Area-based Multi-stakeholder Mechanism for Sustainable Development

The 18th National Health Assembly, having considered the report entitled "Area-based Multi-stakeholder Mechanism for Sustainable Development[1]",

Recognizes that sustainable development is central to achieving holistic well-being across all dimensions—physical, mental, social, and intellectual. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have been adopted as a national agenda that requires collective action at all levels. While Thailand has made progress in advancing the SDGs in several areas, it continues to face significant challenges. These are reflected in national indicator assessments, including unsustainable agriculture and food systems, economic and social inequality, limited access to health services and opportunities for human capacity development, disaster preparedness and adaptation, biodiversity loss, and constraints in governance systems and implementation mechanisms. In addition, there are critical concerns not captured by national indicators but strongly emphasized by civil society, such as physical and sexual violence against women and youth, community land rights, and illegal dumping of industrial waste. These issues pose major obstacles to long-term sustainable development and population well-being;

Acknowledges that Thailand has policies, national strategies, and legal frameworks related to sustainable development that serve as key operational foundations. Various agencies have undertaken efforts to advance the SDGs at the local level, such as the SDG Profile initiative by the Ministry of Interior, the Area Strengthening Alliance (ASA), and national platforms for knowledge exchange on sustainable development. Contributions from other sectors in environmental, social, and governance dimensions also constitute important capital that can be further integrated and leveraged to strengthen collective action;

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[1] The document on the 18th National Health Assembly / Main 5

Commends government agencies, civil society, the private sector, community organizations, and local citizens in many areas who have actively implemented diverse forms of sustainable development initiatives aligned with their local contexts. These include natural resource management, sustainable agriculture, community health and well-being, and human rights promotion. Such efforts demonstrate the capacity and strength of local communities as the foundation of national development, even though many of these initiatives have yet to be officially recognized or incorporated into official government reporting systems;

Concerns that past implementation has been largely centralized and driven through a top-down approach, resulting in misalignment with local contexts and the genuine needs of the population. This has limited a sense of shared ownership among citizens and stakeholders and hindered meaningful, community-level transformation. Moreover, most local challenges are complex and cross-sectoral, spanning multiple dimensions and agencies. Existing fragmented and siloed operational mechanisms are therefore insufficient to address these challenges effectively and sustainably;

Concerns that structural gaps remain a major barrier to advancing sustainable development at the local level, particularly in the following areas:

1. The absence of effective mechanisms and neutral platforms that enable inclusive participation by all stakeholders in jointly setting directions and making decisions.

2. Community-initiated development plans and related grassroots initiatives have not been formally recognized or granted status equivalent to government plans, reducing communities to passive recipients rather than active drivers of development.

3. Certain laws and policies—especially those related to land and natural resource management—continue to restrict community rights, generate conflict, and erode trust between the state and the public.

4. Communication of the SDGs relies heavily on bureaucratic and technical language, limiting public understanding and weakening a sense of ownership and participation.

5. Budgetary and resource allocation lacks flexibility, constraining cross-sectoral integration. Communities face limited real access to funding, alongside inequitable resource

distribution, persistent economic disparities, and imbalances in tax collection and fiscal allocation between central and local governments;

Concurs that Thailand must now shift its paradigm from "translating centrally defined goals to the local level" toward "empowering localities to define and steer their own pathways for sustainable development." The core priority is the establishment of participatory, multi-stakeholder local mechanisms for driving sustainable development that respect territorial diversity, ensure autonomy and flexibility, and genuinely devolve authority to local governments and communities. This will enable communities to determine and plan their own futures, leading to improved well-being for all, while leaving no one behind.

Thereby, adopted the policy statement, as follows:

Policy Statement:

> Thailand should promote and advance the establishment of "participatory, multi-stakeholder local mechanisms for driving sustainable development", while strengthening existing local mechanisms. These mechanisms should have flexible structures, operational independence, and legal recognition, and serve as neutral platforms for cross-sectoral dialogue and collaborative advancement of public policies on sustainable development, grounded in collective wisdom.
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> Such mechanisms should place people's needs at the center, alongside the development of citizen-generated data and the integration and effective use of area-based data, supported by enabling policy, legal, and budgetary ecosystems. This will ensure effective and continuous operation, promote balanced social, economic, and environmental outcomes, and ultimately contribute to sustainable well-being.

The core contents of the policy framework are as follows:

Part I: Development of Participatory Mechanisms

1.1 Establishing an Academic Committee to Support Local Sustainable Development to serve as a neutral platform for cross-sectoral dialogue to collaboratively drive public policies on sustainable development, grounded in collective knowledge. It will also provide technical and

academic support to participatory mechanisms at all levels. The committee should comprise representatives from academia, government agencies, and the public sector, including civil society, the private sector, women's groups, ethnic groups, religious organizations, social enterprises, children and youth, and other relevant stakeholders engaged in sustainable development.

1.2 Establishing Participatory Mechanisms at National and Provincial/Local Levels: In parallel with the work of the National Committee on Sustainable Development (CSD), a National Civil Society Joint Working Group for Sustainable Development should be set up to serve as a neutral platform for proposing initiatives, monitoring progress, and integrating cross-area and cross-issue collaboration. This committee should uphold diversity and equality across all population groups, genders, and age groups, with primary representation from the public sector—such as civil society, the private sector, women, ethnic groups, and children and youth—while academia and government agencies provide data and policy support.
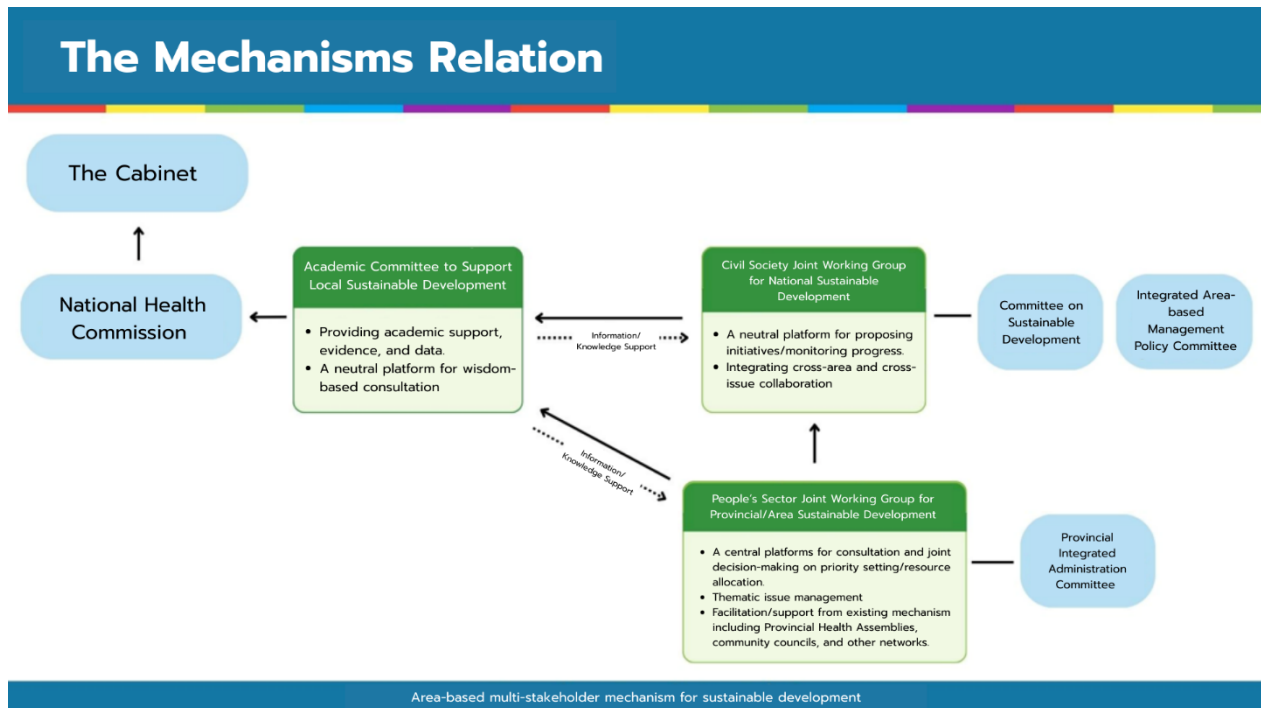
At the local level, existing mechanisms—such as Provincial Health Assemblies, Community Organization Councils, Community Leadership Councils, social enterprises, or other strong and context-specific networks—should be leveraged and strengthened to form "Provincial/Local Civil Society Joint Working Groups for Sustainable Development". These groups will function as central platforms for consultation and joint decision-making on priority setting, resource allocation, and thematic issue management, with facilitation/support from government agencies.

1.3 Elevating the Status of Community Development Plans: Promoting the formal recognition of community development plans that reflect people's needs and are supported by evidence-based data, and ensure their effective linkage with provincial and national development plans. People's Sector Joint Working Groups for Sustainable Development should coordinate with Provincial Integrated Administration Committees to ensure that community plans are accorded official status and meaningful negotiating power in local public policy formulation, including other provincial planning processes.

1.4 Initiating Social Innovation Labs: by promoting area-based actions to address local challenges through creative solutions and collaboration among participatory mechanisms, academia, local

businesses, and community knowledge holders. These initiatives should generate policy and social innovations, serve as good practices scalable to other areas, and contribute to policy and legal reform, as well as future-oriented local scenarios that respond to local challenges in innovative and sustainable ways, supported by systematic and continuous impact assessment.

Figure 1: A diagram illustrating the relation between the proposed mechanisms to be established and the existing government mechanisms

Part II: Empowering Communities and Developing Human Capital

2.1 Human Capacity Development: Promoting learning on sustainable development by integrating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into experiential learning and lifelong learning processes to build individual skills and foster behavioral change. Emphasis should be placed on competencies essential for advancing the SDGs, particularly understanding fundamental rights and the role of citizens in a democratic system. Priority should be given to the participation of vulnerable groups and people of all ages. Such learning should be embedded within existing education curricula and implemented collaboratively by local authorities, civil society organizations, and partner networks.

2.2 Raising Awareness through Public Communication: Enhancing public awareness of sustainable development and the SDGs through clear, accessible language linked to everyday life

and local contexts; and communicating local challenges and actions to achieve broad public understanding through responsible public communication across diverse media platforms. This should be undertaken collaboratively with relevant media networks at all levels, particularly the health and well-being media network of the National Health Commission Office.

2.3 Supporting Citizen-Generated Data: Developing and promoting processes that enable communities to collect, manage, and use their own data to accurately reflect local conditions. Such data should be formally recognized and integrated into relevant government data systems to inform policy decisions and development planning at all levels.

2.4 Preserving and Advancing Community Cultural Heritage: Promoting measures, policies, and legislation to protect cultural heritage that embodies community wisdom and identity, which constitute essential social and cultural capital. This includes ensuring that development policy decisions consider impacts on community cultural heritage and supporting intergenerational linkages between local knowledge holders and younger generations while encouraging the development of local curricula on community history and cultural heritage, with active roles for local civil society in creating, preserving, and leveraging community knowledge, culture, and identity.

Part III: Developing Enabling Support Systems

3.1 Reforming Budget and Resource Allocation: Reforming policies and regulations governing the allocation of national budgets, local government budgets, and sectoral funds under relevant agencies by establishing clear funding proportions to support civil society and local development on sustainable development issues. Budgeting processes should be flexible, transparent, and accountable. Relevant government agencies should allocate funding to support cross-sectoral consultation processes that strengthen participatory, multi-stakeholder local mechanisms for sustainable development. This should include establishing area- or city-based development funds supported by private sector contributions and tax incentives, applying participatory budgeting approaches, and ensuring fair taxation and revenue allocation that reflect local fiscal capacities and burdens.

3.2 Developing Data Systems for Decision-Making by supporting the establishment of a provincial-level integrated data system to consolidate SDG-related data from all sectors, disaggregated by gender, socioeconomic status, and other relevant variables, and made publicly accessible as open data. The system should include feedback mechanisms to all stakeholders and support evidence-based planning and policy decision-making, including the formulation of provincial development targets. Emphasis should be placed on indicators covering quality of life, grassroots economies, environmental sustainability, and cultural dimensions, as well as on understanding sustainable development challenges aligned with local ecological contexts. Lead agencies may include the Ministry of Interior, the National Statistical Office, provincial public health offices, local academic institutions, and local governments, with private sector engagement in system development and resource support.

3.3 Reviewing Legal and Regulatory Barriers: Accelerating the revision of laws, policies, and regulations that restrict community rights or hinder participation in resource management and local development, particularly those related to decentralization, land management, and natural resources, in order to enhance flexibility and enable effective partnerships for sustainable development.

3.4 Building Cross-Sectoral Collaboration Networks: Promoting collaboration among government agencies, academic institutions, and the public sector, including civil society, the private sector, women's groups, ethnic groups, and children and youth, to support continuous, integrated, and outcome-oriented operation of provincial and local mechanisms.

3.5 Co-Creating and Applying Knowledge and Innovation through strengthening the role of educational institutions and researchers in co-producing knowledge with communities by integrating academic evidence with local wisdom; promoting transdisciplinary research, community-based research, and locally driven research approaches to support analysis, planning, and resolution of complex community challenges, and fostering balanced and sustainable development.

Hereby, adopted the following resolutions:

1. Members of the National Health Assembly endorses the policy statement and the core contents of the "Area-based Multi-stakeholder Mechanism for Sustainable Development" as proposed.

2. Members of the National Health Assembly calls upon the National Health Commission (NHC) to establish an Academic Committee to Support Local Sustainable Development[2] as a central platform for cross-sectoral consultation to collaboratively advance public policies on sustainable development, grounds in collective wisdom. The committee shall provide technical and academic support to mechanisms at all levels driving local sustainable development, with participation from all relevant sectors. The International Health Policy Program Foundation (IHPP Foundation) and SDG Move, Thammasat University, shall serve as the secretariat, with support from the National Health Commission Office (NHCO), the Thai Health Promotion Foundation (ThaiHealth), the National Health Security Office (NHSO), and other relevant agencies.

3. Members of the National Health Assembly calls upon the National Committee on Sustainable Development (NCSD) and the Integrated Area-Based Management Policy Committee to adopt the principles of "area-based, bottom-up development" and "multi-stakeholder participatory mechanisms" as core approaches in formulating and implementing national SDG policies and action plans over the medium and long term. Clear roles and responsibilities of implementing agencies and organizations should be defined, and policy deliberations should incorporate proposals from the People's Sector Joint Working Groups for Sustainable Development establishes under this resolution at both national and provincial levels.

4. Members of the National Health Assembly calls upon a report and analysis on the implementation of this resolution to inform adaptive public policy development aligned with emerging contexts, and to report progress to the 20th National Health Assembly.

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[2] This committee was established based on the concept of the "Triple Power Mechanism" (the Moving the Mountain Triangle), grounded in data, empirical evidence, interdisciplinary knowledge, and the experiences of all sectors. The mechanism serves as a platform for consultation and exchange, enabling shared understanding and collaborative problem-solving. It also facilitates knowledge management and the synthesis of lessons learned, while supporting the work of people's sector joint working groups toward sustainable development at both national and provincial levels.