

Statement by
H.E. Dr. Sorajak Kasemsuvan
Vice Minister for the Prime Minister Office
At the High-Level Segment of the Economic and Social Council
30 June 2005
UN Headquarters, New York

Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, let me congratulate you, Mr. President, for the excellent arrangements of the programme of work for this important High-Level Segment of the ECOSOC. My delegation truly believes that under your wise guidance and leadership, our deliberations would be fruitful and productive with concrete results.

Mr. President,
Distinguished Delegates,

By adopting the Millennium Development Goals and setting the target date for them by 2015, we have not just made an international pledge and commitment for the sharp improvement in the living condition of the four-fifth of the world population, but we have also committed ourselves to a decade and a half of faster and more concrete development agenda and actions. The goals and the timeframe may seem ambitious but we all know too well that our task is to make them achievable. That is why Thailand commends your leadership, Mr. President, in timely setting the theme of achieving the internationally agreed development goals.

As we meet today, one-third of the committed timeframe has lapsed. We can no longer afford any more complacency. We can no longer pay the lip service. Nor can we be divisive on the question of development and the implementation of the MDGs. We certainly do hope that the Ministerial Declaration adopted at the end of our 3 days' deliberations will pave more ways for the developed and developing nations alike to accomplish our commitment well within the next decade.

Admittedly, however, achieving the MDGs targets involve the combined international efforts, careful guidance and synergized strategy to attain sustained economic growth. This is neither the mission of the developing nor the developed nations alone. Rather, it is the mission of all who care for justice, equity, and above all human dignity.

We are all in agreement that hopes and aspirations of hundreds and thousands of millions of our people remain to be fulfilled. Hundreds of millions of our fellow citizens in Asia, the Pacific, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean are struggling to uplift their living standards. They are in need of market access, debt relief, and demand driven aid.

The recent announcement made by the G-8 on the 100 per cent debt relief for the 18 heavily indebted poor countries is to be welcomed. It is a sign that the developed world is taking a more realistic approach to development. But should the debt relief be expanded to include all heavily indebted developing countries, that would indeed be a real major step to free up those countries' energies and resources for more productive pursuits in health, education, infrastructure and all other projects to shorten their path to development and achieving the MDGs.

Apart from debt relief, it is encouraging also to note the ODA recovery in 2004 after the decline in the 90s. Developing countries still rely on ODA as a major financial source for development. ODA could be used to strengthen social and economic infrastructure and build the trade competitiveness. The EU commitment to meet the 0.7 percent by 2015 is commendable. We hope that, with the G8 and EU commitment, we will see more from the rest of the developed world.

Mr. President,
Distinguished Delegates,

It cannot be denied that all governments, in the developed or developing world, owe it to their respective people the ultimate responsibility for their citizens' well-being. The developing countries are home to four-fifth of the world population. The new initiatives from the developed countries should and must encourage us, the developing nations, to double and treble our coherence, cooperation and coordination to draw strength from our diversity, to share best practices amongst ourselves and to craft development strategy based on the North-South as much as the South-South co-operation partnership. We must bring in all sectors and all stake-holders within our economies to share the responsibility and commitment. We must encourage the public-private sector partnership. We must encourage every means that will result in the better living

conditions of the four-fifth of the world population who reside in our parts of the world.

Thailand believes that having learned the economic lessons the hard way after the 1997 Asian financial crisis, and having recovered from that crisis faster than many, including the IMF, had anticipated, we can share our ideas, perspectives and means to growth and development with our friends from the developing world.

To lay the firm foundation for our growth with the limited resources available, we must strengthen and empower the grassroots of our economy because they are the genuine backbone of our economy. Just like growing a plant, to make sure of its growth, we must water them at the roots, not the top. Likewise the grassroots of our economy need access to resources and capital to become a firm foundation for any national economy. Providing more access to capital in terms of micro-credit facilities, revolving village funds and SME bank, has opened up opportunities for people at the grassroots level in Thailand to improve their livelihoods by turning their indigenous skills and talents into productive outcome.

Once capital is made available, jobs are created and income generated. With capital in hand, the government must encouraged the grassroots to pursue a job creation and income generation schemes such as the one village, one product project. In this project, which we call “OTOP”, the government made initial investment available, the villagers produce, the government and the private sector help with the ideas, the promotion and the marketing. Their products sell, and employment secured.

With further help of the private sector on IT technology and cyberspace marketing, more income is generated as villagers are taught to be computer literate.

The grassroots income from this “OTOP” - one village, one product - scheme has grown from 200 to one billion US dollars within only three years of its introduction. As joint collaboration efforts of the people in the village, the government and the private sector, we saw the initial investment paid back sooner than many had thought.

As the majority of our grassroots economy lives in the rural area, agriculture and the use and access to land are also important for their livelihood. Inspired by the sufficiency economy theory of His Majesty the King of Thailand, we learned to create local economies that live within their own means. The land reform scheme initiatives by the government

provide more access and ownership to land for the grassroots. To encourage the self-help growth, the newly launched securitization scheme enables the poor to have more access to capital by themselves by turning items available in rural areas such as agricultural produce and cattle as collaterals. With that capital, they can initiate new jobs and create more income for themselves.

However, sustainable development in our context does not limit only to domestic economic situation. Upholding the principle of “prosper thy neighbours”, Thailand has expanded our development partnership strategy with all our immediate neighbours. We do not seek to gain advantage from our fast rate of growth at the expense of our neighbours, nor do we desire to widen the development gap as we make economic progress and success. We believe in consolidated strength and in prospering others while prospering ourselves. We have fostered development partnership with a good number of developing countries. At the same time, we have concluded several partnership agreements with developed country partners to work with them in respective development programmes in other developing countries. We believe that the North-South cooperation is as significant as the South-South cooperation in gaining global sustainable development and attaining the MDGs.

Mr. President,

We believe that the outcome of this High-Level Segment, the forthcoming September Summit and the UN Reform will bring new hopes, opportunities and progress to the Millennium Goals.

With such conviction and perspectives, Thailand pledges its readiness to work in collaboration with the ECOSOC, with all partners, and all agencies to make 2015 the historic landmark for the people of our generation and the generations to come.

Thank you for your attention.