



**PERMANENT MISSION OF THAILAND
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

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Statement

by

His Excellency Mr. Surapong Tovichakchaikul

Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand

at the General Debate

of the 66th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

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Mr. President,

Allow me to extend to you, on behalf of the delegation of the Kingdom of Thailand, our warmest congratulations on your election as President of the 66th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. It is a personal honour for me to speak for the first time before this gathering of the world's nations. Please be assured of my delegation's full support and cooperation in the conduct of this august body's work.

Mr. President,

The year 2011 was a monumental one in modern-day history. The world witnessed unprecedented transitions due to various popular uprisings. The call for reforms in the Middle East and North Africa has produced far-reaching impacts and implications on our global order at all levels. The so-called *Arab Spring* underscores the significance of people's legitimate aspirations and the need to adequately respond to them. In this age of globalization, it is hardly possible to restrict the dissemination of information, ideas and values. This fact has resulted in people's increasing awareness of their legitimate rights. It has also resulted in their rising aspirations to demand that such rights be guaranteed by their governments. This phenomenon is a challenge for every government. It requires national and international systems that are both inclusive and democratic. This would ensure that all voices are heard, real grievances and concerns are addressed, and legitimate aspirations are respected and fulfilled.

As far as Thailand is concerned, after experiencing some political unrest, the country has taken another step forward in our democratic process. The general elections held on the third of July this year went smoothly, which is a testament to the resilience of Thai democracy. The new government has been successfully formed, with a solid mandate from the people. Indeed, the voter turnout was the highest in Thailand's electoral history. The Administration of Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra is now working resolutely to deliver on the promises it made during the election campaign. Great importance is attached to the voices and participation of the people. This current episode in the political development of our country illustrates that democracy has taken even deeper and stronger roots in Thai society.

The current government is fully committed to implementing the people-centered policies that were announced during the election campaign and to Parliament. Such policies place the people at the centre of all our undertakings. We seek to bring about a strong, equitable and sustainable economic infrastructure in the country. More importantly, this government is determined to promote reconciliation and uphold the rule of law to serve as a basis for harmony and unity within the country.

As far as our foreign relations are concerned, the Government will further enhance cordial relations with our neighbouring countries as well as our friends from beyond the region. A special emphasis is placed on promoting trust, confidence and mutual respect. This is particularly important as we prepare for the realization of an ASEAN Community in 2015. We will also strengthen international cooperation at all forums and levels, particularly with the United Nations.

Thailand seeks to play a responsible and constructive role in the current international order. We believe that such order must be more inclusive and responsive to all states and civil society. In response to changing times, a reform of global governance is essential. This is aimed at producing more balanced representation which better reflects and more effectively represents the legitimate concerns and aspirations of the peoples of the world. Towards this end, emphasis should be placed on strengthening the partnership between developed and developing countries, assisting developing countries to enhance their national capacities to effectively cope with global challenges, and improving working relations between states and the international civil society.

Mr. President,

Thailand is convinced that the three pillars of the United Nations -- peace and security, development, and human rights -- are all inter-connected and mutually reinforcing. They are issues that need to be addressed comprehensively in order to achieve the ultimate goal of “human security” for our peoples. They are also issues that Thailand will emphasize in our cooperation with the United Nations.

In terms of **peace and security**, Thailand believes that this year’s theme for the General Assembly’s Open Debate, as proposed by Your Excellency, is very timely. Mediation is a crucial tool to help resolve disputes peacefully. The recent birth of the Republic of South Sudan and its swift admission to the United Nations is a clear testament to the constructive role of mediation and the UN’s continued engagement in conflict resolution. Thailand welcomes the Republic of South Sudan into the global community, and wishes to forge our bilateral relations and partnership for development with this new State.

Thailand is convinced that peaceful resolution of conflicts is the most desirable and cost-effective approach – both in terms of human lives and financial costs. For this reason, **political will** remains a key ingredient, without which such an approach cannot be successful. However, in many instances, the deployment of UN peacekeepers to stabilize conflict situations and observe peace is still necessary. Wishing to do our part, Thailand has continued to actively support the UN’s comprehensive peace operations and peacekeeping missions worldwide in over 20 situations in the past. Presently, we have deployed an infantry battalion to participate in the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, or UNAMID. We have also sent our police and military officers to join UN peacekeeping missions in Timor-Leste and Haiti. At the same time, we are about to deploy military officers to a UN mission in Kashmir. In addition, since Autumn 2010, Thailand has dispatched two Counter-Piracy Task Groups to join the international efforts in patrolling and protecting ships from pirate attacks in the Gulf of Aden area. These are but a few examples of Thailand’s efforts to play a meaningful role in the maintenance of international peace and security.

Mr. President,

If international stability is one of our primary goals, Thailand firmly believes that a key foundation for durable peace is **sustainable development**. Sustainable development is an essential tool to help eradicate poverty and inequality, which are a root cause of, and a breeding

ground for, insecurity. As the guiding principle for our social and economic policy, Thailand has long adopted a “people-centred approach” and adhered to the “Sufficiency Economy Philosophy” of His Majesty King Bhumibhol Adulyadej. Such philosophy focuses on living in moderation and striking a balance between economic growth and sustainable management of natural resources. Ever since the global financial and economic crisis of 1997, this philosophy of moderation has held us in good stead. It helped ensure that Thailand and the Thai people were able to cope much better with subsequent crises.

Our government is also working resolutely to ensure, among others, equal opportunities for all, free primary and secondary education, and universal health care coverage. Although we have realized most of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) ahead of schedule, we are resolutely pursuing the MDGs Plus. In the greater scheme of things, we are determined that no one should be left behind in Thai society.

Thailand also attaches great importance to, and is seriously preparing for, our active participation in the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development or “Rio Plus Twenty” (Rio+20) to be held next year in Brazil. We are committed to joining international efforts to lay down a new and effective international institutional framework for sustainable development. This framework is aimed at moving forward the work of economic and social development and environmental conservation in a balanced and integrated manner.

In order for sustainable development to be realized, cooperation from all sectors of society and partnership with the international community are of the essence. Thailand has been active in promoting partnership between the developed and developing countries, and stands ready to serve as a bridge between both groups through triangular cooperation. At the same time, we will continue to strengthen South-South cooperation with our fellow developing countries, including in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and the Group of 77 and China.

Thailand has also assumed a more creative and proactive role in cooperation with the international community in various developmental areas. The United Nations Partnership Framework (UNPAF) between the UN and Thailand is a good example which could be shared with others. This is an arrangement that entails close collaboration between the UN and local agencies in order to design partnership programmes in accordance with the country’s needs. Over the years, the relationship between the UN and Thailand has evolved from a traditional donor-recipient relationship to one between development partners. Under this arrangement, Thailand works together with the UN, not only in development work within our own country, but also in providing technical and financial assistance to other countries in accordance with their needs. As Thailand has recently become an upper-middle-income country, we are committed to further strengthening our partnership with the UN in this regard.

In addition, Thailand wishes to commend the UN for its continued efforts in advancing the quality of life of peoples worldwide and in the streamlining of its work. In particular, Thailand wishes to single out implementation of the UN’s concept of “System-wide Coherence”, as discussed in the report on “Delivering as One”. Thailand views such implementation as crucial for strengthening overall UN operations in serving member countries’ developmental needs in a more integrated and effective manner.

Mr. President,

Both peace and security as well as development can never be sustainable if respect for **human rights** is lagging behind. Thailand firmly believes that human rights are a truly universal value. Respect for human rights must be a fundamental principle in every society, regardless of different political, economic and social systems. For Thailand, human rights issues are a core agenda of our domestic and foreign policy. In terms of the latter, Thailand has striven to play a constructive role at both the regional and international levels, especially through our membership of the Human Rights Council (HRC). During our presidency of the HRC, Thailand was proud to have led the crucial task of reviewing the Council's work and functioning in order to make the Council more relevant and credible. This was particularly essential in responding to urgent human rights situations in a more timely and effective manner.

A case in point is the previously-mentioned *Arab Spring* phenomenon, which has provided a crucial test for national governments and the international community. What the phenomenon has revealed is that human rights can only thrive in the context of democracy. Without democracy, fundamental human rights are at risk. However, respect for human rights and democracy cannot be imposed from the outside. They must be developed and nurtured from within, in accordance with the readiness and aspirations of the people. Each government must find its own solution and pursue its own pace in a manner that is appropriate for its specific contexts and conditions. Meanwhile, it is incumbent on the international community to provide support to, and promote constructive dialogue and engagement with, countries of concern, while respecting their sovereignty, territorial integrity and the will of the people.

Such support and dialogue should aim at strengthening the capacity of States to comply with their human rights obligations. Thailand, therefore, sees the importance of building common ground on the value of technical cooperation in enhancing human rights. We have been holding consultations on an initiative to enhance the efficiency of the Human Rights Council in providing technical cooperation to countries in need. Thailand hopes that such an initiative will receive broad-based support from countries across all regions in the Council. Meanwhile, Thailand is also undergoing its first Universal Periodic Review this October. We are ready to engage in the examination process in a constructive spirit with the ultimate aim of enhancing human rights protection at home, where it matters the most, as well as promoting human rights in general. With our genuine commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights, Thailand is determined to continue playing a constructive role in the Council. In this regard, we will proudly stand for election once again for the term 2015-2017.

As Thailand continues to enhance our participation as a member of the Human Rights Council, we are determined to further contribute to human rights work and to strengthen the rights of vulnerable groups, both at home and abroad. We attach special importance to these vulnerable groups, be they children, women, persons with disabilities or the elderly. One notable example is in the area of women's rights. In December last year, the General Assembly adopted the United Nations Rules for Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-Custodial Measures for Women Offenders, or the "Bangkok Rules", which arose from the initiative of Her Royal Highness Princess Bajrakitiyabha. The Rules aim to enhance the human rights of female

prisoners in the criminal justice system whereby gender sensitivity and the specific needs of women are fully recognized. Thailand is committed to promoting the implementation of the Bangkok Rules globally and looks forward to continuing to work closely with all relevant stakeholders. Moreover, the advent of the country's first female Prime Minister has confirmed that Thai society is open to women and that gender equality and empowerment of women are continually promoted.

Mr. President,

From all that I have said, it should be evident that the United Nations is an important cornerstone of Thailand's foreign policy and that Thailand has been an active player in all 3 pillars of the United Nations. Peace and security, development, and human rights are truly inseparable and need to be strengthened concurrently. Given our past experience and continued contributions to all 3 pillars, especially in the maintenance of international peace and security, Thailand has presented our candidature for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the term 2017-2018. We seek the support of our friends in the United Nations in this regard. We are convinced that such a position would enable us to fulfill our commitment to work closely and constructively with all UN members in strengthening multilateralism, peace, and security for the common benefits of the international community and mankind.

Thank you for your attention.
