



Opening Statement
by
Mr. Apirak Kosayodhin
Governor of Bangkok,
at the 6th Asian-Pacific City Summit
Sofitel Central Plaza, Bangkok, Thailand
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Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a delight to welcome all of you to Bangkok and to the 6th Asian-Pacific City Summit. Personally, since I have taken up the office only two months ago, it is such an honor for me to be speaking at this opportune occasion on behalf of the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration to all my colleagues from the Asia-Pacific and beyond.

Bangkok's entrusted hosting of this meeting signifies our faith in and strong support for attempts to promote further cooperation among our cities. This Summit shall mark another significant step towards forging partnership for sustainable development among our cities and communities. We shall at the outset pledge our full commitment to this end. I am confident that, with such commitment and our active participation and constructive contribution in the discussions over these few days, this Summit will be led to a fruitful and concrete conclusion. I am also confident that, though a few days are never going to be too long for us to talk about everything we may wish to, we will manage to spend this relatively short time to deepen our friendship and develop our network for our future long-term cooperation.

Distinguished Colleagues,

At the very beginning of this Summit, I cannot yet do better than echo some of the many words of substantive ideas on promoting sustainable redevelopment in our cities from all of our previous summits and working summits. It is important and necessary to reiterate and elaborate those ideas, which include on the one hand the harmonious relationship between economic growth and urban development, and on the other hand, protection of environment, preservation of tradition and culture, and improvement of quality of life. At our most recent Summit in Fukuoka City two years ago, the ideas of good governance and public involvement were stressed as key to our 'new approach' to city planning for the 21st Century. These ideas shall be repeated and developed further here in Bangkok.

All these ideas have been thought of as means and ends of our effective response to the problems, which regrettably come in the same package of urban development. To repeat what has been said

among ourselves for so many times already, large urban cities attract more and more people and such influx also brings with it socio-economic problems. Ironically, in other words, our cities are so attractive that they attract not only peoples but also problems. It is also an undeniable fact that the rates of the increases of both the share of the world's population living in large urban cities and urban problems are rapid. Despite some negative prediction of unmanageable urban problems in the 21st Century, with no excuse, it is our task to confront the challenges posed by the unprecedented rate of urban growth as well as the unfortunate problems attached to it.

At the same time, it is also our common task to face the challenges of the world at large that are inevitably subject to the process of globalization and interdependence, referring to direct and continuous interaction among countries, cities and communities at all socio-economic levels and dimensions with no limitation of time and space. This means that, while in constant interaction, different socio-economic units could *either* lose out at each other's expenses by concentrating on competing against each other and exhausting resources and capitals *or* gain equitable mutual benefits by promoting partnership. From 13 countries, our 26 cities are rich and poor, strong and weak, in different ways. Our diversity is exactly our invaluable source of our richness and strength. In the increasingly globalized and interdependent world, our cities are never able to stand alone. Our different strengths shall be complementary to eradicate our weakness.

With the unprecedented rate of urban growth amidst the dynamism of globalization and interdependence in the world community at large, therefore, it is necessarily our task, our common and urgent task, to plan ahead now and no later, to make more informed choices about the future for sustainable redevelopment of our cities and quality of life of our peoples. It is our task now to make each of our attractive cities an ever more attractive human living space.

Distinguished Colleagues,

Following upon the rationales and precedent lines of thoughts I have just mentioned, our present theme of the Summit focuses on clear, practical, and effective 'new approaches' towards sustainable redevelopment. We are here to discuss among us the issues of 'new urbanism' and 'new public management'. We are here to develop our thoughts on good governance, public participation, and rehabilitation of culture and tradition. We are here to outline our master plans of public private partnership, promoting for all citizens better economic opportunities, better education, better healthcare, better infrastructure, better environment, and not only making our cities better living spaces for the locals but also better destinations for visitors. We are here, after all, to reveal our strong determination and commitment to 'manage' our aggravating and deepening urban problems.

For all those reasons of why we are here, let me now take the privilege of my status as the host to touch upon what we may wish to discuss towards a substantial conclusion of the Summit. Upon my

assuming the office, I have determined to waste no time and spare no effort in implementing policies, programs and measures aimed at improving the quality of life in Bangkok. As a new governor of such a big cosmopolitan city like Bangkok, I feel much privileged not only to be entrusted by the people of Bangkok, but to bear such a great responsibility for the development of urban life in such an important capital city of the 21st Century.

There is no doubt that Bangkok has grown significantly in terms of its development and the number of its inhabitants. Nowadays it is one of the fastest growing cities in Asia-Pacific and worldwide. My vision is that city that can bring opportunity and prosperity to its citizens, where business and industry can nurture, where the public and private sectors work in a cooperative partnership, and where individuals, families and communities can enjoy an improved quality of life.

So how can we make such a vision of our cities reality? In my view, the 'new approaches' suggested in the theme of our Summit incorporate, first of all, the perception that large urban cities see themselves in a larger geo-political and socio-economic context and assess their roles in a wider region. Cities are to consider their comparative strengths and weaknesses and cooperation among cities are to further enhance complimentarily of their strengths and to eradicate weaknesses through exchange of experiences and technical transfers. This is a conceptual pretext of 'new urbanism'.

Accordingly, the new methods to promote economic growth refer to contextual analysis with a view to identifying areas where it can find markets for its products and services and how to attract foreign investment. To succeed in the ultimate goal of improving quality of life, effective and efficient measures in countering socio-economic problems and promoting sustainable human development include such new methods as market oriented procedure and privatization.

In terms of 'new public management', this also relates to and public- private partnership. For example, in industrial sectors, incentives and efficiencies of private sector may be promoted through appropriately privatizing existing government managed industries. In financial sectors, rapid economic growth often leaves municipal finance system reforms inadequate for the financing of cities' priority projects solely through traditional channels. It is thus necessary to identify projects that can be financed through private sector.

At the core of our 'new urbanism' and 'new public management' is the premise that cities are indeed made up of people, not buildings and streets. For the Administration, this entails the merits of good governance which emphasizes that public participation and the voice of the people must always be sought at every level of the process, from identification to resolution of the problems. The morale of good governance refers to the relationship between transparency and efficiency. The process is to be participative, involving stakeholders from all segments of society. Modes of participation may include surveys, public meetings, workshops, focus groups, task forces and commissions.

An appropriate metaphor in the more market-oriented language is the fact that, customers are nowadays at the centre for manufacturing. Like customers in the free market mechanism, people including the so-called private and business sectors are to get involved actively such that city officials can identify their own opportunities and problems, which vary from city to city.

That is why we, the representatives of our unique cities, gather here to exchange views and experiences. That is why we stress here the importance of diversity. That is why seeking complimentary of our strengths and potentials is our main objective here.

Distinguished Colleagues,

Allow me to point out to you all that, central to our thinking on sustainable development, the value of public participation, I just mentioned, resulting in uniqueness of each locality's way of life, is clearly reflected in His Majesty the King of Thailand's philosophy behind 'Sufficiency Economy', which engages local community participation in developing their own livelihood in harmony with indigenous resources and wisdom.

This concept of community-based development for the benefits of all is central to our 'new approaches'. Community is the grass root upon which every urban life grows. It is obligatory for the cities to secure opportunities and eliminate problems in all areas: from economic well-being to social welfare, from healthcare to education, from sports to culture, and from environment to tourism.

Cities are to provide their citizens with sustainable professional and investment opportunities while concentrating on poverty reduction. They are to provide basic commodities fundamental to civil society, including further improving the quality of housing, medical care, and education. They are to lift up the quality and standard of urban environment and tourism. Last but not least, they are to preserve the communities' fine tradition and culture.

Here, I wish to make two additional points of observations relating all these issues to our 'new approaches'. First, market mechanism may be applied in our attempts to equalize and standardize the quality of social welfare and ecological system, to mobilize and manage funds and resources effectively, as well as to promote sustainable tourism.

Second, different issues are inextricably intertwined and cross-sector approaches must be taken into account. For instance, the impacts of economic growth and industrial restructuring on environment must be properly managed. Furthermore, urban environmental quality is critical to investment attraction, tourism development and economic modernization, all of which link to quality of life, social well-being, as well as the wealth of community.



Distinguished Colleagues,

Having mentioned a handful of conceptual and theoretical elements central to this Summit, we shall never suffer from boredom for having nothing to do here in Bangkok! Over this next couple of days, we shall be comfortably 'packed' with crucial discussion issues concerning directly our cities and all of them need our full attention!

Staying absolutely focused and well on the top of such important matters we may be, it is never my intention to sound too uptight and uncompromising as the host and representative of the people of Bangkok. It is definitely the great opportunity for Bangkok to receive all of you and it must be senseless of me if I fail to show you our wonderful City of Angels, the capital of the Kingdom of Thailand over the past 222 years.

Distinguished Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before proceeding with our next program this morning, I wish to take this opportunity once again to welcome you all to Bangkok, your partner city. I wholeheartedly wish you all a successful Summit and a pleasant stay in our city. Thank you.
