognised by the WHO as a key factor in Thailand’s successful strategy in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.
8. Inclusivity also means that there is no one-size-fits-all healthcare policy, but it must be tailored to the specific needs of different groups, such as migrant workers, women, and youth. And doing so means that we will be leaving no one behind.
9. The second “I” is **Innovation**. Think telehealth and telemedicine. To fight the COVID-19 pandemic, Thailand has developed mobile applications to contact trace, disseminate information, and enable registration to receive vaccines. The opportunities from new technologies are limitless and I believe that you, the youth, can make significant contributions to improving public health with innovative solutions in the long run.
10. But, as you well know, technology, like everything else in life, has its dark sides. Think cyberbullying and disinformation, and how they can affect mental health and well-being as well as political instability. You can think of the so-called Cancel Culture that is gaining strength in the world right now. The global community, through platforms such as ASEM, should take action to ensure that our youth can connect with one another safely and responsibly without falling prey to disinformation and fake news.
11. The third “I” is **International Cooperation**. By now, you have surely heard the oft-touted creed that “no one is safe until everyone is safe”. We must strengthen global public health policy coordination and response to future pandemics as well as give increased assistance to low-income countries to help them fight against the current pandemic and improve their health infrastructures in preparation for the next health emergency.

12. The fourth “I” is **Individual Implementation**. We all desire good health, both physical and mental. We try to eat well, sleep well and exercise regularly. For some, this may be wishful thinking, but I can assure you that they work. And we try to have the right frame of mind too. Think of seeking balance and moderation in what we do. Think also of being compassionate. If we can all manage this fourth “I”, I believe that we can then do even more when it comes to ensuring that the other three “I’s” can happen. And this will, in turn, help to strengthen our ASEM community.
13. To achieve this and more, ASEM and ASEF can play important roles, helping governments and all sectors of society to build and reinforce partnership and together find new and innovative solutions to the challenges of the day. ASEM is 25 years old this year. Let us use this special occasion to intensify ourselves our collective efforts to help build an ASEM community of livable and healthy societies.
14. The theme of this 4<sup>th</sup> ASEF Young Leaders Summit -- “Sustainable Development in a Post-COVID-19 World” -- is therefore most apt. This is after all your world and you, the youth of Asia and Europe, wield the power to shape it. And we, the older generation, will give you the support that you need.
15. Thank you and I look forward to your questions.

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