Introductory Remarks
by Mr. Natapanu Nopakun, Deputy Spokespersons of CCSA, Thailand
at the webinar “Risk communication for better disaster risk management”
a side event at the 7th ESCAP Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction
27 August 2021, 10:00 -11:15 hrs.

Mr. Timothy Wilcox,
Programme Management Officer and Officer-In-Charge of the Regional Office for
Asia and the Pacific, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR),
Distinguished Panelists,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very honored to join this event and deliver these introductory remarks.

While the World is facing multi-hazard risks exacerbated by climate change
and devastating disasters, we have seen rapid technological progress in the field of
Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the last decades. With such
technology, information and data is widely accessible and can be transmitted faster
among the public. A rapid communication system certainly benefits people as they
can receive timely information which, in turn, enhances people’s awareness of the
situation. On the other hand, misinformation can cause the public panic and distrust.
Therefore, risk communication plays a critical role in strengthening disaster
preparedness, enhancing risk management and saving people’s lives.

As for the risk communication strategy in response to the current pandemic in
Thailand, a communication unit was appointed under the Centre for Covid-19
Situation Administration or CCSA as a key mechanism for communicating with the
public. This team has worked closely on a daily basis with the Emergency Operation
Center of the Ministry of Public Health to provide updated information on the
situation, and also to review the information prior to conveying the news to the
public. This process has helped ensure more reliable information is provided /which
led to the public’s cooperation and compliance with the government’s measures.
It has been almost two years since we began this work, amid the dynamic situation. I must say this work is indeed challenging, but it has moved forward Thailand’s effective response efforts as much as possible, despite the situation at hand.

For more effective disaster risk management and public engagement on COVID-19 protection measures, risk communication strategies need to go beyond traditional approaches of sectors working in silos /to include a whole of community approach. This inclusive approach will enable the community to better understand disaster risk, embrace new innovation and build partnerships with all relevant sectors, such as media, civil society and the private sectors. Effective risk communication systems will help enhance individuals’ preparedness so that they can make risk-informed decisions both before and during a disaster. In strengthening risk management, risk communication should be integrated into all areas of disaster response and capacity building. All levels of engagement need to be strengthened.

Distinguished participants, today’s event is a good opportunity for us to exchange experiences and lessons learned from cross-sectoral collaboration about risk communication strategies so as to better manage future disaster risks as we build back from the COVID-19 pandemic. Key challenges and opportunities in strengthening risk communication throughout the disaster management cycle, particularly during compound and complex emergencies, will be explored. I, therefore, very much look forward to our discussions today.

I would like to thank the Ministry of Public Health of Thailand and the UNDRR for their efforts in organizing this important session. My appreciation also goes to all the panelists for their valuable participation especially during these critical times. And may I take this opportunity to pay tribute to all frontline workers around the world, especially those who work in the field in support of pandemic control and disaster management. I wish you all good health and well-being.

I wish this event every success.

Thank you.

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