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Department of Environment and Natural Resources

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## MEMORANDUM

FOR : **The Undersecretary for Special Concerns  
and OIC, Director, Biodiversity Management Bureau**

**The Assistant Secretary**  
Policy, Planning and Foreign Assisted and Special Projects  
and **Director, Forest Management Bureau**  
In Concurrent Capacity

**The Directors**  
Ecosystems Research and Development Bureau  
Environmental Management Bureau  
Land Management Bureau  
Mines and Geosciences Bureau

FROM : **The Undersecretary**  
Policy, Planning and International Affairs

SUBJECT : **REPORT ON THE “HIGH-LEVEL WEBINAR ON  
ENDING PANDEMICS: CAN THAILAND LEAD A  
GLOBAL EFFORT TO PREVENT FUTURE  
PANDEMICS?”**

DATE : JUN 17 2021

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May we refer the letter dated 1 June 2021 from Foreign Affairs Assistant Secretary Nathaniel G. Imperial sharing with the DENR a report by the Philippine Embassy in Bangkok on a virtual event held on 27 May 2021 entitled “*High-Level Webinar on Ending Pandemics: can Thailand Lead a Global Effort to Prevent Future Pandemics?*”

For information and appropriate action, please.

  
ATTY. JONAS R. LEONES

MEMO NO. 2021 - 458



DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
KAGAWARAN NG UGNAYANG PANLABAS

OFFICE OF ASIAN AND PACIFIC AFFAIRS

NGI-2021-

01 June 2021

Sir:

The Department respectfully wishes to share with the DENR a report by the Philippine Embassy in Bangkok on a virtual event it attended on 27 May 2021 entitled "**High-Level Webinar on Ending Pandemics: can Thailand Lead a Global Effort to Prevent Future Pandemics?**". The event was organized by the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Thailand (FCCT).

The webinar featured senior Thai government officials and environment conservation leaders whose key message was that "*the only way to mitigate the risk of a pandemic recurrence anywhere in the world is through international collaboration and by addressing the root causes of zoonotic outbreaks.*"

The Department notes that Thailand's overall response to the pandemic, including the implementation of its One Health Approach, has been successful. As such, the Department transmits the attached report, which may be of useful reference for the relevant Philippine agencies in their planning and joint policy formulation efforts.

Very truly yours,  
For the Secretary of Foreign Affairs:



**NATHANIEL G. IMPERIAL**  
Assistant Secretary

**Hon. ROY A. CIMATU**  
Secretary of Environment and Natural Resources  
DENR Building, Visayas Avenue, Diliman  
Quezon City

**“High-Level Webinar on Ending Pandemics:  
Can Thailand Lead a Global Effort to Prevent Future Pandemics?”  
organized by the Foreign Correspondents’ Club of Thailand (FCCT)  
27 May 2021**

**Highlights and Key Messages**

**Hon. Surayud Chulanont, President of the Privy Council, Kingdom of Thailand**

- It is widely known that the COVID-19 pandemic is similar to SARS, HIV, Ebola and Bird Flu; all of which are serious and potentially deadly to human lives. How to prevent such emerging diseases is one of the world's important topics as it looks for ways to prevent future pandemics.
- To foster recovery in Thailand and to prevent future outbreaks, all parties concerned – the private and public sectors, and experts – are operating to develop and share new approaches focusing on treatments of the root causes.
- Thailand is recognized and admired by the World Health Organization (WHO) and other countries for its ability to manage the COVID-19 situation quite well in its early stages. Thailand's response is a result of the country's strong public health infrastructure, the sacrifice of dedicated personnel, and the cooperation of all sectors in Thailand.

**Hon. Anutin Charnvirakul, Minister of Public Health**

- The webinar is an opportunity to reflect on the current COVID-19 situation and highlight the importance of the One Health Approach in recognizing the interlinks and the need to work effectively across the human, animal, and environment sectors to address emerging and re-emerging diseases. More than 2/3 of emerging infectious diseases have their origins in animals.
- The COVID-19 pandemic is a good illustration of the One Health Approach. The pandemic's root causes include inadequate public health governance that limit countries' capacities to promptly deal with the pandemic.
- Global solidarity and stronger collaboration are necessary to mitigate the pandemic's impacts; this includes implementing public health measures together with social measures. The Thai Government will start its massive rollout of vaccines in June with the aim to vaccinate 100 million doses by yearend, covering 70% of people who live in Thailand.
- Thailand leads the world by example; it acted fast since identifying the first COVID-19 cases outside China. Its extensive distribution of healthcare facilities and Universal Health Coverage are two main factors behind Thailand's successful containment, with Thailand ranking 4<sup>th</sup> in the world in effectively handling the pandemic.
- Thailand can lead the global effort in preventing future pandemics, based on Thailand's experiences in previous outbreaks. Thailand applies the One Health Approach and works with the global community on this endeavor, including through the WHO and Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA), of which Thailand is the current Chair. The Ministry of Public Health cannot work alone against the pandemic; we need one another to enhance efforts.

**Hon. Waravut Silpa-archa, Minister of Environment and Natural Resources**

- Over the last century, humans have increasingly encroached on the natural world, increasing contact between humans and wildlife. Many people rely on wildlife for their livelihood and basic needs. As a result, the frequency and number of zoonotic diseases have risen drastically, with over 70% emerging infectious diseases (EIDs) in humans having originated in animals. These include HIV, SARS, Ebola, H1N1, and COVID-19.

- Systemic change is crucial. While the current pandemic has demonstrated the power of global responses such as systemic changes to peoples' daily routines, the pandemic is also a remarkable opportunity to work together to address the unsustainable pressures that are placed on the environment.
- Recognizing the effects of environmental factors on human health, the global community has adopted the One Health Approach: collaboration among multiple disciplines working locally, nationally, and globally to attain optimal health for people, animals, and environment. The Approach illustrates that solutions must recognize the deep interrelation of different systems. Thailand adopted the One Health Approach when it was hit by the H1N1 disease in 2004 and 2009.
- Addressing the pandemic means addressing its root causes. The current crisis reconfirms how people and nature are interlinked, and how humanity's negative impact on the natural world increases the risk of future pandemics.
- This pandemic can be a catalyst for increased awareness of the need for nature-based solutions. "We should stop illegal, unregulated, and high-risk wildlife trade and consumption. We need to build a new relationship between humans and nature, for a sustainable and just recovery. We must respect Mother Nature; for mankind to survive into the next century, we must adapt to nature and not the other way around." The commitment of stakeholders, and the trust and enforcement at all levels are crucial.

#### *Work in Thailand*

- The Thai Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources is committed to protect Thai people, wildlife, ecosystems, and the environment. It aims to make Thailand free of illegal wildlife trade by collaborating with stakeholders, including businesses and local communities.
- The Ministry works with the Ministry of Public Health on the One Health Approach by monitoring and controlling diseases transmitted from animals to humans. It has a public campaign on refraining from consuming meat from wild animals, especially from illegal hunting and trading. "Never eat, hunt, buy, or sell wildlife." It is vital to tackle the sales and consumption of high-risk wildlife, which is a source of high-risk zoonotic diseases.
- Wildlife laws are important to prevent illegal wildlife trade and the spread of viruses. The 2019 Wildlife Conservation and Protection Act is in force, with increased penalties (in terms of fines and imprisonment) and among the strongest in the region. These penalties serve as effective deterrents for wildlife crimes.
- Law enforcement, however, may not be sufficient to address zoonotic diseases as the destruction of wild habitat forces wildlife into human territory. The Ministry adopted the approach of preserving wildlife habitats in order to isolate wild animals from humans; this is done by demarcating national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, and non-hunting areas which cover 17% of the country.
- The 2019 Community Forest Act is a strong societal driving force that encourages people and local communities to conserve and enlarge forest areas based on their traditional knowledge and practices. Community forests serve as buffer zones separating wild animals from humans.

#### *Regional and Global Cooperation*

- The best way to end illegal wildlife trade is to break its supply chain, where ASEAN countries are either transit or destination countries. ASEAN countries need to prioritize preventive measures to address the issues throughout the region.
- ASEAN countries work together through the ASEAN Wildlife Enforcement Network (WEN), which was further developed in 2016 into the ASEAN Working Group on the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora

(CITES) and Wildlife Enforcement. ASEAN has agreed to allocate the necessary financial and human resources, and cross-border cooperation and coordination to ensure the effective enforcement of legislation governing sustainable management of wildlife and habitats.

- Thailand hosted a Special ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Illegal Wildlife Trade in 2019 to jointly put forward a policy against illegal wildlife trade. This policy was translated into a *Plan of Action for ASEAN Cooperation on CITES and Wildlife Enforcement 2021-2025* which highlights law enforcement on the suppression of online illegal trade and the reduction of demand for wild animals. The Plan of Action also calls on ASEAN Member States to develop strategies for forestry and wildlife management that take into account the need to prevent the transmission of zoonotic diseases. ASEAN Ministers likewise committed to collaborate on stopping wildlife crimes and raise peoples' awareness of the dangers of wild animal consumption.
- No single country or region can fight this battle alone. Thailand has played an active role in the global community such as within CITES and the Convention on Biodiversity to respond to transnational wildlife crimes, which continue to be a pressing challenge for Thailand and was made more difficult by the pandemic.

**Dr. Harald Link, Chairman of B.Grimm**

- Businesses have to closely cooperate on addressing the root causes of zoonotic diseases such as COVID-19 and be "good ambassadors to stop wildlife trade."
- While Minister Waravut effectively argued against illegal wildlife trade, we can go further: "we should stop all wildlife trade, whether legal or illegal." People can "live wonderfully where they are" and animals should "be where they should be."
- Protecting the environment and wildlife is commercially viable and possible. Businesses should join together to plant trees and help governments protect wildlife.

**Ms. Pimpavadee Phaholyothin, CEO of WWF-Thailand**

- Thailand can lead the global effort to prevent future pandemics by example because:
  - Thailand has a strong, world-recognized health system (known for good health at low cost).
  - It has already achieved Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3.8 on Universal Health Coverage, which is necessary to respond to the public health crisis.
  - Thailand boasts a strong system of national parks management, which plays an important role in maintaining key biodiversity. For example, Thailand is the only country in the Mekong region with a sustainable Indochinese Tiger population.
  - Civil society and businesses in Thailand play a key part in promoting the One Health Approach.
- Policy-makers have to seize this time to act. Results of a WWF survey show that there is public demand to close down high-risk wildlife markets and that there is a consumer market is out there for eco-friendly products.