



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

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Statement

by

His Excellency Mr. Abhisit Vejjajiva

Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand

at the General Debate

of the 64th Session of the UN General Assembly

New York

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Please check against delivery

Mr. President,

1. Please allow me to extend to you on behalf of the delegation of the Kingdom of Thailand our sincere congratulations on your election to the Presidency of the 64th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. You can rest assured of my delegation's full support and cooperation.

Mr. President,

2. We live in one of the most challenging times in our history. Like the period before the founding of the United Nations more than sixty years ago, the world is again facing great challenges. Conflicts and tensions remain in many parts of the world; terrorists attack; poverty, disease, hunger still affect many; our supply of traditional sources of energy is dwindling; and climate change is transforming the very environment in which we all live, coupled with this the current global financial crisis, the future seems bleak.

3. But, like our forebears more than sixty years ago, we also live in hope for a better future. And a large part of this hope today rests upon the United Nations. Despite criticisms, we must never doubt the fact that the world has been better off with the United Nations than without it. I say this because the challenges we have faced and are facing demand multilateral cooperation to overcome. The United Nations has provided a bedrock for such multilateral cooperation as well as being, what the great poet Lord Tennyson coined, a 'Parliament of Man'. And it is this Parliament of Man which provides a forum for us to meet and discuss remedies to common challenges as well as to respond to the concerns of our constituency – the global citizens.

Mr. President,

4. In the interdependent and interconnected world, no one nation can go it alone – even the biggest and the most powerful. But at the same time, no one nation should be left behind either in our pursuit of peace, prosperity, and the protection of human rights. Just as we join hands to face common challenges,

we must also extend our hand to those less fortunate, to pull them towards a brighter future and to give them the opportunity to enjoy the fruits of globalisation.

5. Thailand stands ready to extend a helping hand. We stand ready to share our experiences and the lessons we have learnt from our own financial crisis in 1997. We believe that our nation's remedies to our problems can be shared and they should contribute to the forming of international remedies to common global challenges. Central to our belief is that peace and security, development, and human rights are intertwined and must reinforce each other so that all three pillars are sustainable. This view is also central to the United Nations.

Mr. President,

6. Thailand believes that moderation is the key to sustainability. We want to see moderation instead of excessive greed, which is the cause of the economic crisis. We want to see moderation instead of over consumption which is the cause of environmental degradation. And we want to see moderation instead of extremism and selfishness which is the cause of conflicts around the world. We must therefore curb our excesses, live within our means, and use our resources wisely. This idea of moderation is an important pillar of the 'sufficiency economy' philosophy of His Majesty the King. This philosophy should not be understood, or misunderstood, as advocating an 'inward looking' approach. Rather, it teaches us that economic development and modernisation must be better balanced and take into account the well-being of the people, their economic, social, political, and environmental needs, so that the country is resilient and protected from both external and internal shocks.

7. His Majesty himself has applied his philosophy in practice, initiating numerous Royal Projects for the betterment of his people and country. His Majesty has been rightly regarded by the international community as the 'Development King'. His Majesty received the UNDP Human Development Lifetime Achievement Award in recognition of his achievements as well as his 'sufficiency economy' philosophy, which has gained increasing resonance

worldwide. And many of His Majesty's projects are being replicated in many parts of the world.

8. The recent global financial crisis has shown that 'sufficiency economy' is not merely a philosophy but can also be translated into real action. Due to the lessons learned from the 1997 Asian financial crisis, most of Thailand's financial institutions escaped the direct impact of this crisis, thanks to the more prudent style of investment. Entrepreneurs have managed to weather the storm through rational decision-making and more careful risk management, two of the key principles which His Majesty's philosophy suggests.

9. My Government's socio-economic policy is guided by His Majesty's philosophy, which has been incorporated into our National Economic and Social Development Plan. Development is not just about the rate of growth but more for the qualitative growth. Not only have we boosted government spending and investments to jumpstart the economy but we have also cast social safety nets, made education reform a priority, and upgraded our health and welfare services.

10. We have prioritised the investment programmes and action plan to increase strength and to provide greater economic opportunities for people at grass-roots level. We have also laid the foundation for long-term growth and competitiveness in Thailand's various sectors, including agriculture, healthcare, education and tourism. In short, we have made Thailand's development a people-centred approach and Thailand's economy better immune from external shocks.

11. As ASEAN Chair, Thailand has led regional efforts to address today's financial crisis, to create immunity for East Asia as a whole. We are expediting the multilateralisation process of the Chiang Mai Initiative under the framework of ASEAN + 3, comprising ASEAN Member States, China, Japan and the Republic of Korea. The aim of this exercise is to build regional financial stability through a region-wide self help substantive reserve pooling arrangement. This will come into effect very soon. As a region, we have continued to liberalise

trade and reject all forms of protectionism. We believe that these efforts can serve as examples for other regions to follow.

Mr. President,

12. Today's financial woes affect not only a nation's economy but also the development and welfare of its people. The crisis exacerbates the problems that already exist such as poverty, hunger and energy shortages. Nowhere is this more strongly felt than in the developing world and Thailand is no exception. Although Thailand has already attained the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in hunger and poverty alleviation, more remains to be done. Thailand understands well the challenges developing countries are facing and is prepared to share our experiences in managing and overcoming these challenges with others.

13. As a major agricultural economy, Thailand stands ready to contribute to the solution of the world food and energy crises. We are a major food exporter with strong experience and capability in developing alternative energy, especially biodiesel and ethanol. We aim to ensure a balance between growing energy and food crops so that both needs are sufficiently addressed.

14. Another pressing concern that can only be successfully tackled through global cooperation is climate change. My Government is convinced that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is the core for international negotiations and cooperation in this area, guided by the principles of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities. In this connection, Thailand is honoured to host the United Nations Climate Change Talks which will take place next week in Bangkok. We will spare no efforts in ensuring that this round of negotiations will make tangible progress towards a successful Copenhagen Conference in December. Earlier this week, the Secretary-General convened the Summit on Climate Change. We welcome the commitments expressed by major economies during this Summit, in particular in setting clear goals and targets for their action. I am also pleased to

see the G20 pledging themselves to spare no efforts to achieve a successful outcome at Copenhagen.

15. On our part, my Government has vigorously pursued environmentally friendly growth. That is why we have announced alternative energy as our national agenda and invested significantly to boost developments in this field, including energy crops. Moreover, one of Thailand's hallmarks is its strong biodiversity, from which Thailand and her local communities have drawn benefits through innovative economic activities and products. While we seek to benefit fully from our rich biodiversity and natural resources, we also aim to ensure that they are sustainable, regenerated and replenished.

Mr. President,

16. It is not enough to ensure that the economic needs of the people are met. Their political needs are just as important. And there is no better political system than democracy to ensure the people's freedoms and rights. It is my Government's clear policy to sow the seeds for sustainable democracy through strengthening our democratic institutions, engaging civil society, ensuring human rights, and promoting good governance as well as the rule of law. Democracy is not just about the majority rules but also about the respect of minority rights.

17. At the regional level, under Thailand's Chairmanship, ASEAN has made great strides towards making people the centre of the organisation's development, as enshrined in the ASEAN Charter. Human rights issue is now at the forefront of ASEAN's agenda. Collectively, we have played an active role to create the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights, which comes into action this October. We are committed to doing our utmost to ensure that this body fully lives up to expectations.

18. Promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women are also important to Thailand. Besides our national effort on this matter, I am pleased to add that ASEAN is also in the process of establishing an ASEAN commission on

the promotion and protection of the rights of women and children. This mechanism would play an important part in enhancing and strengthening the ASEAN human rights framework as a whole.

19. At the international level, Thailand is party to core international human rights conventions and we are strongly committed to the principles enshrined in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Thailand's candidature for a seat on the UN Human Rights Council for the term 2010-2013 is another testament to our commitment to enhance human rights internationally.

20. Thailand has consistently rendered humanitarian assistance to those in plight wherever they may be. We have steadfastly contributed to the World Food Programme. We have offered our helping hand to those in need. Our humanitarian commitment was clearly evident during the Cyclone Nargis that befell Myanmar as Thailand became the logistics hub for the massive international relief effort for that country.

Mr. President,

21. Sustainable economic, political and social developments are not mere goals in themselves. They ultimately ensure a long-lasting peace and security. That is why ASEAN is moving towards becoming not only a political-security community but also economic and socio-cultural ones by 2015. These three pillars reinforce each other. Within this political-security community, Thailand and her fellow ASEAN members are ready to enhance cooperation, from dispute settlement to conflict resolution, from peacekeeping to post-conflict peacebuilding, especially in cooperation on training for emergency preparedness and humanitarian assistance. We hope that our regional efforts would help contribute not only to peace and security regionally but also internationally.

22. Thailand herself has played a significant role in peacekeeping operations worldwide. In the past two decades, Thailand has provided nearly 20,000 military troops, police officers, and civilian staff in support of UN peacekeeping missions in all continents around the globe, for instance in Cambodia, Timor

Leste, Burundi and soon in Darfur. We will continue to do so where our contributions can strengthen the overall capacity of the UN.

23. As a member of the UN Peace-building Commission (PBC), Thailand also strongly believes in building the right socio-economic and political conditions for sustainable peace in countries emerging from conflict and internal strife. We can play a greater role in ensuring international peace and security. That is why Thailand has presented its candidature for a non-permanent seat of the UN Security Council from 2017 to 2018. As a medium-sized developing country, we can represent the interests and concerns of developing countries, not only in Asia but worldwide.

Mr. President,

24. Over the past four days, we have heard statements, one after another, which seem to point towards one conclusion -- that is we are living in a "challenging period". And perhaps it is the period that multilateralism is once again put to the test. But we also have before us a historic opportunity to act together to right our past wrongs and to make the right decision for the future. How we act today is purely our choice -- a choice that shall be judged by our children tomorrow and our grandchildren in years to come.

25. Our forefathers chose to establish the United Nations over six decades ago. We must now make sure that the United Nations -- a symbol of true multilateralism -- continues to be relevant, efficient and effective in responding to the evolving challenges as well as ensuring development, freedoms and human rights, and peace for all. In this regard, we support UN reform that will lead us towards these goals.

26. Let us use our gathering here to remind ourselves of what the United Nations stands for. And let us seize this opportunity together to lay down a stronger foundation for a new era of peace and prosperity for humankind.

Thank you, Mr. President.