

**OPENING REMARKS BY GUEST OF HONOUR**  
**H.E. Dr Arthit Ourairat**  
**Appointed Representative Of H.E. Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai**  
**Minister Of Science, Technology And Environment**

*The Executive Vice President and Representative Director of Hitachi,*  
*Excellency Ambassador Akao*  
*Distinguished Guests,*  
*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

It is a pleasure and honour to be here this morning and to address the 4<sup>th</sup> Hitachi Young Leaders Initiative. Firstly, on behalf of His Excellency the Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai, let me thank Hitachi for inviting him to be here today. I am pleased to attend as his official representative.

I would like to also thank Hitachi for choosing Thailand as the venue for this important event. We are proud to be entrusted to host the award-winning community service project such as this and value its contribution highly.

I believe all of us agree that Asian youth are a dynamic force, and an important segment of our society. It is now a common saying that ‘youth are our future’. But our youth have much to offer at this very moment already: vision, energy, leadership, pioneering spirit, a fresh perspective of the world and the willingness to take risks. As such, there is a compelling need for promoting youth development, something the Royal Thai Government has always strongly advocated. I am glad to note that a company such as Hitachi has identified this need.

I always admire the utmost importance Japan has accorded on children and Youth Development which is, indeed, the indispensable investment for our future. What future Leaders need is guidance, cultural understanding, a chance to meet and exchange ideas and an understanding of the region’s issues. More than ever, they also need to have a sense of social responsibility. I believe the Hitachi Young Leaders Initiative or “HYLI” is a platform that helps to achieve this.

Today, we witness a select group of Asian Young Leaders on this programme preparing to discuss issues of vital significance to us all. Just as it is important for us to prepare them to shoulder the task of future responsibilities, we should also strive to understand their problems and aspirations today.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen:

As Thailand’s Minister of Science, Technology and Environment, I find the sub-themes of culture, technology and environment being discussed at this forum of particular interest.

While our country continues to develop local technology, we are keenly aware of the impact that such progress can make on our culture. The social, political and ethical challenges created by the impact of globalization and the IT and biotech revolutions are testing Asian leadership capabilities, traditions, and ethical and moral limits. It is also evident that while we promote the use of Information Communications Technology, there remains the need to bridge the gap between those who have the

access to and understanding of the technology, and those who do not have either. These problems are not just being felt in Thailand, but also across Asia, and all over the world.

Similarly, we must recognise that efforts to manage Asia's natural resources and the environment, with a view to achieving sustainable development and a better quality of life for our societies, are of fundamental importance. This concept can be likened to the theme of the ASEAN Environment Year 2000 – “Our Heritage, Our Future”, which my Ministry is currently supporting. As a region, we need to resolve environmental problems together, because- as recent events with forest fires have shown – we will all be affected.

But what will all this be without regional peace and social stability? An understanding of culture and a respect for cultural difference is key to regional stability. We need to strengthen programmes to educate people in their own cultural heritage and other countries' too. We must eliminate potential causes of conflict in this region.

Some argue that value systems are being diminished. It seems that the global intellect has been devising norms and values to fit the rapid advances of science and technology. Is it necessarily right to superimpose a Global Economic model on an Asian culture?

The region's issues are becoming more complex, the speed of change greater. Even market researchers have difficulty in predicting the future of a rapidly changing world. We must at least try to prepare for the unexpected. Good, visionary leadership that can articulate purpose and meaning is an increasing necessity. The increased pace of change calls for faster reaction times and significant changes to organisational structures and the way we do things.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I hope the spirit of this major regional event creates a useful interface between our future and current leaders, business, government, academia, civil society and the media. For all the challenges we hope to overcome, and the excitement of this new digital era and New Economy, we must be vigilant in reminding ourselves that the ultimate goal is to be of service to humanity and not merely to generate profit.

We are at the dawn of the New Millennium and we must rise to face the challenges it presents. Hope, energy and enthusiasm will move us along in this new era, and it is my sincere belief that through programmes such as the 4<sup>th</sup> HYLI our future leaders can make a major contribution to the success of a New Asia.

To the Participants of the 4th HYLI: - your imagination, voices, ideals and energies are vital for the continuing development of the societies in which you live. You represent the agents, beneficiaries and victims of policies and decisions that will affect us in the New Millennium. And you also represent our hope for a better and brighter future. My best wishes for the success of the 4<sup>th</sup> Hitachi Young Leaders Initiative.

Thankyou.