



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

351 EAST 52ND STREET · NEW YORK, NY 10022
TEL (212) 754-2230 • FAX (212) 688-3029

Statement by

**His Excellency Mr. Norachit Sinhaseni
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Thailand
to the United Nations**

**to the Fifty-Fourth Session of
the Commission on the Status of Women**

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Mr. Chairman,

It is an honour for the Thai delegation to address the opening session of the 54th Commission on the Status of Women. Thailand fully aligns itself with the statement made by the Group of 77 and China.

Mr. Chairman,

The Thai Government has abided by the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BDPA), and remains fully committed to promoting women's advancement in 12 critical areas of the BDPA, as well as 8 other critical areas added at the 23rd special session of the UNGA. All critical areas have been incorporated in Thailand's national development plans since the 8th Economic and Social Development Plan (1997 – 2001) and their implementation has been conducted at all levels, closely monitored through the systematic collection of gender-disaggregated data.

Concrete progress on the implementation of BDPA is detailed, as follows:

In the area of **Women and Poverty**, the number of poor people in Thailand has continually decreased from 14.93% in 2002 to 8.48% in 2007, as a result of the Thai Government's poverty eradication policies and programmes and various economic stimulus packages. Recognizing that the poorest among the poor are women, the government has launched specific policies to assist poor women, namely a short-term plan to promote creation of jobs and income generation for women in the agricultural sector, the promotion of social insurance schemes for the elderly and needy women and the promotion of 15 years of free education, which have altogether increased women's personal capital and opportunities to find better jobs.

In the area of **education**, the Thai Government has recognized education as a crucial tool to empower people, and has aimed to promote and ensure equal access to 15 years of compulsory education for all. As a result, the proportion of girls and boys in compulsory education is now roughly equal (1.02: 1). Additionally, our national survey (2007) found that the literacy rate of women increased from 89.2% in 2000 to 91.4 % in 2006.

In the area of **health**, the Thai Government has identified certain health problems that are particular to women, namely cervical cancer and breast cancer, and has specified in the National Health Insurance Act (2002) that women 35 – 60 years of age are entitled to Pap Smear Tests and early detection programmes for cervical cancer as well as means to promote women's reproductive health and early detection of breast cancer. The government has also provided financial support for people living with HIV/AIDS, including a large number of women infected with HIV/AIDS.

In the area of the **economy**, Thai women in the workforce **currently** contribute 45% of the GDP. Combined with their contribution of work in the household, which is traditionally the realm of women and which can be

approximated at 6 % of the GDP, Thai women contribute in total approximately half of the GDP. Nevertheless, women working outside the agricultural sector still receive slightly less income than men (0.92:1) and have very little chance to be in senior executive positions in business (22%) and on committees in labour unions (32%).

The Thai government has also attached great importance to the area of **power and decision making**. This was detailed in the women's development plan in the 10th National Economic and Social Development Plan, which includes policies to promote women's political capacity and knowledge, network creation, as well as society's recognition of women's participation in politics and administration. Regular training has been organized for women who wish to enter political careers. Thus, although the number of women in high level administrative levels (22.18%) and in local politics (10 – 11%) are presently still low, the trend reflects gradual increase.

On **institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women**, the national women's machinery of Thailand consists of a national committee, namely the National Commission on the Policies and Strategies for Women's Advancement, which is chaired by the Prime Minister of Thailand and comprised of representatives from all ministries and specialists in various fields. Chief Gender Equality Officers (CGEOs), who are deputy permanent secretaries at the ministerial level and deputy directors-general at the departmental level, with Gender Focal Points (GFPs) at the divisional level, function to draft master plans on the promotion of gender equality in the respective ministries and departments, as well as on the promotion of gender mainstreaming in their programmes, projects and activities.

Another area of the BDPA in which Thailand has had considerable progress is **women and human rights**. Thailand acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1985, and has made serious efforts towards implementation since then. A number of laws have been passed and amended, such as the Person's Name Act (2005), which allows women to choose to retain their surname and title after marriage, the Protection of Victims of Domestic Violence Act (2007), and the Protection and Suppression Human Trafficking Act (1997). At present, Thailand has removed the 5 out of 7 reservations it had at the time of CEDAW accession, and is now working on the removal of the reservation on article 16 regarding marriage and family relations.

Recognizing that **the media** is an important target group and partner in the promotion of women's advancement by means of changing gender stereotypes, the Thai government has been promoting women's active role in the media by providing awards for women in the mass media profession and utilizing mass media in promoting women's advancement and gender equality in the annual celebration of International Women's Day.

The situation of global warming and recent natural disasters precipitate the government's prompt action, which has clearly emphasized the role and participation of women in the protection and promotion of a sustainable **environment**. Annual awards have been given to women with remarkable roles in this respect and units/organizations have mainstreamed gender aspects into their projects or activities on environmental protection.

Last but not least, is the Thai Government's concern for **the girl child**. The Thai government has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and has promulgated a number of laws on child protection, particularly as concerns the girl child, such as the Child Protection Act (2003), the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act (2008), and the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on the Coordinated Guidelines for Governmental Units Dealing with Human Trafficking in Women and Children (2003). In addition, the government actively promotes knowledge and understanding on gender equality, gender roles, respect for equal human rights, dignity, and the balanced responsibilities and burden sharing between women and men, as well as proper sex education for children.

To effectively assess the status of women's advancement and gender equality in the country, Thailand is the first country in Southeast Asia that has created and implemented **the Gender-related Development Index Plus (GDI Plus)** with the cooperation and assistance from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The GDI Plus is used for analyzing and indicating the state of women's development, and conditions of gender equality in particular areas and issues of concern. It also reflects on the local situation, and contributes to effective planning in the development and promotion of women's status and potential.

Mr. Chairman,

The significance of gender equality and women's human rights has always been among issues of highest priority for Thailand. The Thai Government's commitment is also clearly displayed at the regional and international level through our strong support for the development of a regional mechanism on women's human rights, namely the **ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC)**, and our application for membership on the **UN Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW)** for the years 2012- 2015.

On another level, the royal project of HRH Princess Bajarakitiyabha Mahidol, entitled **Enhancing Lives of Female Inmates (ELFI)**, aims to promote gender-sensitivity in the treatment of female inmates as a standard practice. One of the main rationales behind this project is the need to supplement the 1955 **UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners**, as a response to the distinctive needs of female inmates and their children. In concrete terms, HRH envisions the development of a comprehensive strategy and gender-sensitive

guidelines for the treatment of female inmates, which may further serve as a road map and recommendations for the “UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners” (Bangkok Rules).

Mr. Chairman,

In Thailand, the independent National Human Rights Commission was established by the Constitution to promote and protect human rights, including women’s rights. The National Human Rights Commission of Thailand (NHRCT) in turn established the Sub-Commission on the Promotion of Equal Opportunity to address women’s rights and equality, and other gender-related issues. The NHRCT receives complaints from individuals and has undertaken a number of activities to promote women’s rights. They include research on public policies with respect to women’s rights and equality, reviewing domestic legislation to ensure that laws adequately address women’s rights, sensitizing the judiciary to gender-based discriminatory practices against women in the justice system, countering negative myths and stereotypes about women and combating trafficking in women. In terms of the interaction with other national authorities for the advancement of women, the NHRCT has promoted the use of the complaint mechanism under the Optional Protocol to CEDAW. In collaboration with the Office of Women’s Affairs and Family Development, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security and UNIFEM, the mechanism was introduced to actors and stakeholders working within the field of women’s rights through workshops and other forms of mutual-learning processes.

Mr. Chairman,

For all our successes, many challenges remain. In Thailand, the proportion of women’s participation in politics and administration, as well as many other critical areas such as science and technology, remains low. Furthermore, the increase in numbers of women, including older women, in vulnerable groups such as persons with disability and female migrant workers, needs special attention and consideration.

Thailand recognizes that continued hard work and dedication is required to overcome persisting and new challenges and we reiterate our firm commitment to continue to work closely with all sectors at the local, national, regional and international levels towards the full implementation of the BDPA, CEDAW and other international agreements on the improvement of the status and quality of life of women in Thailand. On our part, we hope that this will count as a significant contribution to the advancement of women all over the world.