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**Session III
Good Governance in managing natural resources**

Please find attached the contribution by Dr. Suttida Pliankarom, the Royal Irrigation
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Contribution (Plenary III : Good governance in managing natural resources)

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“Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) towards good governance in managing natural resources”
Furthering an implementation of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) as stated in Section 46 of the Enhancement and Conservation of National Environmental Quality Act 1992, EIA has been applied systematically in Thailand as a legislative tool for environmental planning and management on the economic development projects screening approach. The EIA has been used to identify impacts of the projects as well as an establishment of the appropriate mitigation measures so that the natural resources will be efficiently used for the economic development of Thailand.

However, since 1992, Govt. has been a leading role on making a decision of country development policies. Once a project has been initiated and/or approved, other sectors, stakeholders, would then participate in the later stage of the project development process. These have brought about discrepancy between Govt. and public on the implementation of many projects, and have raised questions to the efficiency of projects' goal achievement.

Since 1981, EIA concept was first introduced to Thailand as it was believed to be an effective tool to help plan for efficient natural resource utilization, to consider whether the project will cause adverse impacts, to help developer to find the suitable mitigation measures before the project implementation, to ensure that the prediction has been done correctly and to select the practical mitigation measures at low cost, to support investor or developer to make decision and can be used as the data for public to scrutinize in order to decrease the conflict problems as well as to set monitoring plan during construction and operation stage. However, by learning from experiences, EIA seems not to be an effective tool for solving the conflicts once there is a question from public on whether a project should have been initiated or implemented, as the Govt. has already made decision on the existing of the project.

Hence, there is a need to search for other tools which promote development of strategic Decision Support System (DSS) in which all sectors would participate in the initial stage of the country development policies. SEA is one of the tools, successively implemented in many European countries, to ensure that environmental consequences of certain policies, plans and programmes are identified and assessed during their preparation and before their adoption. The public and environmental authorities can give their opinions, and all results are integrated and taken into account in the course of the planning procedure.

With later start, Thailand has begun to develop SEA guideline, under an initiation of the Office of Natural Resource Policy and Planning and NGOs, in order to recognise SEA as an important element in the preparation and adoption of plans, programmes and, to the extent appropriate, policies and legislation, and that the wider application of the principles of environmental impact assessment to plans, programmes, policies and legislation will further strengthen the systematic analysis of their significant environmental effects and should, therefore, be of the importance of providing for public participation in strategic environmental assessment. Especially, in the case of likely have significant effects, public are informed and have the possibility to make comments which will be integrated into the national decision making process. Furthermore, through an implementation, SEA will contribute to more transparent planning by involving public and by integrating environmental considerations. This would help to achieve the goal of managing natural resources towards sustainable development.

During having technical hearings of the SEA guideline, although there is much room for public's comments and recommendations on which SEA model would be suitable to Thailand, there is also a gap during the development of technical tools, which are necessary to be incorporated in every step of the assessment. Again, Thailand should learn various perspectives of SEA from countries of long been experienced in which it would help strengthen pavement towards good governance in managing natural resources.