

UNV and TICA event
South South Knowledge Exchange on Youth Volunteering for SDGs
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Ms. Alexandra Solovieva, Chief of Programme Coordination Section, United Nations, Volunteers, Distinguished delegates, colleagues and youth

- On behalf of the United Nations in Thailand, I am pleased to welcome you to Bangkok for the South-South Knowledge Exchange on Youth Volunteering for Sustainable Development Goals. During this conference you will share Sufficiency Economy Philosophy and other ASEAN approaches to promote youth partnerships for peace, development and human rights.

- First of all, I would like to thank the Royal Thai Government and United Nations Volunteers for co-hosting this event, which draws together a diverse body of partners from ASEAN countries and beyond, ranging from representatives of governments, Volunteers Organizations, private sector, academia, UN agencies, and most importantly youth themselves.

- The diversity of experiences and expertise in this room will certainly generate an open and constructive dialogue for the coming days.
- Over the past decades, countries in the Asia Pacific region have achieved unparalleled economic growth, which led to remarkable achievement in human development. However, disparities across geographical areas, gender and ethnic groups, as well as rising inequalities in the region are causes for concern. Inequalities persist in sectors such as education, health, nutrition, work opportunities, etc. Inequalities are compounded by the lack of voice and participation of vulnerable and marginalized groups. But these challenges are not unique to the Asia Pacific region.
- The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for the 2030 Agenda recognize those gaps and also the need to empower youth in tackling these challenges. Youth are the largest population segment in the developing world, with around 60% of the world's youth living in the Asia-Pacific region alone. They should therefore be key actors in achieving the 2030 Agenda.

- On the other hand, the SDGs also recognize the unique capacities and perspectives of Global South partners to support each other in addressing common development challenges. Member states have called on the United Nations to support South-South Cooperation to help realize this potential. So did Thailand and that is why South-South cooperation features as a key strategy in our 2017-2021 partnership framework
- This week's event is a golden opportunity to explore these two important themes: the crucial role of youth and south-south cooperation. Or, in other words, how youth volunteering can play an important role in South-South Cooperation, through facilitating knowledge and skills exchange, delivering services and developing capacity, and strengthening people-to-people links.
- Thailand has a strong tradition of volunteerism and a unique approach to people-centered development informed by the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP). Thailand has also been a strong and prominent advocate for South-South and Trilateral Cooperation, through its G77 Chairmanship and

active role linking ASEAN Vision 2025 with 2030 Agenda, through its commitment to the Sendai Framework and Bangkok Principles, through The Thai Volunteer Programme initiated by the Thailand International Cooperation Agency (TICA) and through experience sharing and knowledge exchange with other countries.

- As I mentioned before, the UN Country Team, under the new 5-year partnership framework, will support Thailand in enhancing its institutional capacity for South-South Cooperation and in strengthening systems and processes for expanded exchange of expertise available regionally and globally. Furthermore the UN in Thailand commits to building partnerships with civil societies, community-based organizations and the private sector.
- More specifically, the UN, in collaboration with TICA, will assist in strengthening volunteer engagement in South-South Cooperation to position Thailand as a key regional actor, as well as in engaging youth as key partners for localizing the SDGs through volunteer action.

- Currently, The UNV Programme in Thailand has the highest numbers of volunteers in the region. There are 36 international and 4 national volunteers working hand in hand with various UN agencies for Thai and regional projects. I have personally witnessed the invaluable contributions by our UNV colleagues to our programmes and advocacy. Their experience shows how youth volunteering can serve as a vehicle for South-South Cooperation and an accelerator for sustainable development.
- Before I conclude this remark, I want to stress the significance of this event for me personally. This is going to be my last public speech as the UN Resident Coordinator in Thailand. In June 1987, exactly 30 years ago, I began my career as a volunteer humanitarian and development worker in Djibouti, in the Horn of Africa. Since then, many things have changed, but my passion has always been to serve the vulnerable people in the world. As the Resident Coordinator, what I have enjoyed most is to engage with young people like you, regardless of nationality, gender, religion, sexual orientation, language and background. Youth is the driving force to create the better future in our planet. Some of you may have heard of the 5 P's for Sustainable Development: People, Planet,

Prosperity, Partnership and Peace. For me there is a 6th P, and that is PASSION, the strong devotion to make this a better world for us now and future generations. That is why it is our responsibility to invest in and create opportunities for the youth. And today I am pleased to talk about youth and volunteerism at the end of my assignment as the Resident Coordinator.

- On that note, I hope this event will be an opportunity for all of you to identify good practices, and innovative approaches to South-South Cooperation through youth volunteering. And I hope our young audience here will one day say with pride: that's how I started, as a youth volunteer.
- Thank you.