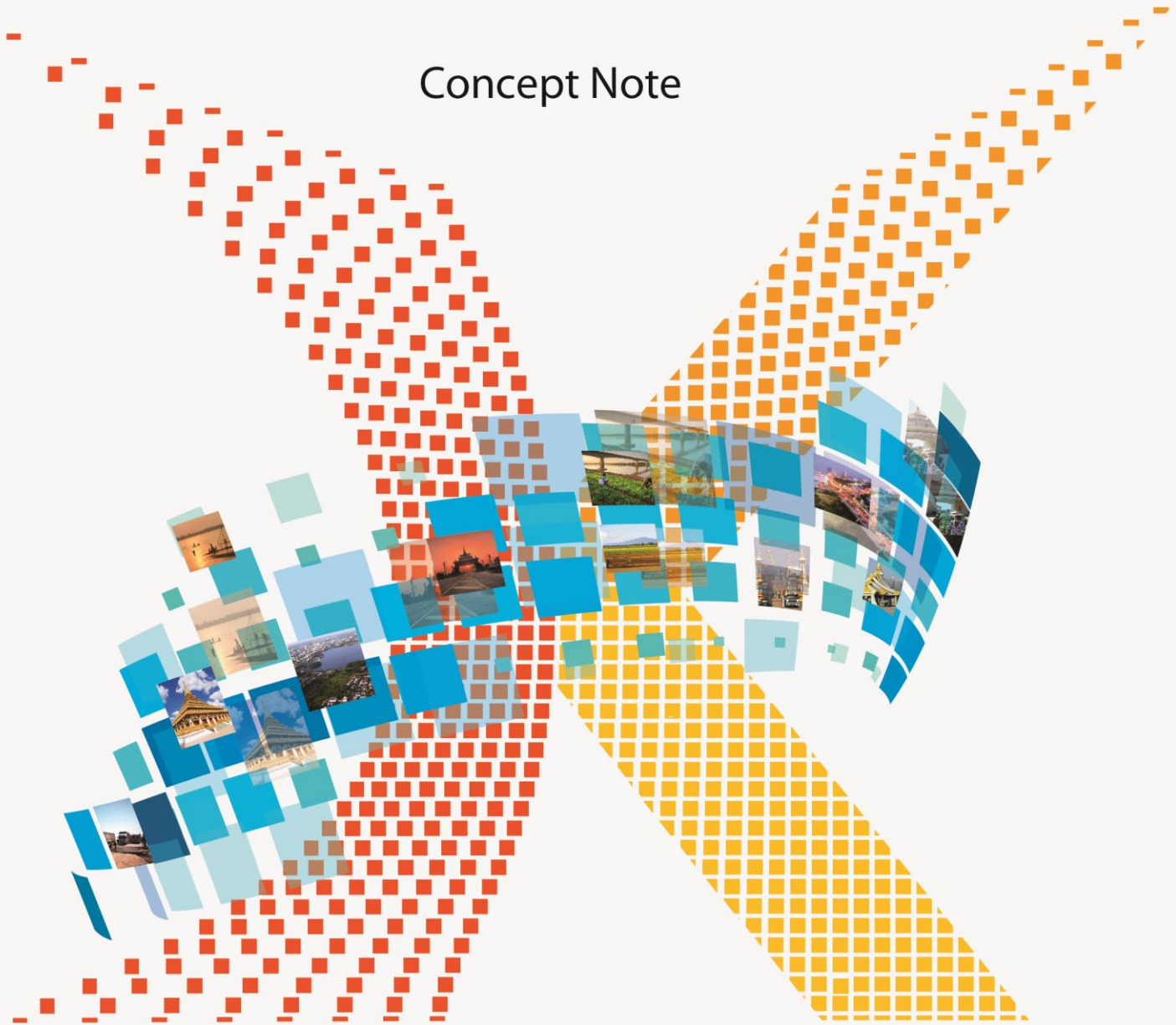


## Concept Note



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# The 1<sup>st</sup> Khon Kaen Business Forum

“Promoting Opportunities for Trade and Investment through  
Sustainable Innovation and Technology Management  
in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS)”

September 25-26, 2017  
Pullman Khon Kaen Raja Orchid, Khon Kaen, Thailand



## “Promoting Opportunities for Trade and Investment through Sustainable Innovation and Technology Management in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS)”

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### 1 Introduction:

The creation of a single market under the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) has placed the Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) in an increasing competitive situation since almost all countries rely on similar products, e.g. agriculture and services. One of the main challenges is the resilience and adaptation of the SMEs. In this nexus, full preparation and adaptation for AEC readiness will reduce business risks and help the small-scale entrepreneurs to approach to new business opportunities. The possibility of maximizing the benefits of the AEC largely depends on the readiness of all stakeholders, especially the entrepreneurs who realize the changes and impacts on their capacity.

For SMEs competitiveness, Innovations and Technologies are the key factors and it is imperative for SMEs to develop and maintain a competitive advantage and/or gain entry in to new markets. Based on the survey of 1,000 large companies and 1,000 entrepreneurs (generally, smaller startups<sup>1</sup>), 97 percent of large companies and 82 percent of entrepreneurs believe that digital innovation is critical or important for their future performance<sup>2</sup>. Today's digital economy, an SME without understanding of available innovation and technology, and how to use it to reach customers, partners and new markets, is at a severe disadvantage. The lack of access to modern technology and tools, especially the internet, is a severe constraint on SMEs' participation in e-commerce and on SME development in the GMS. Many SMEs in the GMS countries need to gain access to online marketing and electronic payments as well as the requisite skills to utilize these tools.

<sup>1</sup> A startup company (startup or start-up) is an entrepreneurial venture which is typically a newly emerged, fast-growing business that aims to meet a marketplace need by developing or offering an innovative product, process or service. A startup is usually a company such as a small business, a partnership or an organization designed to rapidly develop a scalable business model.

<sup>2</sup> Accenture, Harnessing the Power of Entrepreneurs to Open Innovations, Young Entrepreneurs' Alliance Summit, Turkey 2015

Thailand 4.0 is a policy vision of Thailand's economic development and a model of the government's economic development under the administration of Gen Prayut Chan-o-cha, Prime Minister and Head of the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO). The Prime Minister has managed the country with the vision of stability, prosperity and sustainability to achieve the key reform missions to adjust, organize and align directions and create the country's development guidelines to cope with new, rapidly changing opportunities and threats in the 21st century. Thailand 4.0 policy also encompasses the development of SMEs as well. With the aim to increase the value of SME GDP to be at least 50% of total GDP by 2021, the government plans to drive the growth of SME with three drivers; 1) Active Cluster/Smart Farming, 2) Smart SME and, 3) Global SMEs. With the enhanced capabilities, SMEs can develop the product quality and standards in response to development and changes.

The establishment of the AEC is important to the SMEs in the GMS as they in principle will receive the benefits of agreements under the framework of Free Trade Area in terms of non-tariff schemes applied. In the light of the AEC blueprint and Thailand 4.0 economic model, The Mekong Institute (MI) in collaboration with The Office of Commercial Affairs, Khon Kaen, is organizing the 1<sup>st</sup> Khon Kaen Business Forum on "Promoting Opportunities for Trade and Investment through Sustainable Innovation and Technology Management in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS)" on September 25-26, 2017 in, Khon Kaen, Thailand.

The Khon Kaen Business Forum aims at providing opportunities for innovative SMEs as well as exchanging best practices and success stories on innovations and technologies, and to build the business network between the SMEs with government officers, leading and startup companies and business people in Thailand and the GMS countries.

## 2 Objectives:

- To promote Innovative SMEs' trade and investment to increase capacity and competitiveness and identify opportunities to access the global market in the context of Thailand 4.0 economic model;
- To provide a platform and marketplace connecting technology suppliers and their innovative ideas to investors, manufacturers and distributors in order to promote investment and collaboration; and
- To initiate business network and long-term business cooperation, promote, and develop technological cooperation between SMEs in Khon Kaen and business networks within Thailand and other GMS countries.

## 3 Target Participants:

The event is expected to join by over 100 participants representing:

- Innovative SMEs and Startups from Khon Kaen and other locations from Thailand and GMS countries;
- Businessmen, traders, investors, manufacturers and distributors from Thailand and GMS countries; and
- Government officers in charge of production and trade promotion, representatives of companies, business associations, and innovative SMEs groups at the provincial, national, and GMS levels.

## 4 Expected Outputs:

- The participants are able to realize;
  - i. the business opportunities and understand the international business cooperation in the AEC.
  - ii. the importance of innovation and technology transfer for their business in the context of Thailand 4.0 economic model.
- Long-term business cooperation can be initiated and further developed between SMEs and Khon Kaen government, Khon Kaen business networks, businessmen, and investors who are interested in trade and investment in the GMS countries.

## 5 Seminar Structure:

The seminar will be organized in the form of "Forum", to deliver the following topics:



To contribute in the forum, the following experts (TBC) will facilitate discussions and share experiences:

## Session 1: Opening Session

- **Welcome Remarks** by Mr. Khamnuan Suwandee, Director of the Office of Commercial Affairs, Khon Kaen
- **Opening Remarks** by Mr. Pongsak Preechawit, Khon Kaen Governor
- **Program Overview** by Dr. Watcharas Leelawath, Executive Director, Mekong Institute
- **Keynote Presentation** by Mr. Chalermpon Punnotok, CEO, CT Asia Robotics

## Session 2: Business Innovation for Thailand 4.0

- **Industry 4.0 in Thailand**  
By Dr. Kittipong Promwong, Secretary General, National Science Technology and Innovation Policy Office
  - *What are the key components of Thailand 4.0 strategy?*
  - *What are the challenges and opportunities?*
  - *How neighboring countries can benefit from the new industry 4.0 of Thailand*
- **SME 4.0 with E-Commerce application**  
By Mr. Somwang Luangphaiboonsri, Country Head of PayPal (Thailand)
  - *What Business-to-Business Strategies are companies using to conduct electronic commerce?*
  - *What are the major security threats to electronic commerce businesses and their customers?*
  - *What are the likely future scenarios for electronic commerce for SME 4.0?*
- **Corporate Venture Investment in Startups**  
By UN Industrial Development Organization – UNIDO
  - *How entrepreneurs and startups play an important role in driving economic growth and job creation in the GMS and ASEAN?*
  - *Which startup investor's criteria are the most important?*
  - *What are the factors for deciding to invest in a startup?*
- **Best Practices on Innovative SMEs and Startups**  
By Mr. Sompoat Chansomboon, Director, Business Innovation & dtac Accelerate at DTAC
  - *What are the key success factors for innovative SMEs and Startups?*
  - *How can startup companies afford to risk their time and money to execute before obtaining any real market validation?*
  - *What are the likely future scenarios for Startup companies in Thailand 4.0?*

## Session 3: Support for SMEs: Intuitional Support Mechanism for Innovations in ASEAN

- **Access to Finance**  
By Mr. Paul Martin, United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF)
  - *What are the financing sources used by start-up companies and Innovative SME in the GMS and ASEAN?*
  - *What stage are the start-up companies and Innovative SME in the GMS and ASEAN at, and do they use different financing sources at various developmental stages?*
  - *Which financing opportunities do start-up entrepreneurs in the GMS and ASEAN prefer: informal or formal, traditional or modern?*
- **R&D Activity and Intellectual Property Rights**  
By Department of Intellectual Property (DIP), Ministry of Commerce
  - *What research and development are needed to get the technology ready for commercial sales?*
  - *Are innovative SMEs and startup companies able to manage such R&D efforts to increase their stock of knowledge in order to become more innovative? Are they successful as their larger counterparts in increasing their productivity?*
  - *What criteria should be used to assess how trade and intellectual property regimes should proceed for innovative SME in the GMS and ASEAN?*
  - *Should patent protection be extended to all developing countries?*
  - *How do foreign intellectual property rights affect GMS exports, affiliate sales, and licenses?*

- **Sustainable Development through Technology and Innovation**

By Digital Economy Promotion Agency

- *How can we incentivize the take-up and adoption of innovative technologies, for sustainable development in the GMS and ASEAN?*
- *What best practices can be learned from innovation leaders and achievers: leveraging strengths and addressing weaknesses in innovation performance in the GMS and ASEAN?*
- *What are the key lessons that policy-makers need to take into account to leverage sustainable industrial development?*

- **Promotion of Entrepreneurial Education**

By Mr. Oudet Souvannavong, Vice-President Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Secretary General of the Greater Mekong Sub-Region Business Council

- *How can Capacity-building in Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) education requirements be related to the requirements of the GMS economy? How can policymakers enable educational institutions to better connect with the productive sectors?*
- *What changes are required in educational systems to provide students with the entrepreneurial skills needed for the future? Which are the priority action areas? How can policymakers facilitate these changes?*
- *How to do Entrepreneurial Education in the GMS and ASEAN? What are we learning from business training and entrepreneurship evaluations in the GMS and ASEAN?*

## Session 4: Closing Session

- **Synthesis and Way Forward** by Madhurjya Kumar Dutta, Director of Trade and investment Facilitation Department, Mekong Institute
- **Closing Remark** by Dr. Watcharas Leelawath, Executive Director, Mekong Institute

## 6 Organizers:

The event will be organized by the MI in collaboration with the Office of Commercial Affairs, Khon Kaen.

## 7 Event Venue:

A Two-day event will be organized at Pullman Khon Kaen Raja Orchid, Khon Kaen, Thailand

## 8 About Mekong Institute:

MI is the only GMS-based HRD and capacity building institute owned and operated by the six GMS governments; Cambodia, Lao P.D.R, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam and Yunnan Province and Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region of PR China by offering standard and on-demand capability development programmes across three cutting themes of agricultural development and commercialization, trade and investment facilitation, and innovation and technological connectivity.

For more details please visit [www.mekonginstitute.org](http://www.mekonginstitute.org)

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