



## WORKING TOGETHER COMPETENTLY

Keynote address by Mr. Lertsak Cholvibul

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At the Oil Spill Response Thailand 2017 conference

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**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

On behalf of The IESG Association, it is a privilege and honor to again welcome all of you to this conference, and I would like to thank the organizer of the event for inviting me to give this keynote address on the topic that is very dear to our hearts.

**Distinguished participants**

The issue of oil spills into the marine environment has long been a major concern and the focus of international attention throughout the world as well as here in Thailand. In the past decades, and still today, environmental performance of oil industry especially oil spill has come under sharper scrutiny from the public and now social media. And under this scrutiny, with the experience and lessons learned from past incidents, we have collectively, within the oil industry community, responded to these challenges to make oil industry a safe and environmentally sound mode of operation.

For oil industry in Thailand, great strides have been made over the past decades through a variety of measures, such as the development of standards and codes of practice, as well as increased advocacy and capacity building, to effectively reduce both the risk and occurrence of marine oil pollution incidents. I am sure that you will agree with me that this is largely due to the tireless efforts and determination of oil industry as a whole.

IESG Association, as you may know, is an industry cooperative for incident prevention and effective response to oil spill and emergency associated with oil industry operations in Thailand. The Association started with only 5 member companies back in 1970, and now we have 19 members, probably nearly 100% of the oil companies operating in Thailand. As a business, they are all

competitors. But, as a member of the Association, they are working in full collaboration as a team with the same vision and mission.

Our vision is to be the Most Trusted and Effective Organization in Incident Prevention and Emergency Response of Oil Industry Operations in Thailand.

And, our mission is to work with members to prevent incident and to prepare for effective responding to emergency through the following actions:

- Develop human resources to have knowledge and ability in incident prevention and emergency response.
- Promote and support members to operate with standard to prevent incident, and to respond effectively in an event of emergency.
- Maintain the readiness of Oil Spill Response equipment at all times.
- Strengthen collaborative networking with agencies and organizations, in-country and internationally.

As you may be aware, major spills are rare, but when it happens, impacts to the environment and socio-economic are enormous if cannot be cleaned up rapidly and effectively. Unlike a fire incident where the damaged area is rather limited, oil spill impact, on the contrary, especially the large ones are often spread out into a wider area. And, obviously, one organization or one company may not be able to handle fully. This calls for a mutual cooperation among oil companies and concerned parties.

This was, and still is, one of the main reasons for the setting up of IESG, a starting of “Working Together” 47 years ago.

I came across an article talking about reasons why working together is better. The article mentioned 5 reasons which are - less stress, improved focus, trust is built, new perspectives, and more is accomplished. Although the article didn't talk about oil spill, but I think the mentioned reasons are very well applicable to oil spill response.

The first one is **less stress**. Oil spill response is stressful. You can ask those who used to be in such situation. So, when others come to help you or work with you, you will feel less stress.

With less stress, our ability to **focus improves**. As there will be several aspects or tasks to handle during an emergency response to an oil spill, each team or

group can concentrate on individual role or responsibility rather than worry about everything. This helps to eliminate feelings of overwhelm.

On the **trust is built**, someone said "A team is not a group of people that work together. A team is a group of people that trust each other." This will give members an opportunity to build trust through open and honest communication. As the team makes progress, trust and mutual respect builds. And, when patterns are repeated, members can rely on their teammates to deliver a good outcome.

Working together can also bring **new perspective**. Team member is able to point out something that they didn't realize they were doing. That outside eye can reflect a picture of where we need to make adjustments for improved results, saving time and energy. Team members also often offer ideas that we may not have considered, which can lead to creative ideas and innovative solutions.

And lastly, when individual roles are clear and teams learn how each member works and communicates best, they can **accomplish more**, and faster.

Working together is something oil industry and authorities around the world has been doing. Here in Thailand, as I mentioned, not only we have been working together among members of IESG in responding to an oil spill incident, but we also have been working together with the concerned authorities all along. And, that has reflected in our national OSR contingency plan where many parties are coming to work together as one team.

In the Valdez spill back in 1989, thousands of company and contractor personnel together with the Coast Guard and more than 11,000 residents were involved in a massive cleanup effort. And, in the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010, approximate 47,000 people and 7,000 vessels were involved in the response works. Not to mention the Rayong oil spill in 2013 where several hundreds of personnel were involved in a less than 1 kilometer stretch of beach for the cleanup effort.

However, working together is not enough in oil spill response, or as a matter of fact, in everything we do if we want to achieve a good result.

As there are several roles and responsibilities are required for effective and rapid oil spill response – field operations at sea or on the beach, logistics

support, planning, aerial surveillance, community relation, media communication, and etc., you name it. If the team members or parties involved do not know what to do or how to do, serious impact is unavoidable. I mean several types of impact – environmental, socio-economic, financial, and last but not least the reputation that we all valued.

In this regard, it is essential that all of parties coming to work together in an oil spill response, especially the big and serious one, must have ability to cope with the disaster. In other words, we must work together in an efficient and capable way.

The Association has realized this, and effort has been put to educate personnel to gain knowledge and skills through training, seminar, workshop, and emergency response exercise. Last year, nearly 1,000 peoples from IESG members, government authorities, and third party were involved in training, seminars, and workshops on oil spill prevention and response. And, more than 700 were involved in emergency response exercises.

I do understand that working together is not a problem in Thai culture. But, working together competently is quite a challenge for oil spill response. The national OSR contingency plan provides a framework for involved parties to work together with specified roles and responsibilities. Each party and individuals in such the plan must develop and maintain an adequate preparedness and response capability of their own while simultaneously recognizing the importance of co-operation with relevant parties in the national plan.

I would like to encourage all parties to maintain skill and capability of concerned personnel through regular training and exercise as we never know when the oil spill will happen. And, as for the Association, we are more than willing to support for such preparedness. IESG has long recognized the importance of well-practiced preparedness and response systems that are needed to ensure prompt action to minimize the impact of an oil spill.

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

I am sure this conference will provide you with an excellent platform to get to know and learn from each other as well as from the experts so that we can work together as a team in an efficient and capable way. So I shall stop here

and take the opportunity to express my sincerest appreciate to all those involved in the organization of this important event.

But, before I end this keynote address, may I remind you that “working together competently” is not a given, so don’t take it for granted – work for it!

I wish you all the very best for a fruitful conference and a successful outcome. Last, but not least, return home safely, everyday!

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I thank you for your kind attention.