

Statement
by
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and
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the Vienna Forum to Fight Human Trafficking

Austria Center, Vienna
13 February 2008

(Please check against delivery)

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Royal Thai Government, it is an honor for me to address this first ever global forum to fight human trafficking. Thailand wishes to commend the UNODC for launching this Global Initiative and to pay tribute to His Highness the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi for his invaluable support and to recognize the active role of other members of the initiative; namely, the ILO, IOM, OSCE, UNICEF, and the OHCHR.

Over the years, the UNODC has been Thailand's key partner in combating transnational organized crime and human trafficking. Our past collaboration on these issues, and the significant advancements Thailand has made in combating human trafficking has paved the way for Thailand to co-host last year's UN.GIFT regional event for East Asia and the Pacific. Here, let me reiterate Thailand's thanks and continued support to the work of the UNODC and its Executive Director, Mr. Antonio Maria Costa.

Mr. Chairman,

Thailand views human trafficking as a clear and present threat to human security and a gross violation of human rights. We have, therefore, vigorously pursued a *people-centered approach* in combating human trafficking.

As a Signatory State to the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its supplement Trafficking Protocol, Thailand reaffirms its commitment to both of these important instruments. We are currently reviewing and harmonizing our domestic laws to ensure that they are compatible with the two documents. Once that

process is completed, we hope to conclude the ratification process of the Convention and the Protocol soon.

In the meantime, one significant and positive development is Thailand's new "*Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking Act*", which has just recently been passed by Parliament and promulgated, will enter into force on June 5th of this year.

At the same time, Thailand understands full well that other aspects of the criminal justice system must also be made sufficiently robust to keep up with emerging trends to keep ahead of the trafficking offenders. As such, there is a need to enhance such areas as immigration and border control, capacity building of law enforcement officials and social works-related staff and training on special investigation techniques, particularly for such new trends as cybercrime, sex tourism, child pornography and the recruitment of potential victims on the Internet. I am glad to report that these issues were given high priority at the East Asia and the Pacific regional UN.GIFT event held in Bangkok last year.

Mr. Chairman,

Being a country of origin, transit and destination of human trafficking, Thailand recognizes and values the importance of international cooperation. Over the years, Thailand has been a staunch supporter and active participant in several initiatives. At the regional and sub-regional level is the *Bali Process*, which is holding a side event here at the Vienna Forum. Another important initiative is the *Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking* or *COMMIT*. Hailed as an effective sub-regional grouping that brings together six countries to fight human trafficking in a coordinated and effective manner, COMMIT recently adopted its *2nd Sub regional Plan of Action* for the years 2008-2010 which focuses on 7 specific areas of cooperation.

At the inter-regional level, Thailand has also been active in the Human Security Network, the OSCE, as well as the Helsinki Process.

Thailand also sees the usefulness of forging well-targeted *bilateral cooperation* on combating human trafficking with countries of origin and destination. We have already signed MOUs with two of our immediate neighbours, Cambodia and the Lao PDR. We are now also reaching out to cooperate with Vietnam and South Africa. In 2006, a Joint Task Force on Counter Trafficking in Persons between Thailand and Japan was established. Under this framework, we hope to soon conclude a set of Standard Operating Procedures on Protection, Assistance, Repatriation and Reintegration of Victims of Trafficking in Persons. Yesterday our two delegations, Japan and Thailand, discussed these and other important issues within this framework on the sidelines of this meeting.

But international cooperation is only effective if coupled with a strong national structure and framework to fight human trafficking. In Thailand's case, this is reflected in our *National Plan of Action to Combat Human Trafficking*, which is distinct in character for its emphasis on multi-stakeholder partnerships. Thailand's *National Action Plan* is constantly reviewed and has already undergone two revisions. The third edition is currently being revised. Above all, the Action Plan continues to recognize the invaluable role played by civil society and NGOs.

Mr. Chairman,

Human trafficking is one of the most daunting challenges of our time and requires both innovative approaches and urgent action. As such, we would like to share some of our thoughts on what we have done and on some of the experience and successes gained. We hope that our experience can help point a tangible way forward for others.

First, we have incorporated a *human-rights based approach* into the design, implementation, and evaluation of all anti-trafficking and development policies in a comprehensive manner. This has been extremely beneficial in framing our measures and actions.

Second, Thailand has established a national monitoring mechanism that designs action plans, collects data, and coordinates activities among the relevant government agencies and NGOs. This *Human Trafficking Operations Center*, established in the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security has been instrumental for not only the aforementioned activities but also in maintaining our *multidisciplinary and inter-sectoral approach* to combating human trafficking.

Third, we have stressed the need to foster *a sense of unity* and *joint responsibility* among all stakeholders to prevent human trafficking by way of disseminating accurate information through the media, education, and various advocacy measures. The media, in particular, needs to display socially responsible journalism and sensitivity in reporting on the victims, particularly those of sex trafficking.

Fourth, we have consistently stressed the principle of *shared responsibility* and the importance of *technical assistance* and *capacity-building* to support our anti-trafficking endeavors. Here, let me express Thailand's sincere appreciation for the support of UNICEF, as well as the IOM and ILO in this regard. We look forward to exploring additional avenues of cooperation with the UNODC, which is best placed to assist Member States in the implementation of the Trafficking Protocol, the development of legislation, the training of criminal justice practitioners, and the provision of victim assistance.

Finally – and this is an area that Thailand now gives increased attention to – we need to seriously address *emerging new trends and issues*. For Thailand, one such issue is *migrant workers*. Increasingly, male, female and children migrant workers are becoming easy targets for human trafficking networks. In Thailand, the Ministry of Labour has already begun working actively with all agencies concerned to come up with

guidelines for urgent action by labour officials at all levels, aimed at supporting their active participation in the fight against human trafficking.

Mr. Chairman,

The phenomenon of human trafficking and the issues involved are constantly evolving and we must constantly keep up. Bringing different countries and stakeholders together in this global forum is the right approach. One of the most important results of this Forum will be *better networking*, including but not limited to the creation of the Women's Leadership Council. We look forward to this and other positive and concrete results of this Forum.

Thank you again to the UNODC for taking this timely and important initiative and thank you for your kind attention.
