

STATEMENT BY
H.E. DR. SORAJAK KASEMSUVAN
VICE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THAILAND
**HIGH LEVEL SEGMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL MEETING TO
REVIEW THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF
ACTION FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF SMALL
ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES (SIDS)
REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS
13 JANUARY 2005**

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

It is a great honour and pleasure for me to represent H.E. Dr. Thaksin Shinawatra, Prime Minister of Thailand, at this very important and timely meeting. I wish to thank the Government of Mauritius for the gracious hospitality and the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States for its role in the preparation and the arrangement of this meeting.

Mr. President,

The massive earthquake and the tsunami disaster that occurred on 26 December has clearly shown us the scale of devastation a natural disaster can cause to human lives and the environment, especially when we are ill prepared to prevent and mitigate its effects. This bitter lesson has hammered home the vital importance of cooperation networks in implementing effective early warning systems, risk reduction strategies and relief efforts to mitigate the effects of disasters. The Special ASEAN Leader's Meeting on the Aftermath of the Earthquake and Tsunami in Jakarta, Indonesia, last week did not only reflect a very noble joint effort of international community to cope with the calamity regardless of the differences in development level amongst the participating countries but also agreed on the initiative to set up a regional early warning system in the Indian Ocean. Thailand looks forward to the more effort of cooperation at the UN Conference on Disaster Reduction in Kobe on 18-22 January. In the meantime, to follow up with an immediate task agreed in

Jakarta, Thailand will be hosting a regional ministerial meeting on 28-29 January in Phuket with a view to mapping out a work plan for the establishment of an early warning system in the Indian Ocean. This is a regional effort that could also compliment national disaster preparedness of SIDS.

Mr. President,

Thailand welcomes the Draft Strategy, which addresses not only natural disaster but also other issues related to sustainable development of SIDS. From our experience, we realize that development would not be sustained unless the economy is strengthened at the grass-root level. There are a number of ways and means to do so, in addition to the implementation of a number of schemes to provide access to capital, to promote small and medium size entrepreneurs, and to enhance public welfares. Our development approach is also guided by His Majesty the King's philosophy of sufficiency economy. The key to this philosophy is "moderation", which suggests a middle path in conducting various aspects of life at both the individual and community levels. As a result of following this philosophy, the economy can advance in moderation and become more self-sufficient and resilient. The environment and people's livelihoods are also better protected. Negative impacts of migration which poses problems to human resource development can also be prevented. To share our practical experiences with developing countries, Thailand hosted the first Ministerial Conference on Alternative Development: Sufficiency Economy in November 2004 attended by 19 countries including some island states. Thailand is ready to host similar exercises in the future.

Mr. President,

Tourism industry in Thailand can be cited as one of our success stories in performing a socio-economic policy from within. Tourism immensely contributes to the process of our sustainable development. Based on our experience, Thailand sees the natural beauty and cultural heritage of SIDS as an excellent endowment for SIDS to enable them to leap forward in this sector of economy. Well managed tourism would open up opportunities for additional earnings especially at the grass-root level. With 12 millions foreign tourists visiting Thailand last year, Thailand's tourism industry has entered into its mature stage. We are most happy to exchange knowledge and techniques to promote the tourism development and management in SIDS.

Mr. President,

As far as the negative impacts on human resource development are concerned, Thailand perceives that health and pandemics can bear impact both positively and negatively to human resources. We also perceive HIV/AIDS epidemic as a severe threat to human security. The spread of HIV/AIDS has no boundary and is indiscriminate. An increase of HIV infection among people at working age, women and youth has given rise to social and economic instability. Thailand has long experiences in coping with HIV/AIDS since the early days of the pandemic and so far we have been considerably successful. Evidently, HIV/AIDS creates serious challenge to our socio-economic development. It needs high political commitment and has to be addressed through a multi-ministerial approach in order to provide access to all for prevention, treatment and services. On the treatment in particular, Thailand has developed and provided free Anti-Retroviral Agents (ARV), the drug which has contributed to the reduction of the infection rate among our people. My Prime Minister has even offered at the Leaders' Meeting of Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation or APEC in Chile in November to provide this drug at production cost to developed countries to provide them as assistance to other developing countries. We stand ready to take part in any initiative with SIDS and their potential development partners through the concept of partnership to promote the wider access to affordable Anti-Retroviral drug and to share our experiences in combating HIV/AIDS so that the deteriorating situation of this deadly disease in SIDS could be alleviated.

Mr. President,

At this meeting, Thailand would like to join the others in calling for shared responsibilities from the international community to assist SIDS in addressing their particular vulnerabilities in an endearing manner. Thailand will do whatever in our capacity to offer our share in the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. Thailand will work with all of you to explore all possible multilateral cooperation strategies for further implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. SIDS or non-SIDS alike need to do more together because the big stakes of SIDS are indeed the stakes of us all.

Thank you.