



**Statement**

by

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**(Head of the Thai Delegation)**

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**Mr. President,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,**

At the outset, I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the United Nations and the Government of Turkey for hosting this very important conference, focusing on a group of countries whose welfare is most deserving of our special attention. In many ways, it is most appropriate that the meeting is held in this beautiful, historic city of Istanbul, where East meets West.

During the past decade since this Conference was last held, the world has witnessed greater challenges for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs). The so-called “Triple F Crisis”, involving food, fuel and finance, has highlighted the vulnerabilities of LDCs in all corners of the world. The crisis has inflicted severe losses on their economies and yielded great repercussions on the lives of their peoples, impeding their efforts for development.

These daunting challenges have made it virtually insurmountable for LDCs to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and other internationally agreed development goals. It is therefore appalling that so far only three countries have managed to graduate from LDC status. For this reason, it is evident that LDCs need special attention and support from the global community with regard to their development efforts. Thailand is therefore pleased to see the massive presence at this conference of donor countries, development partners, international organizations, private corporations, NGOs and other stakeholders, so that together we can work in concert to chart the way forward for sustainable development in the LDCs over the next decade.

**Mr. President,**

The Royal Thai Government is determined to enhance our country's role as a responsible and active partner of the international community. As a middle income country, Thailand advocates international cooperation in assisting LDCs as part of MDG 8 – the global partnership for development. Our past experience tells us that assistance from the international community is crucial for developing countries, especially the LDCs, to pursue a sustainable path for development and remain on track to achieving the MDGs. Therefore, international development cooperation has become one of the major elements of Thai foreign policy.

Thailand has sought to engage with LDCs in all corners of the world, whether Asia, Oceania, Africa, or the Americas, to help them address their development challenges. In 2009, Thailand provided nearly 60 million U.S. dollars as part of our development cooperation programmes. Thailand's development assistance to LDCs includes grants, concessionary loans, and technical cooperation with a concentration on 3 main areas -- agriculture, public health and education. We believe these areas are the key factors for sustainable development in LDCs. While bilateral assistance, under South-South cooperation, forms the main component of Thailand's international development assistance, Thailand has also been working hand-in-hand with developed countries and international organizations, such as UNDP and UNICEF, in carrying out a number of development cooperation programmes for LDCs.

Thailand's international development cooperation policy is wide-ranging, but has given priority to our neighbouring countries, namely Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar. As members of the ASEAN family, we together share the dream of peace, growth and prosperity in the region. We want to ensure that no country in the region is left behind while others move forward. Therefore, in order to narrow the development gap within the region and promote the realization of an ASEAN Community by 2015, Thailand has always been committed to assisting our close friends in addressing their development challenges. Our three next-door neighbours, who are part of this LDC grouping, are the major beneficiaries of Thailand's development assistance, with more than 75 percent of our international development cooperation budget being directed to them.

Thailand also plays an active role in promoting South-South cooperation with African countries. Several development programmes, tailored specifically to individual needs in areas such as agriculture and public health, have been implemented in Burundi, Madagascar, Mozambique, Senegal and Sudan. Moreover, Thailand has also worked in partnership with Lesotho in setting up the Agricultural Development and Sufficiency Economy Project, which is in line with the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy of His Majesty the King of Thailand.

**Mr. President,**

Thailand also attaches great importance to forging connectivity between countries as a means of promoting economic growth and narrowing development gaps. We support the development of transport infrastructure

in LDCs, as this would provide LDCs with greater market access. It would also enhance their economic potential, including by attracting investment, generating employment and stimulating tourism.

The Royal Thai Government has been working closely with our ASEAN member countries and development partners to strengthen regional connectivity in less developed areas. This has been done both through ASEAN mechanisms as well as other sub-regional initiatives, such as the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) and the Ayeyarwady–Chao Phraya–Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy (ACMECS).

A number of grants and commissary loans have been offered to our neighbouring LDC countries to upgrade their physical infrastructure. In Cambodia, we have extended assistance of nearly 100 million US dollars to develop the rail and road infrastructure in that country. In Laos, our accumulated assistance is worth more than 240 million US dollars, involving projects such as the construction of the Thai-Lao Friendship Bridges and the R3 Highway linking Thailand, Laos and China. We fully support Laos' national strategy to transform itself from a land-locked to a land-linked country.

**Mr. President,**

Thailand's role as a responsible actor in the international community also entails providing humanitarian assistance to those in need. In recent years, we have seen a number of countries falling victim to the effects of climate change and natural disasters. For LDCs in particular, with their scarce resources, it is difficult for such countries to recover from any unfortunate calamity on their own. Taking this into account, Thailand deems it imperative for the international community to share the burden of affected countries in any way they can.

As a next-door neighbour, Thailand was the first country to respond to Myanmar's humanitarian needs caused by Cyclone Nagis. In the case of the Haiti earthquake, Thailand's donation, while just a portion of that country's immense needs, was still one of the highest amounts among the developing nations.

I wish to note here that Thailand's contribution to humanitarian operations is not only limited to donating cash or relief items during the time of crisis. Indeed, Thailand is always ready to take part in the reconstruction

and rehabilitation process, especially through the formulation of development programmes in the affected countries.

**Mr. President,**

Let me turn now to the subject of international development cooperation and to share with you two general principles guiding our policy on this matter. It is my hope that these principles will be reflected in the outcomes of this conference.

Firstly, Thailand believes that sustainable development must **begin with the people**. In order to be effective, international cooperation must enable local people to stand on their own, and national strategies must be developed to achieve development goals in the long run. Thus, capacity building and human resource development are key components in our development assistance. Thailand's best practices, experiences and knowledge in various areas, such as agriculture, public health, education, social development, environment and tourism, have been shared with and transferred to various LDCs through a number of training courses, technical cooperation projects and post-graduate scholarships managed by the Thailand International Development Cooperation Agency (TICA).

Secondly, our development assistance is **demand-oriented**. Thailand has continually worked closely with LDCs as their development partner in designing development cooperation programmes. This is to ensure that our contributions fully meet the development needs of LDCs and that a sense of ownership is guaranteed.

**Mr. President,**

Thailand has, in the past, been a net recipient country of foreign assistance. However, we have now emerged as a middle income country with a capacity and desire to foster development cooperation with other developing countries. We are well aware that much of our progress can be attributed to the official development assistance (ODA) that we received from developed countries in the past, and we still feel grateful for that.

However, turning to the situation of LDCs today, what we have seen is that the existing amount of ODA is not sufficient for them to meet their massive development challenges coming from all fronts. Therefore, we join with others at this Conference in calling on all parties concerned to ensure an adequate flow of ODA to LDCs. To this end, we do hope that all

developed countries will honour their commitments to increase their ODA to 0.7 percent of their gross national income (GNI) by 2015.

**Mr. President,**

The immense challenges that LDCs are facing in this era of globalization are complex in nature and cannot be overcome by individual efforts alone. With political will and concrete contributions from all of us present at this conference, I am confident that the LDCs will move closer towards the goal of sustainable development in the future.

On our part, Thailand remains committed to South-South and triangular cooperation to help LDCs achieve their national development goals. We hope to play a role as a “regional centre of excellence,” offering knowledge, experience and best practices in areas of our expertise, which could complement the development needs of LDCs in all regions of the world. Only through our concerted efforts can we achieve our common goal of assisting the LDCs to attain the prosperity and progress that they so greatly deserve.

Thank you for your attention.

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