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**Statement of His Excellency Mr. Don Pramudwinai
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand
at the General Debate of the 72nd Session
of the United Nations General Assembly**

*on "Focusing on people: striving for peace and a decent life for all
on a sustainable planet"*

at the United Nations Headquarters, New York, United States of America
September, 2017

Mr. President,

1. I am sure I speak on behalf of everyone here that our hearts and prayers are with everyone in the Caribbean now facing the devastating effects of hurricanes, especially in Dominica and Puerto Rico. Our prayers are also with people of Mexico in the aftermath of the deadly earthquake on Tuesday.

Mr. President,

2. Over the past few days, the words "we the peoples" have been echoed in this august assembly many times. Thailand shares the view of Secretary General Guterres and many member states that we need to focus more on the people and less on bureaucracy. The United Nations must be less about debates but more about actions and can truly impact changes on the ground.

3. At the General Assembly this year, it is gratifying to hear world leaders focusing on people. Indeed, the life, survival, and prosperity of a nation depend on the quality of life of its people. When people live decent lives, they thrive, and in turn nations and our planet prosper. On the other hand, if people are still struggling with their daily lives, having nothing to eat, nowhere to sleep, no schooling or healthcare access, then the advancement of nations would be an unrealizable ambition. That is why we must focus on people.

4. In fact, we have long focused on the people in Thailand. Our Late King, His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej, told us to listen to the people and to learn from them. He said that those living in the community know best about their conditions and needs. Development must not be top-down but bottom-up, and must vary according to specific contexts. His Majesty laid the groundwork on this people-centered approach through the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP), which stresses self-development and places emphasis on everyone's potential to mold one's own future and live in harmony with nature. When each person can contribute meaningfully to his or her community, the life of the nation will surely be good.

5. Based on the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy, the Royal Thai Government envisions the lives of our people and the life of our nation to become “Stable, Prosperous, and Sustainable”. Our key national frameworks, namely the 2017 Constitution, the 20-Year National Strategy Framework, the 12th National Economic and Social Development Plan have all been formulated to focus first on people. Thailand has stepped up efforts to put in place a decentralized area-based development policy to empower those who will be affected and create a space to appreciate local wisdom and knowledge.

6. At the same time, Thailand is seeking to utilize Science, Technology, and Innovation to strengthen human capability and foster an enabling environment in our development paradigm. Currently, we aim to build a value-based economy under the “Thailand 4.0” policy. The value-based economy encompasses a circular economy, in which resources are utilized efficiently and in an environmentally friendly manner; a distributive economy where development is inclusive; and an innovative economy where growth springs from ideas and knowledge. This value-based economy under Thailand 4.0 requires human wisdom even more than high technology. And that is why we are focusing on our people and putting human life cycle development as our priority.

7. Since 2002, we have successfully embarked upon our Universal Health Coverage System (UHC). UHC is an investment in our people and our future. At present, 99.87 per cent of the population enjoys some kind of health coverage. The UHC has helped prevent over 100,000 households from falling into poverty over the past decade. As Chair of the Foreign Policy and Global Health Initiative, Thailand will present a draft resolution at this UNGA session to mark 12 December as World UHC Day. We hope to receive support from member states in this regard.

8. Another recent example of how we focus on people is our National Strategy on Elimination of HIV/AIDs (2017-2030). By 2030, Thailand aims to reduce new HIV infections, reduce HIV/AIDs related deaths, and cut down discrimination related to HIV and gender. We are also proud to say that in 2016 the World Health Organization recognized Thailand as the first country in Asia and second country in the world to eliminate mother-to-child transmission of HIV and syphilis.

Mr. President,

9. The world is going through a critical time, facing a series of common challenges, such as extremism, terrorism, ongoing conflicts, and irregular migration, along with environmental degradation, climate change, and natural disasters. Another grave concern is the nuclear threat which is looming over us and feels more real now than ever before. It is at times like these that humanity is being truly tested.

10. Two days ago Thailand signed and deposited our instrument of ratification to the Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty. We are proud to be among the first countries to do so. We wish to call on others to do the same. By doing so, we are sending out our message to our children and grandchildren that we do care.

Mr. President,

11. Thailand shares the international community's grave concern over the situation in the Korean Peninsula, and the recent nuclear and missile tests by the DPRK. We encourage all parties to find a peaceful solution, along with full implementation of UNSC Resolutions.

12. Thailand is also deeply concerned about ongoing violence and conflicts elsewhere in the world. And as a neighboring country, Thailand cannot turn blind eyes to the situation in the Rakhine State, which recently forced hundreds of thousands to leave their homes. We are fully aware of the complexities of these humanitarian situations that cannot be solved overnight. These situations call for long-term political and socio-economic solutions. Sustaining peace and sustaining development must go hand in hand.

Mr. President,

13. To enable people to have decent lives, we must build inclusive societies where every person has a sense of belonging and feel that their voices are heard and their views counted. We must empower the most vulnerable in our societies – those suffering in poverty, women, children, persons with disabilities – and leave no one behind. Their rights and dignity must be respected. They must be protected by law and have equal access to justice. Only then can we realize a truly inclusive society with sustainable peace and development.

Mr. President,

14. Multilateralism and the United Nations, in particular, have a great role to play in fostering the quality of our people's lives. The United Nations must take transformative steps to live up to today's reality and expectations. Development programs, financial and technical assistance, peace operations, security sanctions, resource mobilization, environmental protection programs – all of these must truly enhance the quality of life of the people.

15. The work of the United Nations must have real impact on the ground. The United Nations must be able to identify challenges based on the needs and particular situations of each country, and must be able to adapt its work in a responsive and flexible manner. It must also address the root cause of each problem, especially by addressing structural gaps and working more on prevention, rather than only curing the symptoms.

16. We look forward to hearing more details on the UN Development System reform, and how it would impact changes on the ground, enhance resource efficiency, and synergize works of regional commissions and UN country teams. We also wish to hear about innovative resource mobilization and enhanced partnerships with all stakeholders, especially the private sector, academia, and civil society. Partnerships, particularly with Science, Technology, and Innovation communities would bring about the transformative push required for achieving SDGs.

17. We must learn to mobilize the diverse strengths of each and every one of us. We must ensure that local wisdom and community knowledge are appreciated and integrated into our efforts. We must create a culture of partnerships based on mutual trust and respect.

18. On our part, Thailand recognizes and appreciates the diversity of strengths of each stakeholder. We value the sharing of knowledge and experiences. It is in this spirit that Thailand has launched the "SEP for SDGs Partnership" to encourage the sharing of the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy in advancing SDGs. As part of our efforts to promote South-South cooperation, last year, Thailand supported the reopening of the UN Office for the South-South Cooperation for Asia and the Pacific in Thailand and has provided human resources to the Office.

Mr. President,

19. Last but not least, focusing on the people is not only about working on external conditions. The first step of a successful transformation is to work on the mindsets, especially of children and youth. We must not forget them. Their voices must be heard. The future belongs to them. Therefore, we must ensure that children today grow up to become citizens of the world with global mindsets.

20. Everyone can be an agent of change. If one can have a decent life, feeling content with what one has, eventually that person will want to give and to share. Our role as governments, Mr. President, is to support the people, creating an enabling environment for them to be able to give and to share, and let the people drive the change.

21. I thank you, Mr. President.