

## Welcome Remarks

CLMVT Forum 2018: “CLMVT Taking-Off Through Technology”

by Minister of Commerce (Mr. Sontirat Sontijirawong)

Thursday 16 August 2018, 9.00 – 9.15 hrs.

Centara Grand & Bangkok Convention Center, CentralWorld

---

His Excellency Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha,

Deputy Prime Minister Dr. Somkid Chatusripitak

Ministers from CLMVT Countries,

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Business leaders,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the secretariat team of CLMVT Forum 2018: “CLMVT Taking-Off Through Technology”, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Your Excellency for kindly presiding over the opening ceremony and delivering the opening keynote speech today.

*CLMVT is originated from Prime Minister’s vision and Ministry of Commerce is the first and only government agency that has thoroughly implemented this initiative.*

Owing to **the grand vision of Your Excellency and the Royal Thai government**, Thailand has demonstrated a strong commitment to a policy on mutual economic development together with neighboring countries in

Mekong region including Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam, and Thailand, as CLMVT economies and cultural background are closely interconnected. These complementarities will contribute to each other's competitiveness and to accommodate to the dynamics in global context.

Accordingly, it was a great pleasure of Ministry of Commerce to organize the first CLMVT Forum in 2016 with the theme “Towards the Shared Prosperity” where policy directions for trade, investment, and tourism in CLMVT were actively discussed. The Forum was concluded successfully and beautifully and had more than 800 participants from the public, private, civil, and academic sectors.

### *Deliverables from the First Forum*

Since the CLMVT Forum 2016 was concluded, Ministry of Commerce has worked closely with other public, private, and international organizations to promote connectivity among CLMVT countries. **Notable examples** are;

- (1) Creating **CLMVT Knowledge Tank** by the Thai Chamber of Commerce and Board of Trade,
- (2) Developing human resources and entrepreneurs from CLMVT in **logistics and herb businesses** – the region's key service sectors – by Ministry of Commerce,
- (3) Upgrading **ASEAN Design Centre (ADC)** in Chiang Mai to become a regional centre for product and entrepreneur development in northern Thailand, and
- (4) Drafting Strategic Plan for **promoting border trade** through Sister Cities Initiatives,

where the following CLMVT-CIC principle has been adopted for advancing collaboration between the CLMVT countries;

C – Connectivity,

I – Inclusiveness, and

C - Competitiveness

### *CLMVT Forum 2018 : Key objectives*

The second CLMVT Forum is held again in 2018 to advance the objectives originated from the 2016 forum as follows;

(1) Creating networks of leaders in the CLMVT region: this forum is **the only international forum** that brings together foremost public figures, distinguished CLMVT and non-CLMVT business leaders, renowned scholars, and representatives from civil society to share ideas about directions and channels to drive the CLMVT economic development. This year more than 1,000 participants are expected.

(2) Promoting the **Shared Prosperity** of the CLMVT region, and

(3) **Jointly fostering** sustainable development of the CLMVT countries, including **increasing economic opportunities in local economy** in a streamlined and unified direction.

### *CLMVT Forum 2018 : Theme = Technology to Change Trade and Investment and People*

His Excellency Prime Minister and distinguished guests,

Commerce Ministry has recognized the significance of the new-age technologies which largely evolved into a unique characteristic of trade

ecosystem. This year, the CLMVT forum: Taking-off Through Technology is thus centered around the corner of how countries collectively prepare themselves prior to an adventure to the new economy highly driven by technology. The forum focuses on two perspectives - 1) Technology to Change Trade and investment and 2) Technology to Change Life and Young Generation. Over the last decade, we witnessed a rapid development of digital, physical, and biological technologies, leading to the amalgamation of all technologies and a new mode of production, as well as groundbreaking products and services. This inevitably has both positive and negative impacts to countries in the CLMVT region. And, there is no better time to strengthen our collaborations and connectivity to the shared prosperity for all.

The CLMVT is “The Golden Region of Opportunity”. CLMVT is among the world’s most dynamic regions by a considerable margin. In 2017, GDP growth of the region registered at 6.28% and IMF projects that it will double the world’s GDP growth between 2013 – 2017.

As per the **technology**, we may illustrate that the CLMVT is in **preparation stage before taking off**. Almost 150 million people in the region, or 61% approximately, are accessible to internet and 120.5 million Facebook accounts were registered in 2017, according to “Internet World Stat.com” website.

Another key area of emphasis in this forum is **E-Commerce**. It is surprisingly found that, accounting only two countries in the region namely Thailand and Vietnam, 47 million people regularly buy products online with the annual average spending amount of 109 US Dollars per person, increasing 10 – 14 % from last year. The total value accounted for 5,100 million US Dollars with the growth rate of expand 20 – 22%. Although this figure has yet included another three countries, it is profound that **e-commerce has great potential to facilitate regional trade beyond our imagination – faster, easier, and more convenient**. With the projection that e-commerce will highly proliferate in this region, this also attracts digital platform giants both from Asia and other regions to expand their businesses into the CLMVT.

Apart from Digital Economy and E-commerce, another promising trade in the region is **the role of young generation and entrepreneurs**. Noting that SMEs, startups, and young entrepreneurs are the key drivers of the CLMVT economies, the **Ministry of Commerce are gladly welcome many SMEs and Startups from wide range of areas** both CLMVT people who work overseas and pioneers who successfully utilize new emerging business models and platforms **to share their experiences and ignite new inspiration among others**. I strong believe that **young generation is the heart of economic development and regional connectivity for the future in the age of technological challenges**. Hence, the Ministry of Commerce has initiated broad range of activities aiming to groom

young entrepreneurs for their next steps such as YEN-D and New Economy Academy (NEA) program.

### *Opportunities vs. Challenges: Together, Stronger*

As you can see, our CLMVT region has large potentials to utilize these technological changes. However, there are also challenges from **technological disruption**. For example, employment might be partially replaced by robotics and Artificial Intelligence (AI). Human capital development plan needs to shift its focus to the “re-skilling” and “up-skilling” of CLMVT workforce for the future of jobs. **To explore new opportunities, while simultaneously address these challenges, an agile adaptation from both public and private sectors is a necessity** - in order for CLMVT to **sustain our roles in the global value chain (GVC)**.

As CLMVT economies – both in production and consumption aspects- are closely-connected, any individual country cannot change on one’s own. **We rather need the concerted efforts to raise awareness and implement transformative policies throughout the regional value chains**. This encompasses **all dimensions, ranging from production, services, digital trade, SMEs and Startups development, to the integration of grassroots and agricultural sectors through creative economy**. All of these are the notions behind this year CLMVT Forum; bringing us together to jointly prepare for changes at the dawn of the Forth Industrial Revolution (4IR).

I am confident that if we **walk together, CLMVT will be stronger and become the rising stars**, not only in Asia but also at the global arena.

*Ministry of Commerce's collaboration with partner agencies*

His Excellency Prime Minister and distinguished guests,

The Ministry of Commerce of Thailand hosts this CLMVT Forum 2018 in collaboration with many partners, including the Ministry of Digital Economy and Society, the Ministry of Industry, the Ministry of Science and Technology, the Ministry of Tourism and Sports, the Ministry of Culture, the Board of Investment of Thailand, Bangkok Metropolis, the Mekong Institute and private sectors. In this year, it is a great honour for us to have distinguished ministers from CLMVT join the forum, in addition to leading businessmen, young entrepreneurs, and social enterprises.

I am confident that the exchange of views among the “Top Minds” experts and prominent representatives from many sectors in CLMVT and other countries will yield fruitful results and practical steps for future cooperation. Over the past two years, many partnership projects have stemmed from CLMVT Forum 2016, for instance, human capital development, entrepreneur network development, and sister-cities strategic partnership to reach the global market.

On this auspicious occasion, I have the honour to invite **His Excellency Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-Ocha** to deliver his welcoming address and opening keynote speech for CLMVT Forum 2018. Please Excellency.

-----