

ITU Digital Societies Forum: Opening remarks  
Dr. Pansak Siriruchatapong, Executive Director,  
Digital Economy Preparatory Commission Secretariat  
June 25, 2015 9.10-9.20  
Sheraton Grande Sukhumvit

Speech starts here.

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Air Vice Marshall Thanaphat Raicharoen of the NBTC

Esteemed speakers

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen,

**First of all**, on behalf of the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology, I would like to welcome all guest speakers — from the ITU, ICANN, ISOC, GSMA, Pakistan Telecommunications Authority, Windsor Place Consulting, and Plum Consulting London — and all participants to Thailand and to this forum. As you may already know, the Thai government has launched the so-called “Digital Economy and Society” initiative. This forum comes at a right time, where your input from both international and local communities can be used to inform all of us who are now working on the implementation details of this initiative. Therefore, as the Executive Director of the Preparatory Commission Secretariat, it is also my greatest pleasure to join you all here today.

**Second of all**, as this is an opening session, let me give you a quick review of what we have been doing with regards to digital economy and society.

As you know, digital technology has become a necessity in both daily life and all economic functions. The cabinet, under the leadership of Prime Minister, General Prayuth Chan-ocha, has thus set out to bring Thailand into a new digital era with the goal of using digital technologies to

enhance the country's competitiveness and escape the famous middle-income trap, while leaving no one in the country behind.

With this mission, the Deputy Prime Minister, Mom Rajawongse Pridiyathorn Devakula, gathered a team of experts to build a framework for digital economy and society development — with the vision that technologies will enable an all-dimension reform in Thailand's economic, business, social, and governmental sectors.

To achieve this, Thailand's digital economy and society framework was formulated and consists of 5 supporting pillars.

**The first pillar of digital economy is "Hard Infrastructure."** Reliable networks with enough capacity, coverage and suitable pricing are prerequisite to economic and social development. The national broadband initiative proposes to pool together existing network resources that belong to state enterprises, government agencies, as well as private companies for more efficient resource planning and usage. Moreover, hard infrastructure also aims to increase investments in data centers as well as to increase international gateway capacity.

**The second pillar is "Service Infrastructure,"** which refers to infrastructure that enables service innovations in both government and business sectors. This pillar promotes service platforms that will allow data from multiple sources to be linked and mashed-up to create innovative services. Government data will be open and integrated through government service platform with the goal to provide paperless, one-stop, citizen-centric services. For example, this will eliminate traditional requirements of using hard copies of citizen ID and house registration.

**Third, "Soft Infrastructure"** refers to the underlying processes to guarantee secure and trusted digital transactions. New laws and regulations are being created, while the existing ones are being updated — especially to improve user privacy protection and data security. In addition to electronic

transaction promotion, this pillar also addresses trade facilitation with an electronic document exchange system.

**The fourth pillar aims at “Digital Economy Promotion.”**The direction here is to boost the Thai economy through a vibrant digital business ecosystem. Digital technologies will transform how Thai businesses of all sizes operate— especially the SMEs, from competing for prices to creating new value for products and services that will satisfy customers. Digital commerce as well as digital marketing are important tools to bring the SMEs and OTOP products into market. Also, capacity building in the area of digital entrepreneurship, e-commerce, and digital marketing are necessary to achieve a long-term economic growth.

**Finally, the fifth pillar of digital economy addresses “Digital Society.”** In order for Thailand to become a digital society, everyone — especially the less privileged groups — should have easy access to information as well as public services via digital means. Such equal access can be achieved by means of universal design and digital inclusion projects. In addition, we envision a digital society where all citizens can learn throughout life and also become media and information literate.

Now, it must be noted here that while having this framework in mind, we are not doing everything at once. The ad hoc National Digital Economy and Society Committee, chaired by the Prime Minister, has prioritised 5 critical sub-themes, which are

1. Development of national broadband — where we are consolidating the country's broadband coverage data; inviting experts to design the national broadband plan; and (later on) establishing professional organization(s) to manage broadband assets including poles, pipes, and fiber optic cables;
2. Development of data centers — where we are planning to promote investments of data centers in Thailand, while reducing redundancies of data centers in the government sector;

3. Promotion of digital commerce, digital contents and digital entrepreneurs — where we focusing on digital usage in businesses, service innovation, creative economy, embedded system industry, and digital awareness promotion;
4. Promotion of lifelong learning — where we are showcasing projects in the areas of ICT for marginalized communities, massive open online learning systems, ICT to assist students with learning disabilities and planning to scale them up after having proof of concepts.
5. Following up on digital economy and society bills — Currently, the 8 bills are going through various stages of legislative process. After careful consideration by stakeholders in government, private, and civil sectors, they are expected to pass within a reasonable timeframe.

In essence, the digital economy and society initiative is progressing at a good pace, though not as speedy or complete as we would have liked. I hope this information is useful as a jumping point for today's discussions. As mentioned earlier, we are working on implementation details of these strategic themes and will positively welcome all your input and recommendations.

**Last but most important**, I would like to thank you all — esteemed speakers, distinguished guest, ladies and gentlemen — for joining us in the quest to better Thailand with digital technologies. Also, special appreciation goes to the ITU for bringing in great global expertise and hosting this beautiful forum. I wish us all great success today and hope to continue our work together in the future. Thank you very much.