

**Welcoming Address to the  
High Level Workshop on**

**Asia Angel Investors:  
Financing New Technologies for Thailand's Future**

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Distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the Market for Alternative Investment, I am pleased to welcome you all to this inaugural event in Thailand of the South-East Asian Business Angels Network (SEABANet).

It is indeed appropriate that the City of Angels today has the pleasure of welcoming so many Angels from Thailand and from Singapore and from other places around the globe – especially since Angel investing groups are becoming a truly global phenomenon.

It is also most suitable that the Market for Alternative Investment is taking the lead role in raising awareness about the importance of Angel investors as a critical element in the start-up process of technology-based firms. The MAI has been diligently working to introduce innovative financing mechanisms and alternatives for small and medium companies, albeit under very difficult macroeconomic conditions.

I would like to extend a special welcome to our colleagues from Singapore, and especially Professor Wong Poh Kam, who has played a key role in the establishment of the South-East Asian Business Angels Network and the involvement of Thailand.

And express my appreciation to the following Angel facilitators that have played a critical role in making this event possible: the MAI team led by Khun Somnuk Wiwatana; Khun Chanitr Charnchainarong and his colleagues at Thai Incubator.com; and Dr. Peter Brimble and the resources of The Brooker Group plc.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The role of *Angel investment* as a critical component of the business financing chain, especially for smaller new-technology enterprises, is increasingly recognized. In the United States and Western Europe, Angel networks and groups are becoming more and more prevalent.

Many Angel investors in these markets, who started as solo investors conducting due diligence on their own, are now realizing that it makes better sense – and for smarter investments – to team up through one type of Angel group or another. In the United States, figures from last year indicate that more than 50 Angel groups have formed over the previous

three years and more than a million accredited Angels have a total of US\$ 20 billion invested in more than 30,000 technology start-ups.

Responding quickly, Korea and Singapore are taking innovative steps to encourage this type of activity in their business arenas.

Business Angels, personal investors in venture businesses at the early stage of financing, have grown rapidly in Korea in the past few years. This growth has been supported by strong tax incentives in order to fill in the missing link of financing for the start-up and initial growth stage of new technology firms. Government provides income tax deductions for the amount of investment in venture businesses and any capital gains from such investments are tax-free. Recently, a number of Angel Funds have been established.

Singapore has also moved quickly in recent years with major programs to support technology investments and related activities. A one billion US\$ Technopreneur Investment Fund has been spent already (with another one billion US dollars in the pipeline) and a number of tax and investment incentives introduced. To encourage Angel investors, a Singapore Business Angel Fund has been set up, and an innovative scheme to reduce the risk to Angel investors of investing in technology start-ups has been set up by the Economic Development Board. The Singapore-based activities of the South-East Asian Business Angels Network have been closely followed and supported by the Singapore authorities.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I do not need to dwell much on Thailand's low rankings in the technology and innovation categories of the IMD and World Economic Forum global competitiveness rankings. Just to emphasize that this critical weakness in our business environment highlights the significance of measures to enhance R&D and innovation, and especially the sustainable financing of such activities.

We at the MAI feel strongly that there is an urgent need to increase awareness of *Angel investment* in both the public and private sectors of Thailand, and to identify ways and means of encouraging the growth and development of early-stage financing in Thailand's capital markets to support "technopreneurship" and innovation in Thai business. We are firmly convinced that this part of the business financing chain will be very important for Thailand's business in the future - as it is now for countries like Korea and Singapore.

Accordingly, this Workshop today has been organized to stimulate the awareness of the importance of *Angel investing* in Thailand and to launch the activities of the South-East Asian Business Angels Network in Thailand. It is designed to present practical information to support Angel investors and to generate ideas and actions on what can and must be done in Thailand.

The South-East Asian Business Angels Network has been formed to develop a strong, cooperative network of angel investors in South East Asia, with linkages to well known angel associations across the USA, Europe, Japan, Korea and Asia. It is a forum that will empower angel investors to make better decisions by sharing best practices, investment experience, network contacts and knowledge about cross-border tax, investment and legal matters related to angel investing.

Before welcoming Khun Visit Tantisunthorn, CEO of Lanna Resources plc and formerly of Grammy Entertainment, as our Guest of Honor and Keynote Speaker on his “Personal Investing Philosophies”, I would like to reiterate the MAI’s support for the Business Angels Network in Thailand and hand the podium over to Professor Wong Poh Kam, Chairman of the South-East Asia Business Angel Network and Director of the Centre for Management of Innovation & Technopreneurship (CMIT) at the National University of Singapore.