Concept Note
Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) Thailand
Establishing a SDSN node for Thailand

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1. Rationale

At the SDG Summit 2019, Global Sustainable Development Report 2019 alarmed the world leaders that the SDG progress has been too slow. Transformative change, especially in the aspect of implementation and knowledge governance, is crucial. At the regional level, SDG Progress Report 2019 by UNESCAP reports that Southeast Asian nations had a reversal trend in SDG16 and were poorly performed in the environmental goals, especially SDG13: climate action, SDG14: life under water, and SDG15: life on land. At the national level, SDG index 2019 reports that Thailand still have at least 4 SDGs with the red label (Major Challenges Remain), and 11 SDGs with yellow label (Significant Challenges Remain). Only SDG1: No poverty is considered achieved, according to the international indicator.

After 4 years, Thailand SDG progress is still very slow although Thai government has been quite active. The government has mainstreamed the SDGs into the top-level national policies, established National Committee for Sustainable Development (NCSD) which is chaired by the Prime Minister, and assigned related government agencies to take responsibility on goals and targets. SDGs were also integrated into Ministerial level action plans and policies. Despite all of those efforts, the existing challenges remained, and the new ones emerged.

One of the gaps is the lack of integrative governance for SDG implementation. The NCSD is rarely a platform for multi-stakeholder dialogue because of how the committee meeting is organized. The integration between government agencies under different ministries are still difficult, which makes it even harder to tackle complex sustainability problems. Dialogues between government, business, civil society and academics on sustainability problems rarely occurred except through the Open-Ended Working Group on SDGs held by Ministry of Foreign Affairs, thus, trust between sectors has been built very slowly.

Another gap is the knowledge gap, covering the gaps in knowledge production as well as in knowledge translation. The gap in knowledge production occurred because the real users may not have a chance to inform their needs to the knowledge producers. Also, complex sustainability problems may prove difficult to solve because they cannot be solved by one discipline. The lack of interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research leaves these sustainability problems unanswered. In addition, the existing knowledge is rarely translated and delivered to the public and those who need it the most. Without the proper translation and delivery to the right users, the knowledge created loses its opportunity to impact the world.

We, SDG Move, CPCS, TIIS, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, believe that the model of Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) could fill these gaps. SDSN Thailand could be the starting point for the network of researchers and experts to unite and initiate the interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary efforts to tackle the sustainability problems related to the SDGs and be the multi-stakeholder platform where practices and research meet, knowledge co-produced, and integrated solutions implemented. It can also be the platform for knowledge and experience sharing between Thai and global experts. In addition, SDSN Thailand can also support the existing academic network as well as nurture new thematic and area-based networks. This is a mechanism that will accelerate the achievement of the SDGs in Thailand.

2. Vision of the Network

SDSN Thailand mobilizes universities, research centers, civil society organizations, knowledge centers and businesses to create and implement transformative solutions to achieve the Agenda 2030 and beyond. SDSN Thailand has 4 main objectives:

- **Shape multi-stakeholder dialogue**: provide platforms for exchanging ideas and experiences between academia, government, business and civil society to build trust and commitment, and to foster systematic solutions and mobilize actions.
- **Nurture thematic networks to foster sustainable development solutions**: Strengthening and incorporating SDGs into the existing thematic networks and nurture new thematic networks for issues that have not been systematically addressed, to monitor the situations, to facilitate multi-stakeholder platforms, and to foster sustainable development solutions for these themes.
- **Advise decision-makers:** Offer evidence-based advice to decision-makers in politics, business and society to fill policy gaps and motivate normative change.
- **Strengthening capacity on sustainability research and education of Thai universities and schools:** Provide innovative educational tools, content for education for sustainable development, and necessary trainings for teachers and young researchers, as well as provide platforms for Thai scholars for exchanging knowledge and experiences with global experts.

3. Vision to Action

Our vision to action covers 3 years and is divided into 3 phases as follows:

Phase 1 (2020): Establishing SDSN Thailand within Thai SDG communities by organizing platforms for dialogue, for instance, Thailand Sustainability Conference, SDG workshop series (connecting Thai and global experts, as well as publishing Thailand SDG Progress Report in cooperation with business, civil society and academic sectors.

Phase 2 (2021): Nurturing thematic networks especially those that would accelerate transformation and bring continuous improvements towards sustainability in Thailand and globally. The potential themes are the followings:

- Governance System and Means of Implementation
- Data for SDGs
- Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP)
- Sustainable Cities
- Reduced Inequality
- SDG Localization

Phase 3 (2022): Initiating Regional Cooperation, especially at Southeast Asian level and beyond to explore and tackle transboundary issues, for instance, sustainable agriculture and PM2.5 pollution, water resource management (particularly Mekong river), and, regional infrastructure and influence of China. Cooperation with SDSN Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Southeast Asia will be crucial.

4. Prospective members and partners

SDSN Thailand brings together leading scientists and researchers, responsible and innovative business and impact-oriented civil society organizations to build partnerships and accelerate transformation pathways towards sustainability. Our members and partners play a key role in exploring ways for constructing knowledge and solutions, mobilizing thematic networks, and producing locally focused content of sustainability.

- **Members:** Universities and network of universities, research centers, civil society organizations, and other knowledge centers, such as think tanks and social enterprises that are engaged in sustainable development. Member of the global SDSN are invited to be members of SDSN Thailand. Potential members are the following organizations:
  - ASEAN Center for Sustainable Development Studies and Dialogue (ACSDSD)
  - Faculty of Economics, Chiang Mai University
  - Mahasarakham University
  - Mahidol University
  - Social Research Institute, Chulalongkorn University
  - Sustainable Development and Sufficiency Economy Studies Centers, National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA)
  - Sal Forest

- Urban Future Research Unit, Faculty of Architecture and Urban Planning, Thammasat University
- **Partners:** Organizations that support the vision and objectives of SDSN Thailand, but are not member of the global SDSN, are invited as partners. This includes non-global SDSN universities, research centers, civil society organizations as well as businesses, foundations, associations and international organizations, for example, Global Compact Network Thailand (GCNT), Thai Responsible Business Network (TRBN), Thai Business Council for Sustainable Development (TBCSD).
- **Networks:** SDSN Thailand establishes collaboration and seek synergies with existing networks and nurture newly built networks and initiatives that foster sustainable development, including Thai SCP Network, Urban 11 Nexus, Sustainable Universities Network (SUN), Thai Responsible Business Network, Thai Young Philanthropist Network, Volunteer Spirit Network, Young Thai for Sustainable Development Assembly (YSDA), and civil society networks in Thailand.
- **Government:** SDSN Thailand works closely with key government agencies, such as National Statistical Office, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It seeks to include relevant government agencies in its thematic networks since they play important role in implementing the SDGs.

5. **Proposed governance structure, including list of potential leadership council members**.
- **Leadership Council**: includes up to 12 representatives from academic, government, civil society, private, and philanthropist sectors. The combination of each sector in the council will be balanced to ensure an equal voice for each sector in the council. Names of the Leadership Council members will be proposed by the network's members. The major role of the leadership council is to increase the visibility and reach of the network, provide intellectual leadership, stimulate dialogue, and support the mobilization of resources.
- **Chair of the Leadership Council:** will be elected by the Leadership Council members. The core partners agree that

the chair will be from academic sector. At the moment, the director of the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies (CPCS), Chulalongkorn University is an acting chair before the leadership council is formed.
- **Secretariat:** coordinates the day-to-day business of SDSN Thailand, including its programme of work. It facilitates thematic initiatives and the mobilization of resources. It coordinates and works closely with member and partner organizations in Thailand, as well as with the global SDSN secretariat. The SDG Research and Support Programme (SDG Move) of Faculty of Economics, Thammasat University will be the main secretariat of the network with supports from designated staff members of the TIIS and CPCS.

6. Resources

Initially, Faculty of Economics, Thammasat University; Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, Chulalongkorn University; and Nation Science and Technology Development Agency (NSTDA) will support resources necessary for the establishment and basic operation of the SDSN Thailand. European Union will also support the launch event at the Asia Pacific Forum for Sustainable Development (APFSD) at UN-ESCAP during March 25-27, 2020.

SDSN Thailand was also proposed to Thailand Science Research and Innovation (TSRI) for funding. At this point, TSRI informed us that one of the conditions for the funding is the formal document of international cooperation. We strongly believe that, once SDSN Thailand is established, it is very likely that we will be able to secure the funding for further network mobilization.

7. Host Organizations

- **SDG Research and Support Program (SDG Move), Faculty of Economics, Thammasat University**

Faculty of Economics, Thammasat University, is a leading academic institution in Thailand focusing its research on economics linking to sustainability issues. The faculty hosts more than 50 experts in economics of natural resources, environment, climate change, water resource management, energy, agriculture, rural development, education and health, labour, poverty and inequality. Two

major research centres under the faculty, namely, Centre of Policy Research on Green Economy (PRO-Green) and Centre of Research on Inequality and Social Policy (CRISP), play important roles in environmental economics and inequality research and related policies respectively. Under PRO-Green, SDG Research and Support Programme (SDG Move) was established 4 years ago and has been working on the 2030 Agenda ever since.

SDG Research and Support Program (SDG Move) is among the first research unit established specifically for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It was supported by Thailand Research Fund (TRF), responsible for identifying directions for research granting of the TRF, reviewing and following progress of SDG research and implementation at the global as well as national level, and providing policy recommendations for SDG implementations in Thailand. There were two sets of research projects under the funding directed by SDG Move, i.e. 17 research projects evaluating baseline and current status of 17 SDGs, and 5 research projects on localizing SDGs in the context of Thailand. SDG Move no longer plays this role due to the drastic change of the national research system.

SDG Move also has a research team working on policy research related to SDGs. It worked closely with National Statistical Office (NSO) in developing national SDG indicators, and with Department of International Organization, Ministry of Foreign Affairs in promoting partnership for SDGs in Thailand. It has been working with General Auditor of Thailand in incorporating SDGs into its auditing practices. It also worked with the Office of Natural Resource and Environmental Policy in the development of monitoring system for 5 indicators under SDG12. In addition, SDG Move played important roles in advocating SDGs. It was one of a few organizations that developed SDG training courses and learning tools for Thai audience. Academic network for SDGs was formed at the sub-national regional level.

- **Center for Peace and Conflict Studies (CPCS), Chulalongkorn University**

In the contemporary world, the dilemma on conflict existing in the society is diverse and dramatic. The society is currently in the midst of the vulnerable condition that is at risk from fractions, hatred, and prejudice between the majority and the minority. The violent situation of conflict continuously happening in the past years, especially in the deep south, mirrors the seam of understanding on the root cause of the problem. The analysis of the problem that lacks academic principles and appears to be a work of conjecture. Manipulated and malfunctioned communication. Those involved in healing the conflict are clouded to perceive the possibility of peaceful means. The bereft of skills and creativity in conflict resolution without violent means. These conditions are all the reflections of this current situation.

In the condition where the society is currently facing the crisis of violent conflict, the university is expected to manifest its role as a leader of ideas, knowledge, creativity, the skill to coexist together, and conflict resolution by peaceful means. **Chulalongkorn University** has great potential and is a source of interdisciplinary knowledge that proves to be useful in helping the society through the crisis of conflict. The university is able to lay the foundation of a strong democratic society that is to face problems later in the future. The integration of education encompasses a wide range of areas namely, philosophy, ethics, social psychology, public communication, law and human rights, governance, international relations, religion, education, culture, health, and development.

It is to corporate the knowledge of the faculty of teachers in creating conflict resolution by peaceful means for Thai society, the establishment of **Center for Peace and Conflict Studies** could potentially become a significant mechanism in pioneering the work in this area more explicitly. The Center operates to achieve the following objectives: (1) to respond to the urgent need for policies on building harmony in the case of the deep south; (2) to accumulate and develop the body of knowledge as well as the experience in conflict resolution by peaceful means from the international domain and the Thai society; (3) to coordinate with the network of to organize training programs and develop the activities promoting national and international peaceful means such as Rotary International; (4) to develop the curriculum and training projects on peace and conflict resolution by peaceful means. This would consequently contribute to the capacity to accumulate the resources, the acknowledgement of activities leading to development and knowledge distribution in terms of public participation, and the policy preposition leading to conflict resolution.

- **Technology and Information Institute for Sustainability (TIIS), National Science and Technology Development Agency (NSTDA)**

The National Science and Technology Development Agency (NSTDA) was established in December 1991 as an autonomous government agency under the National Science and Technology Development Act 1991. NSTDA is affiliated to the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation, with the Minister serving as the chairman of NSTDA Governing Board.

NSTDA is entrusted with an important task to accelerate science, technology and innovation development in Thailand in order to respond to the need of the industry and enhance the country's competitiveness in the global economy, and as a result, making contribution to national economic and social development. Our mission is to perform and support Research and Development, Design and Engineering, Technology Transfer, Science and Technology Human Resource Development and Infrastructure Development. This mission is implemented through working with partners from academic, government, private, and non-government sectors, both domestically and internationally.

Technology and Informatics Institute for Sustainability, national science and technology infrastructure unit**,** aims to serves as a central body to house the database for sustainable development as well as to develop data management system in accordance with the international criteria. Data are widely used across the country to provide manufacturers and consumers with valuable information on sustainability (SDGs, Climate change, etc.), this center will play a crucial role in supporting and enhancing Thailand's competitiveness and philosophy of sufficiency economy.