

Statement
by
His Excellency Mr. Kasit Piromya,
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand
at the General Debate
of the 65th Session of the UN General Assembly
New York
29 September 2010

Mr. President,

1. Please allow me to extend to you on behalf of the delegation of the Kingdom of Thailand our wholehearted congratulations on your election to the Presidency of the 65th 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 a world of divides. Although the predominantly ideological divide of the Cold War has ended, new divides have risen to the fore, be they politico-security, socio-economic, digital, or even based on beliefs. Such divides present challenges to peace, security, prosperity, and human dignity. To overcome them, requires nations working together as one. To overcome them, requires a United Nations.

3. But the effectiveness of such international cooperation depends on the strength and willingness of individual nations themselves. And Thailand is such a nation – willing and ready to cooperate with international partners to help bridge such divides, to help the world cross into a better future.

Mr. President,

4. But of course, we are under no illusions about Thailand's own difficulties, about our current divides. But history has shown that Thailand is a resilient country and her people are capable of overcoming whatever challenges thrown before them. Thailand remains a functioning democracy but we are a relatively young one. Like many other democracies, with time our democracy will develop and mature. And the Thai Government is committed to this, to the principles of democracy, the practice of good governance, and the respect for human rights.

5. Have no doubt that the Government is resolutely working to heal the political and social divisions in my country. We are working to address any legitimate socio-economic grievances with a view to bringing back national unity and confidence. We have launched a national reconciliation plan and set up independent committees led by eminent personages with the utmost integrity to propose ways to reform the country and her democratic institutions. We will bridge our country's divide.

6. Human rights remain the cornerstone of the Government's policy. We are looking into any wrongdoings of the past and will ensure that they do not recur and justice is done. To this end, we have set up an independent fact-finding commission to look at the tragic events earlier this year. Other independent organs like the National Human Rights Commission also play a key and active role in safeguarding human rights.

7. The Thai Government well recognises that some of the political grievances mainly arise from the economic disparities in our society. This is a serious issue and the Government is working to bridge the economic and social gaps. We are creating social safety nets through our universal healthcare schemes, 15 years of free education, training programmes for the unemployed, and support for low-

income earners, farmers, the elderly, and people with disabilities. Our stimulus packages would benefit not only the overall economy but especially those who are economically and socially disadvantaged and disenfranchised.

8. Despite our troubles, the Thai economy remains robust as our economy and exports continue to grow steadily. However, we are not complacent as much remains to be done. We need to better spread economic and social wellbeing and strength throughout Thailand, which would also contribute towards reconciliation, trust, and stability of the country. To this end, we seek to strengthen Thailand's Creative Economy by utilising our rich cultural and historical heritage and the creativity of both urban and rural Thais to add more value to Thai products and services so that our productivity and competitiveness are enhanced and our wealth more widely spread.

9. I think we have proven to the world the strength of our national character and the resilience of our nation. Despite the tragic incidents, Thailand has continued to move forwards, not merely for the benefit of the country but also for the international community. It is evident that we remain an active and responsible member of the United Nations, ready to enhance our present partnerships and build new ones to help create a better world future. I will now expand upon how Thailand has contributed and can further contribute internationally to help bridge the world's divides.

Mr. President,

10. Many a conflict, whether inter-state or intra-state, stem from the disparities of development; the suffering from economic injustice. The world is divided not simply into haves and have-not countries, but rather into haves-more and have-less ones, into North and South. Thailand therefore believes that, in bridging the development gap, global economic growth should be balanced and inclusive,

regional economic cooperation and integration be enhanced and the disadvantaged and dispossessed not be left behind.

11. The recent global financial crisis served as a valuable wake-up call for all, reminding us to live within our means. Thailand believes that people-centred development, moderation in economic behaviour, and the optimum use of limited resources as stipulated in His Majesty the King of Thailand's "Sufficiency Economy" philosophy are essential if we are to have sustainable economic development and growth. Thailand has embarked on this path and we urge others to follow.

12. The financial crisis has also alerted us to the necessity of better global governance – the need for reform of international financial institutions, with due consideration for the interests of developing nations as they are the ones affected the most. Countries must work more closely together to better coordinate fiscal and monetary policies and to improve regulation of financial institutions.

13. On our part, Thailand has engaged actively in regional and international fora such as ASEAN, ASEAN+3, the G-20, and the UN. As ASEAN Chair, Thailand was invited to the G-20 Summits in London and Pittsburgh last year to share ASEAN's experiences and lessons learnt from the 1997 financial crisis. Thailand believes that regional initiatives like the Chiang Mai Initiative Multilateralisation (CMIM), the Asian Bond Markets Initiative (ABMI), and the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) would all help complement the ongoing global cooperation to achieve balanced and sustainable growth, as well as to promote a resilient international financial system that also addresses the concerns of developing countries. We believe that ASEAN, through the ASEAN Chair, will continue to contribute to the forum its relevant experiences in achieving these goals.

14. As a developing country herself, Thailand stands ready to help others in need. We believe in greater South-South cooperation for it is fellow developing countries that best understand what is required to help push development forwards. We are also active in building partnerships between the developed and developing world, providing a bridge between them through triangular cooperation, by adapting technology from the developed countries to match the needs of the developing. We have achieved most of the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and stand ready to share our knowledge and experience, especially in alleviating poverty and improving wellbeing in other countries.

15. And we have already done so in our region, by cooperating with our neighbours to improve social welfare and build essential infrastructures. Through the Thailand-initiated Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity, the Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI) Strategic Framework, the East-West Economic Corridor (EWEC), the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) projects, as well as bilateral cooperation, we have strived to promote greater technical cooperation in the region, and to create and upgrade transport and telecommunications networks to facilitate greater economic activities. Such initiatives ultimately help narrow the developmental divide within the region.

16. Of the problems of development, food security ranks as one of the most important. For lives to live, mouths must be fed. As a major food exporter, Thailand can contribute to ensure greater food security. We also believe in greater regional cooperation. The ASEAN Plus Three Emergency Rice Reserve stands as a model for other regions to emulate.

17. Climate Change is undeniable. It is happening now. We are all experiencing its effects, which have exacerbated the world's woes, including food scarcity and natural disasters. Thailand is a developing country actively pursuing its

voluntary climate change mitigation efforts. We will increase our forest area through reforestation and afforestation, and increase our renewable energy usage. Indeed, our 11th National Social and Economic Development Plan for the years 2012 to 2016, which is now being drafted, aims to move Thailand towards becoming a Low Carbon Society.

18. We also aim to have economic growth that is 'green' with energy used more efficiently and wisely. But the developed world must also play its part in helping others be better equipped to fight climate change. Greater technology transfers are thus a must. We sincerely hope that the COP16 in Cancun will lead to more concrete and comprehensive outcomes in our fight against climate change.

Mr. President,

19. Development is linked to human security which is linked to human rights. People must have freedom from want as well as from fear. But while fundamental human rights are universal, how they are ensured and promoted differ in various countries in accordance with different belief systems and cultures. Thailand believes that we must bridge such differences by working together towards a more common understanding of human rights and how they must be protected. To this end, fora like the interfaith dialogues and the Alliance of Civilisations are invaluable contributions to that greater common understanding.

20. I stress again that human rights are a core principle of the Government and foreign policy. Thailand's election to the Human Rights Council for the years 2010-2013 and its election by acclamation to become the President of the Council in June this year are clear testaments to the conviction of the international community in Thailand's active and positive role in promoting and protecting human rights.

21. As a member of the Human Rights Council, Thailand aims to reinvigorate the Council to address more effectively human rights problems worldwide. To this end, as President of the Council, we seek to see through the review process by next year. We believe that the Council should adopt a more even-handed approach through greater cooperation and engagement with the concerned countries themselves, to establish greater dialogue between states as well as regions and to try to forge consensus among them.

22. Instead of mere criticism and the imposition of values seen as foreign, we must reach out to persuade the countries concerned to understand that human rights are shared values and common to all. Only through true engagement can the Council have a real impact on the betterment of people's lives and ultimately help pave the way towards peace. Only then can we ensure that the rights of man do not again fall hostage to the wrongs of mankind.

23. And Thailand has strived for this aim regionally as well. Under Thailand's ASEAN Chairmanship from July 2008 to the end of 2009, the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights was given birth to protect and promote human rights and to uphold human dignity. We have also contributed to international human rights norm-setting on enhancing the lives of female inmates through Her Royal Highness Princess Bajrakitiyabha Mahidol's "Draft United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders" submitted for this General Assembly's consideration.

24. Thailand has also rendered humanitarian assistance to preserve human wellbeing and dignity damaged by natural disasters not only in nearby places like Myanmar, China, and Pakistan, but also in places far afield as Haiti and most recently Chad. We remain ready to offer our facilities as a staging centre for humanitarian assistance in our region.

Mr. President,

25. The flames of war are sparked by many reasons but none are as flammable as the real or perceived security divide and power imbalance between nations as well as within them. Thailand believes that global disarmament and non-proliferation are essential to level the security playing field, to dispel the sense of a power and security imbalance. The United Nations must continue its active role to this end, but major powers and regional entities must do their fair share – the Southeast Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty (SEANWFZ) is a good case in point.

26. Thailand supports international efforts towards the disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. We have consistently abided by the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions and are gravely concerned with the threat of the proliferation of such weapons to terrorists. That is why Thailand has recently joined the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism.

27. The maintenance of international peace and security is a serious and costly endeavour and history has shown that the international community has often acted too late – enforcing and keeping the peace rather than making it. We believe that more should be invested in peacemaking and preventive diplomacy, which are much less expensive than peace enforcement and peacekeeping. It is much better to hold talks than to wage war. It is also far less likely for a community of nations to wage war with itself. That is why ASEAN is steadfastly becoming a community, economically, socio-culturally and politically.

28. But in cases where peacekeeping were and are necessary, Thailand has also done its part. In the past two decades, Thailand has contributed nearly 20,000 troops, police officers, and civilian staff to United Nations peacekeeping operations worldwide: from Cambodia and Timor-Leste to Haiti and very soon

Darfur in the Sudan. Thailand has also recently sent a Counter-Piracy Task Group to assist international efforts in patrolling and protecting ships from pirate attacks in the Gulf of Aden area. These are our contributions to the maintenance of peace and security worldwide, and we are prepared to do more. Rest assured that so long as there is peace to be kept, Thais will be ready to help keep it.

29. However, peacekeeping alone is not enough. The conditions for sustainable peace must be built in post-conflict societies to ensure that blood is not shed again. We believe that sustainable development is crucial for perpetual peace. This is what Thailand is working for by helping lay the foundations for peace through development since during the peacekeeping phase: from the transfer of agricultural know-how in Timor-Leste to the building of essential infrastructures in Burundi. We have also strived for this goal through our membership of the Peacebuilding Commission. Thailand envisages this body playing a greater role in ensuring sustainable peace worldwide.

30. Thailand herself is poised to play a greater role in ensuring international peace and security. We have presented our candidature for a non-permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council for the term 2017-2018, for which we ask your invaluable support. Thailand aspires to work closely with our international partners to ensure that the path towards war is rerouted towards peace and never tread again.

31. While we believe that the Security Council has so far played an indispensable role in maintaining international peace and security, we also believe that the Council should be adjusted to better reflect world realities in order to tackle today's global challenges more effectively. Thailand envisions a Security Council working with greater efficiency, transparency, and engagement with concerned parties, be they countries, regional organisations, or other UN bodies.

We believe that through such reforms, the Council would become more effective in maintaining peace and security worldwide.

Mr. President,

32. Thailand is wholly committed to the United Nations and its lofty ideals. Since the United Nations' birth over six decades ago, Thailand has worked closely with the organisation to advance peace and security, development, and human rights worldwide. And we will continue to do so. In spite of our problems, our commitment and determination has never wavered.

33. As a medium-sized and middle-income developing country we are ready to engage with and connect between North and South, East and West. As a country with substantial experience in addressing the problems of today, we are ready to help narrow the international gaps in development, human rights, and security. Thailand believes that the time to act is now and we stand ready with our partners to act as a bridge between worlds as well as to help bridge the world's divides.

Thank you, Mr. President.
