

Keynote Address: What does the latest science tell us?

SEA of Solutions 2019:

Partnership Week for Marine Plastic Pollution Prevention

in South East Asia

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Excellencies,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen

My name is Wijarn Simachaya. I am the President of Thailand Environment Institute Foundation or TEI which has been ranked as one of the world top Think Tank on environmental policy for seven consecutive years by the University of Pennsylvania. I also serve as the Secretary General of Thailand Business Council for Sustainable Development or TBCSD which is an Association with over 40 leading companies in Thailand from almost all major industries join to address emerging national sustainable development issues. I am greatly honored to be here on this stage today to deliver keynote address on the latest science; share experience and exchange knowledge on national and international environmental policy, natural resource

management and environmental conservation, particularly on the challenges related to plastic waste and marine litter.

With the advancement of digital technologies, we all have access to tremendous knowledge, information and data; and with the modern communication channels, the global community are well connected and aware of the situations all around the world.

Since the invention of plastics in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, our lives have been safer and more comfortable. Due to its durable, persistent and low cost nature, plastic usages quickly and widely spread around the world. We use plastics in our everyday life. It protects our water, food and medicine from contamination; makes transportation of materials and goods around the world possible; and is used in laboratory which create great innovation and save lives. However, the unmindful- and miss-used of plastics, and unsustainable waste management could not retain plastics where it should be. Large amount of plastic leaks to the environment. It is estimated that at least 8 million tons of plastics end up in our oceans every year with an equivalent rate of a garbage truck load's worth every minute. The effects of waste pollution have been clearly evidenced. Plastic waste are found everywhere in the world even in the remote area such as on the topmost mountain and in the deepest sea; a number of citizen lives in or near mountain high of waste; some part of the river and ocean is full of plastics. Moreover, it

is estimated that at least 800 species worldwide are affected by marine litters, and as much as 80 percent of that litters are plastics. More and more scientific findings have also proved that plastics could breakdown in to small pieces called “micro- and nano- plastics”. When these small pieces of plastics are in the ocean they look like “plankton” and are found in several of wildlife species including species which we consume. Advance scientific research also report potential impacts of these plastic particles to organisms including human.

On the bright side, innovative thinking has led to a number of solutions, including intensive communication tools and channels to advocate and build awareness of this issue to promote sustainable use of plastics and prevent plastic leakage such as 3Rs and Circular Economy; technology to remove plastic debris from the environment such as passive clean up system and interceptor; innovation to turn plastic waste to useful resources such as turning plastic waste to new products (upcycling) and using plastic litter as energy; technology to seek alternative materials; and interactive knowledge sharing platform which allow all the experts and communities to learn from and collaborate with each other to solve the challenged and complicated problem.

Ladies and gentlemen,

It cannot be denied that waste pollution, especially plastic waste is one of the most troublesome and complicated environmental and sustainable development challenges at all levels from the grassroots community, national, regional and global levels. The international communities from multidisciplinary have come together to join hands in tackling this matters. At the global level, waste pollution, including marine plastic debris, is a significant part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Plastic pollution challenges are integrated in several Sustainable Development Goals such as SDG 11, SDG 12, SDG 13, SDG 14, and of course SDG 17. At the regional level, there are several commitments and agreements to tackle marine plastic debris. For ASEAN, the ASEAN Community has just adopted the “Bangkok Declaration in Combating Marine Debris in the ASEAN Region” together with a Framework of Action on Marine Debris which outlines key actions to combat marine debris covering Policy Support and Planning; Research, Innovation and Capacity Building; Public Awareness, Education and Outreach; and Private Sector Engagement. In addition, ASEAN has endorsed “Bangkok 3R Declaration towards Prevention of Plastic Waste Pollution through 3R and Circular Economy”. ASEAN also works with other international collaborative partners to find the best fit solution to solve the problem in the ASEAN

context. These are huge leaps for regional unity, collaboration and commitment to address plastic pollution.

For the national level movement, please allow me to share some examples from Thailand. Thailand considers plastic waste as a national issue. We developed and has been implementing the 5-Year National Master Plan on Waste Management (2016 – 2021), together with the 20-Year Roadmap for Sustainable Consumption and Production (2017-2036) and established the National Sub Committee on Plastic Waste Management under the National Environment Board to promote effective and sustainable waste management by creating collaborations among all stakeholders from government, private, community, civil society. Furthermore, these multi-stakeholders have come together and initiated a network known as “Thailand Public Private Partnership for Sustainable Plastic and Waste Management” or PPP-Plastic. PPP-Plastic currently consists of over 30 governmental agencies, private companies and civil society organizations and continue to grow. The Sub Committee and PPP-Plastic set out an ambitious goal concentrate on single used plastics of reducing marine plastic debris by at least 50% and all target plastic waste in Thailand to be fully recycled by 2027. PPP-Plastic focuses on 4 pillars such as building community models for plastics circular economy; promoting

education and communication on waste management to change human's behavior to waste disposal; promoting innovation for upcycling plastic waste; and supporting and influencing sound government policy by serving the national waste management sub-committee. The national roadmap on plastic waste management already approved by the cabinet on 2018.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Have we done enough? Do we have all we need to tackle marine debris problem? The answers are yes and no. Yes, we have been investing in raising awareness, mobilizing resources and inventing technology to solve the problems. However, it still seems that plastic waste presents in large amount in landfilled and in the environment.

What else do we have to do? We have to keep working to advocating on this issues; finding the best and most suitable solutions and alternatives; removing the plastic waste in the environment; and organizing knowledge sharing and technology transfer platform like this "Partnership week for marine litter and plastic pollution prevention in South East Asia under Sea of Solutions". We need to work together in a big scale nationally, regionally and globally to ensure that plastics will belong to its appropriate places which is not in the environment or in organisms. We need to ensure that the global community change

their behavior on plastic use and waste management to stop plastic leakage. We need to find plastic alternatives to which is affordable and durable to keep our water and food clean. We also need to remove the waste that already exists in the environment and ensure that we keep the world, wildlife and us clean and safe.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

All of us in this room have the will, power and tools to reverse the plastic waste pollution crisis and save the world. Our children and the future generations are looking upon us and working with us to really solve the problem. There is no better time than doing it now and we have to do this together.

Thank You