

**Thailand's Statement
for
ECOSOC Special Event: The Avian Flu**

**Thursday 3 November 2005, 11:00-13:00 hrs.
UN HQ, ECOSOC Chamber**

Mr. President,

First of all, my delegation wishes to take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation to you for taking this initiative. Also, our appreciation to the distinguished panelists for their presentation. I will base my intervention on the challenges presented by Dr. Nabarro especially on the issues of improving infrastructure for animal health, preparedness for influenza pandemic strike, access to antiviral and consistent public communication on risk reduction.

Thailand's action

In response to the outbreak, Thailand has declared bird flu problem a national agenda. Our highest priority is to effectively control the outbreak of the H5N1 virus in animals and reduce the risk of human infections. We also share the global concerns that a much-dreaded human influenza pandemic might break out should an avian flu strain, like H5N1, ultimately adapt into a strain that is contagious among humans.

In our combat against the disease, the Royal Thai Government has set up a **National Committee on Avian Influenza Control** under the supervision of a Deputy Prime Minister, comprising all parties concerned. The committee is responsible for the mapping out the national strategy and relevant plans in tackling the avian flu problem. It also serves as a coordinating body overseeing the implementation of relevant agencies and reports the latest development directly to the Prime Minister.

A **National Strategic Plan for Avian Influenza Control** and a **National Strategic Plan for Influenza Pandemic Preparedness in Thailand** which cover the 3-year period between 2005–2007 were endorsed by the Thai Cabinet since January 2005 with a view to tackling the problem in a unified and sustainable manner.¹ The Plans focuses on the immediate necessities and priorities to ensure that prompt and adequate measures will be carried out to protect both humans and poultry based on the best practices Thailand has learned from extensive experiences during the past 2 years. I am pleased to inform the Meeting that these Plans are now being assiduously carried out.

¹ MFA, Bangkok has already delivered Thailand's strategic plans to our foreign missions worldwide

On animal control, the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperative is the core agency. Avian Influenza Control Operating Center was set up to closely monitor the disease. Pre-emptive culling of poultry within 5 kilometer radius from the infected farm, surveillance of the area within 50 kilometers during the outbreak, movement control of avian species as well as public awareness campaign were among the priorities of the operations implemented. Moreover, the bio-security system is in place in which compartmentalization of poultry farms has been implemented in order to ensure that poultry in Thailand are disease-free and that the origins of all poultry products from Thailand can be identified.

On human aspects, the Ministry of Public Health has activated the Ministry's Operation Center to closely monitor each patient who is diagnosed as having a possibility of being infected with avian flu. Surveillance Rapid Response Team (SRRT) and local volunteers have been deployed in each village throughout the affected areas to provide any possible assistance and adequate information on the best practices.

To prevent further outbreak in the long run, networking for the disease-monitoring system with WHO and many countries in the region in accordance to the International Health Regulations (IRH) has been strengthened. International support in terms of technical assistance from FAO, OIE and WHO was significance in helping Thailand's combating avian influenza. Collaboration for public health laboratory, training exercise for controlling the outbreak at community level, relevant personnel training, improvement of necessary medical equipments and capacity building for research and development were among the focuses of the Ministry of Public Health's long term strategy.

International Cooperation

The Thai Government is determined to work with international partners to stem the outbreak. Since the first case was confirmed early last year, Thailand has hosted and actively participated in a series of multilateral and bilateral meetings to encourage international cooperation. For example, Thailand hosted a Health Ministers' Meeting of ASEAN+3 Countries on Avian Flu in November 2004 and an ASEAN Parliamentarians Seminar on the Spread of the Avian Influenza in April 2005. Thailand has also been appointed as the focal point for Southeast Asia under the FAO project on the regional network for avian influenza investigation and surveillance. We have also contributed significantly to the ASEAN Animal Health Trust Fund.

Thailand also values the importance of providing technical assistance for those countries which may lack necessary resources. We have been providing assistance to our neighboring countries to fight against avian influenza both in terms of technical and human resources. Prevention of an avian flu pandemic is being given the highest priority in ACMECS. At the first meeting of the ACMECS Working Group on Public Health on 24 October, avian flu was the focus of the discussions. ACMECS Leaders are expected to issue at their Summit on 3 November a Declaration on Partnership in Combating Avian Influenza and Other Infectious Diseases, which would include such issues as closer cooperation on monitoring and surveillance, sharing of information and best practices, developing rapid response teams, and the possibility of establishing a regional stockpile of antiviral drugs.

Priorities in the future

Thailand strongly supports the establishment of regional stockpiles for antivirals, whereby each country contributes a percentage of its antiviral to the designated regional stockpile. By so doing, we believe this mechanism will give assurance that appropriate medication will be rapidly deployed-say within 24 hours- to the infected areas in the event of emergency. We also hope to see enhanced collaboration in terms of development of vaccination for humans. Since there exists disparity in terms of technology, R&D capacity, personnel, and equipment, Thailand strongly encourages all nations to share relevant resources to fight against the disease. It is beyond any doubt that the problem has become a global concern, raising threat to every part of the world without any boundaries. Therefore we need to work collectively so as to upgrade our capacity in tackling the problem.
