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Press Release

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United States Sponsors Life Sciences Innovation Conference in Chiang Mai seeks to foster innovation and strengthen science and technology partnership in the region

On June 27 and 28, 2012, the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok, the U.S. Consulate General in Chiang Mai, Chiang Mai University's Technology Development Center for Industry, and the Chiang Mai Creative City Initiative organized the *"Life Sciences Innovation Conference"* to increase capacity and knowledge in medical and agricultural biotechnology. As part of the Lower Mekong Initiative and the Thai-U.S. Creative Partnership, the conference brought together over 200 U.S. and regional experts from academia, government, and industry in the field of life sciences.

U.S. Ambassador to Thailand Kristie A. Kenney, Mr. Woragan Yokying, Deputy Governor of Chiang Mai, and Professor Dr. Pongsak Angkasith, President of Chiang Mai University, opened the conference, which took place at Shangri-La Hotel. Organizers chose Chiang Mai to host the conference because the city is quickly becoming a medical and agricultural hub in Thailand and the wider Mekong region.

In her opening remarks, U.S. Ambassador Kristie A. Kenney highlighted the U.S. commitment to fostering innovation and strengthening science and technology partnership with Thailand and the other countries of the Lower Mekong. She emphasized that innovation is vital to building a strong economy and requires collaborative relationships between academia, civil society, government and industry.

Speakers at the conference discussed issues surrounding innovation in three pillars: medical biotechnology, agricultural biotechnology and medical systems. Additionally, the conference built on Chiang Mai's already established position as a center for creative industries, creativity, and innovation. Participants discussed how to promote ideas to further develop innovative clusters around medical and agricultural biotechnology.

In his opening remarks, Chiang Mai Vice Governor Worakarn Yokying said Chiang Mai province supports the endeavors and collaboration among experts from the government, academics, and business community to promote Chiang Mai as an innovative hub of medical service and medical and agricultural biotechnologies. He said these pursuits will propel Chiang Mai's development toward a knowledge-based economy.

According to President of Chiang Mai University, Dr. Pongsak Angkasith, the conference strengthens Chiang Mai's position as a center for creative industries, creativity and innovation. He also said the conference will promote ideas on how to further develop innovative clusters around medical and agricultural biotechnology.

The Thai-U.S. Creative Partnership brings together Thai and U.S. business and government efforts in innovation; increases research and university exchange; and builds beneficial bridges between the private sector and academia. The Partnership, which was launched in July 2010, seeks to expand cooperation in the health, energy, and science and technology sectors.

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