

Synopsis welcome address by Ambassador of the EU in Thailand, HE Pirkka Tapiola at EU Business Avenues in S E Asia – ICT – 28 September 2020

- Ambassador Tapiola welcomed the participants and thanked Business Avenues team and the stakeholders involved for their dedication to move the Business Avenues to a full digital environment in a very limited time. The Ambassador made a special reference to the support of the European Association for Business and Commerce (EABC) to the ICT Business Avenues mission.
- He highlighted the added-value and crucial role of digital technologies in supporting our economies, our societies and people in their daily life, notably in face do the unprecedented Covid-19 crisis.
- Face to the negative current economic perspectives, Ambassador Tapiola highlighted that **open and fair trade, based on a reinforced multilateral rules-based system** remains as the main source to create jobs and growth and therefore to get on the recovery path.
- He referred to the “**EU Next Generation**” **recovery plan** that is called to contribute to make of Europe a leader of the digital economy by securing 20% of the allocated 750 billion EUR to support the digital economy. Main areas of action will be **data, artificial intelligence and infrastructure**.
- Quoting the President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen in her State of the Union address last 16 September, he stressed the **need to persevere on the EU Digital Single Market** and the on-going work on ambitious goals for the digital transformation of our society by 2030 while adhering to the right to privacy and connectivity, freedom of speech, free flow of data and cybersecurity.

- Regarding Thailand, Ambassador Tapiola noted the strategic role of the country as the second economy of ASEAN. He highlighted the opportunities for developing new technologies, including solutions and applications in ICT, in the context of the flagship project ‘**Thailand 4.0**’. Ambassador Tapiola also reminded that **better market access in the services sector** is needed to unleash the potential for EU companies to contribute to Thailand 4.0 and the overall ICT sector in Thailand.
- The Ambassador emphasised the crucial role of SMEs for Europe's competitiveness, economic growth and innovation, and therefore their central piece of the post-Covid19 recovery strategy, both in the EU and in other markets. He concluded his welcome address by encouraging the 48 participating European SMEs **to learn more about business opportunities in Thailand and to establish new partnerships with Thai companies in the ICT sector.**