

Speech

By Ms. Annette Dixon

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*Memorandum of Understanding between
International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank)*

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The National Institute of Development Administration

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Dr. Sombhat (Pronounced Som-Butt), Rector of the National Institute of Development Administration, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen:

It gives me great pleasure to be here with you today at the signing ceremony of the Memorandum of Understanding between NIDA and the World Bank. This MOU provides for bilateral cooperation on a research program, knowledge sharing and a range of other issues aimed at strengthening transparency and accountability of the Thai public sector, which over the last decade has achieved tremendous progress in its reform program.

For more than six decades, the World Bank has enjoyed a long standing partnership with Thailand on economic and social development. This partnership has spanned a range of sectors and covered many challenging issues, including those related to economic policy, human and social development, infrastructure, and public sector reform.

Most of the World Bank's work has traditionally been with government agencies to improve the efficiency and the effectiveness of public service

delivery. We appreciate and value the role of non-government stakeholders in demanding the public sector to be more transparency in generating and using of public resources for economic and social development.

It is as a testament of this appreciation that we gather here today to sign the Memorandum of Understanding with NIDA. This MOU provides a collaborative framework for the World Bank and NIDA to work across a range of research and knowledge sharing activities, with which we hope to help the Thai citizens strengthen the transparency and the responsiveness of the public sector.

Dr. Sombath, I would like to highlight two key interesting projects that will commence in the coming weeks. The first project intends to strengthen the implementation of the Official Information Act – with NIDA taking the leading role in evaluating the progress and the challenges with the implementation of the this Act, while the World Bank providing the international perspective by looking at how right to information legislation has been implemented in other countries. The second interesting area of collaboration aims to enhance external monitoring of public procurement processes. I believe that these two projects will be beneficial to Thailand in promoting civic participation in public policy execution and at the same time motivating government agencies to respond more effectively and efficiently to public demand.

At the World Bank, we also try to put money where our mouth is. Last year, our Board of Executive Directors approved a ground-breaking policy to allow access to almost all information regarding World Bank operations to the public. A small list of exceptions has been drawn to protect the confidentiality of information that third parties provide us and personal information of our staff,

as well as to make sure that our staff can continue to be frank and open in their discussions about World Bank operations. Nevertheless, this policy – which will take effect on July 1 this year – allows access to more information than the Bank has ever done in the past and in a more timely manner. By allowing our constituencies to know more about what we do and how our decisions are made, we hope to improve our accountability and ultimately our effectiveness.

I would like to end by thanking NIDA for hosting this ceremony and for Dr. Sombhat for kindly hosting a very delicious lunch for us. We look forward to the successful implementation of this program and I personally wish the team success in their endeavors.