

# Thailand: Taking Action for Sustainable Development



Cambodian migrant fishers repair nets before going back to sea in Rayong, Thailand © Nachagahn Sathiensotorn

## What are the actions being taken by the Government to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in Thailand?

Human trafficking is a serious crime and a grave violation of human rights. Every year, thousands of men, women and children fall into the hands of traffickers, in their own countries and abroad.

In 2014, Thailand was cited among the worst countries for human trafficking by the US Department of State's Trafficking in Persons Report. The country remained at the lowest ranking for another year while the Thai seafood industry was hit hard by reports of forced labour on its fishing boats.

Everybody including Thai government officials, employers, trade unions, as well as retailers around the world swung into action, through a project led by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and funded by the European Union called [“Ship to Shore Rights.”](#)

A top goal of “Ship to Shore Rights” is to close the gap between Thai law and global standards on forced labour—a key measure of progress for SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth. The Thai government is currently teaming

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*I believe that to solve these [fishing and seafood labour] problems, success can only be achieved through cooperation... between the Royal Thai Government, Thai workers' and employers' organizations, the private sector and civil society organizations.*

**General Sirichai Distakul  
Minister of Labour, Thailand**

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*We are committed to firmly supporting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, leaving no one behind. We are concerned that many victims of forced or child labour have no voice and no possibility to escape from extreme working conditions. We welcome the firm commitment of the Thai government to move ahead and address the issue with determination.*

**Ambassador Jesus Sanz  
Head of the Delegation of the  
European Union in Thailand**



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Thai government officials lead a labour inspection of a fishing vessel in Rayong, Thailand © Nachagahn Sathiensotorn

up with employers, civil society, and trade unions to draft rules that meet the ILO's Forced Labour Protocol and the Work in Fishing Convention.

A second goal is adding muscle to ensure the rules are enforced. The Ministry of Labour of Thailand has added port inspections and over 60 interpreters to make sure that Cambodian and Myanmar fisheries can be heard.

Due in part to these responses, Thailand was moved off the lowest rung of the US State Department's global list of the worst offenders in human trafficking.

## ***Why do the above actions matter to people in Thailand?***

Fairness and dignity for migrant workers is particularly important for Thailand because the number of migrant workers here is growing—the most recent UN estimate puts the total number of migrant workers in Thailand at 3.5 to 4 million people.

Respect for the fundamental rights of workers—both Thai and international migrants—is not just about basic human rights and complying with Thai law. It is also about business and competitiveness. Buyers of Thai seafood around the world now look for decent work practices in

their supply chains more than before. As Thai seafood suppliers plan for the future they see that remaining competitive in this global industry means more than low prices and high quality products. It also means decent work.

## ***What SDG has been particularly advanced through the project?***

Goal 8 on decent work and economic growth has been advanced, focusing on Target 8.7: take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms.



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