

KEYNOTE SPEECH
NATIONAL STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT FOR STATISTICS
IN THAILAND
BY

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Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of the Royal Thai government and the Thai people I have great pleasure in welcoming you to the High-Level Forum on Strategic Planning in Statistics for South-East Asian Countries, which assesses the current status of strategic statistical planning in the sub-region to identify the successes and constraints being experienced in implementing existing plans and to consider solutions to those constraints.

We are privileged that Thailand was chosen as the venue for this meeting, especially this month when Thai people are celebrating the Occasion of the King's sixtieth anniversary of his accession to the throne. The National Statistical Office itself is of great honor and very happy to be part of this very important forum.

Upon its establishment in 1963, the Thai National Statistical Office (or NSO) was a departmental-level agency under the Office of Prime Minister. Following the bureaucratic reform in 2002, the NSO was reorganized to be under the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology.

The NSO is mandated for producing and providing country's statistical data, as well as managing country's statistical system which encompasses the networks of 75 provincial statistical offices. With more than 40 years of experience, the NSO has earned trust and recognition from the Government, public agencies, and private organizations in providing statistical data that are widely utilized in policy formulation and in development of plans.

At present, the process of globalization has generated a new level of complexity in the world in which we operate. Changes are more rapid and fluid, instigating an even greater need for a country to lay down appropriate foundations for economic, social, environment and natural resource management structures. Against this backdrop, the Thai government is facing up to the challenges and is fully aware of the importance of having a balanced, sustainable, and cohesive national strategy to ensure the continuity of the country's development.

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Critical to the success of implementing this strategy is a “good governance” plan, which the Thai government has successfully developed. The plan takes a multi-dimensional approach, emphasizing the importance of the result-based framework that focuses on monitoring and evaluation of government activities and outcomes. At the same time, it also requires a lot of detailed and relevant statistics as key inputs into the whole process. The approach requires all ministries and departments to align their strategies with the national strategy in a coherent fashion so as to ensure that the monitoring and evaluation system is followed through. At the provincial level, a new governance style, known as the CEO style was introduced in 2003. In addition, the government also introduced the result-based budgeting whereby the preparation and execution of budgets places stronger emphasis on outcomes than outputs of activities. Officials are also trained and required to develop key performance indicators, enabling them to monitor and evaluate their work activities.

In all, these reform steps have been introduced to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of government administration and governance. However, without access to quality information and statistical data, or a responsive statistical system and capable personnel, the result-based framework introduced will fall short of achieving its intended objectives. To serve this mission, the NSO has striven to make available such statistical data as:

1. **Report on economic, social, and environmental situations**, to be as an important tool for a monitor system and an early warning system that are related to situations in particular information and data about the SET index, CPI, unemployment, interest rate, business confidential index, and public confidential index.

2. **Information and data for the formulation of plan or strategy and for the forecasting of economic and social situations in Thailand**, such as data for calculating GDP, data for monitoring labour market, investment, income distribution, education, health, and so on.

3. **Data for analysing projects or programmes**, especially for a feasibility study of the public or private projects that they are proper or suitable to the context of Thailand or not. The data includes data on logistic satellite and various statistics account such as education, health, environment, etc.

4. **Data and information for monitoring and evaluating the effect of strategies or plans**, in order to be an essential tool for measuring the effectiveness and efficiency of the strategies or plans. The data includes data on GDP, GPP, poverty, income distribution, and environmental account.

5. **Research and knowledge management**, to be as a holistic form of information for other agencies to use as knowledge for enhancing the competitiveness of Thailand for example data in the I/O table, science and technology information, logistic information, and other emerging issues such as intellectual rights.

However, it is important to bear in mind that Thailand's statistical system is a decentralized system with the NSO as a central agency responsible for producing fundamental statistics while statistical units are responsible for producing statistical data to serve their purposes and internal use. Often, collection and production of statistical data are conducted without applying standards and quality control, and result in duplicated efforts and lack of comparability, thereby wasting resources. As a result, it has been suggested that the role and functions of the NSO should be modified towards managing the National Statistical System, providing a one-stop service, and certifying statistical data produced by statistical units to ensure that the same standards are applied across the board.

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Looking ahead, once charged with the new role and functions, the NSO will have to work closely with its partners to establish:

- An evidence-based policy making environment with reliance on quantitative indicators
- Professional independence and objectivity, anchored on high credibility and strong reputation
- Presence of legal framework providing authority and powers to the statistical agency
- Professional leadership to manage and set highest scientific standards for the statistical system
- Adequate information technology and human resource infrastructure
- Responsiveness to changing users and evolving needs

Given that with a number of countries interested in the management of National Statistical System, this conference on National Strategic Development for Statistics will greatly benefit Thailand and other countries in this region. It will provide a platform for idea exchanges and experience sharing among all the participating countries and members.

Currently, the NSO is reviewing and revising the National Statistical Act, which has been in use since 1965, in order to keep up with the demands for data series that are linked to the functioning of markets and a changing role for governments. It is suggested that the NSO prepares the national statistical master plan, defining roles and responsibilities of statistical units for production of statistical data. This new Act is expected to be promulgated in 2007 while the NSO has already started to proceed with the implementation of the national statistical master plan. Knowledge gained and experiences shared in this forum will provide new ideas and guidance for the NSO to develop a system capable of producing quality statistical data that meet the demand of various users at all levels.

It is an auspicious time now, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen. I would like to take this opportunity to wish you a fruitful and successful meeting.

Thank you.
