

**Summary of  
ASEM Seminar on  
Enhancing Human Capital for Sustainable Digital Connectivity  
25 October 2019, Bangkok, Thailand**

1. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand hosted the ASEM Seminar on Enhancing Human Capital for Sustainable Digital Connectivity on 25 October 2019 in Bangkok.
2. The seminar was a follow up to the 12<sup>th</sup> ASEM Summit in Brussels in October 2018 when ASEM leaders stressed the importance of enhancing ASEM cooperation on digital connectivity. General Prayut Chan-o-cha, Prime Minister of Thailand, pledged to host the seminar and opined that there was a need to develop international rules and to equip human capital to keep pace with the transition to a digital economy. The seminar was organized as part of the country's commitment to the issue of sustainability in all dimensions and as part of a series of international meetings hosted by Thailand on digital connectivity, including the Digital Thailand Big Bang 2019 organised by the Ministry of Digital Economy and Society, held in Bangkok on 28-30 October 2019. Approximately more than 250 participants, representing ASEM members, international organizations, government agencies, private sectors, academia, local communities and youths, attended the meeting.
3. The seminar was designed to serve as a platform for sharing experiences and best practices between Asia and Europe on sustainable digital connectivity and human capital capacity building. The seminar also provided an opportunity for both Asia and Europe to explore the priorities and challenges in promoting sustainability and its contributions to the attainment of Goal 9 (Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation) of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals.
4. The seminar comprised of High-Level Commitment and three sessions, namely (1) Session I on "Bridging the Digital Skills Gap - Towards a Digital Literated Society in Asia and Europe"; (2) Session II on "Accessing the Digital Marketplace - Towards an Open and Innovative Digital Global Economy"; and (3) Session III on "Towards Sustainable Digital Connectivity and Security in Asia and Europe".
5. In her opening statement, H.E. Ms. Pornpimol Kanchanalak, Advisor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, reiterated the importance of connectivities between people, businesses and institutions which aimed to attain the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). She also emphasized that the Asia-Europe connectivity was vital for peace, stability,

economic prosperity, as well as inclusive development on which Thailand had been focusing. This seminar provided a timely opportunity for Asia and Europe to discuss on the way forward to promote sustainable digital connectivity in order that the two regions would be well prepared for the 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution. In doing so, enhancing human capital should be put on at the top of their priorities. Moreover, she stressed that the development of technologies for the people and training of skills necessary for future careers should be emphasized for the empowerment of human capital so that they could respond to any challenges during the digital transition. In addition, Asia and Europe should enhance their collaboration in strengthening cyber-security to build up digital trust and in promoting digital governance.

6. The seminar discussed and concluded with the following points:

6.1 The seminar acknowledged that the advancement of digital technology has irreversibly changed the way of life for people. Thus, it was vital for governments to equip their citizens with necessary skills in an increasingly volatile labour market. This called for a holistic reform of the educational establishments together with an investment in the digital infrastructure of the countries to ensure the affordable accessibility for all.

6.2 At the same time, the seminar recognized that digital technology was an essential tool to poverty eradication. Thus, the seminar called for the business and government sectors to work together to harness the benefits of technology, innovation, digitization, and E-commerce, both at the national and regional levels.

6.3 The seminar also touched upon the issue of cyber security and urged both Asia and Europe to work together on regulatory alignments and digital governance to ensure cyber resilience and to leverage digital technology for the attainment of the SDGs.

6.4 The seminar took note of the world's changing landscape into digitization. While digital technology could be empowering to humans in many aspects of life—from job searching mobile applications to smart cities—it also introduced some unfamiliar challenges such as the threat of human jobs being replaced by A.I. technology, etc. Thus, the world should quickly adapt in order to prevent possible shortcomings in the future digital age. The seminar underlined that public-private partnership could play a key role in addressing these challenges; in particular, the partnership to bridge the existing digital skills gap. Majority of panelists supported the idea of engaging the younger generation with an entrepreneurial mindset at the country's policy level. Taking the recent appointment of Gojek founder as Indonesian Education Minister for example, it was agreed that this could be a catalyst for a more practical solution to certain

country's longstanding problem that couldn't be addressed in a traditional way. The seminar also discussed the growing trend of using digitizing to reduce social gaps and increase country's productivity. In Vietnam, for instance, a smart farming mobile application has helped farmers throughout the country plan their harvests more efficiently. It was also highlighted that human adaptation to the digital age is a life-long learning process that should be taken seriously.

6.5 The seminar realized that the potential for the digital economy to drive inclusive and sustainable growth was substantial. It was therefore vital for the ASEM partners to fully leverage the benefits of the digital economy and work together in tackling inequality and giving equal opportunities by enabling more people through infrastructure, and training, as well as by promoting business and community engagement, and digital innovation. The seminar, thus, discussed how to advance digital platforms and ecosystem for digital economy development that benefits all sustainably. The seminar realized the crucial roles of the public sector as a digital transformation facilitator and of the private sector in contributing towards innovations such as mobile money and e-commerce platforms for the improvement of financial service availabilities and digital economy. The seminar underlined that reaching higher performances of the public sector in regulating businesses related to electronic transactions, in implementing effective law enforcement on taxation system in the transboundary e-commerce, and in regulating a balanced data protection law were challenges. Therefore, consultations among all stakeholders were needed to come up with the proper laws and regulatory frameworks, which would be simpler and easier to comply. Moreover, the seminar also highlighted that Asia and Europe could work together in sharing information and best practices on regulatory frameworks on tax laws for e-commerce and data protection laws, and on education and upskill development for human capital so that the future workforce in the digital economy could be equipped with digital IT ability, critical thinking capabilities and growth mindset.

6.6 The seminar realized the challenges created by the era of digital transformation, including inadequate local capacity in utilizing new technology, cybersecurity risks, low level of digital trust, online dissemination of hate speech and fake news, and online radical mobilization. Proactive and responsive actions had been taken by different national and international key actors to address these arising challenges. The seminar, thus, encouraged the exchange of knowledge and best practices among different actors on what could be done to achieve sustainable digital connectivity and security. The seminar underlined the importance of enhancing the capacity of human capital and business sector in adopting new technology. It was suggested that high level of trust was deemed to be a precondition for capacity building. The policymakers needed to come up with reliable and practical protective and preventive measures to secure use of data exchange and data usage. In addition, the seminar discussed further

enhancement of cybersecurity measures ranging from top-down governmental projects to local capacity building by different sectors. Taking into account the threats arising from the use of speedy and easy-to-access technology, the seminar exchanged good practices through a number of innovative platforms, such as a virtual command center among different IT companies to respond to major violent incidents, and an online media outlet to address violent extremism. Above all, the seminar underlined that the engagement of all relevant stakeholders such as inclusive dialogues, working groups, multi-sector joint operating projects, public consultation and policy coordination, could be the key to the success of promoting digital society and security by addressing all the challenges that came with digital transition.

6.7 The seminar appreciated Thailand's role and leadership in promoting a sustainable digital connectivity and recognized the importance of partnership and collaboration among ASEM members and the promotion of ASEM's roles as a platform for exchanging experiences and best practices on human resource capacity building and sustainable digital connectivity.

\*\*\*\*\*