

**Translation of Inaugural Address  
Delivered by  
His Excellency General Prayut Chan-o-cha (Ret.)  
Prime Minister of Thailand  
At the Opening Ceremony of the Seventy-First Session of the United Nations  
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)  
On 28 May 2015 at the United Nations Conference Centre, Bangkok**

\*\*\*\*\*

**Heads of State and Government,  
Ministers,  
Madam Executive Secretary,  
Distinguished participants,**

1. On behalf of the Government and people of Thailand, I am very pleased to welcome you to our country. We are proud to be ESCAP's home and to support the work of ESCAP and the United Nations as a whole. We will continue to do so fully.

2. Thai people have long known the United Nations and ESCAP; the United Nations as an organization that strives for world peace and development, ESCAP as a regional commission that supports development of countries in Asia-Pacific. ESCAP helps bring the work of the United Nations closer to the people in this region. And this is why I sincerely support the work of ESCAP.

3. The theme of this ESCAP session emphasizes balance between the three pillars of development, namely, economic, social and environment. We should all realize that for development to be sustainable, resources must be used efficiently and effectively, while caring for the environment. That is our development today must not come at the expense of our future generations. We have to use our resources mindfully.

**Distinguished participants,**

4. 2015 marks an important year for the world. It will set the course for the world in the years to come through several important world conferences on development and environment.

5. In March this year, I participated in the Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai, Japan, in which the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction: 2015-2030 was adopted. In September, I will join world leaders at the New York Summit to adopt the post-2015 development agenda which will succeed the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Later in December, the Twenty-First Session of the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) will convene in Paris.

6. Today inequality persists throughout the world, both between and within countries. Recent findings from a report by ESCAP reveal that more than 1.4 billion people still live under two US Dollars a day. Over 1.7 billion people do not have access to proper sanitation. An estimated 75 million children around the world are underweight. And every year almost 3 million children die before their fifth birthday. The rich keep getting richer while the poor keep getting poorer resulting in widening income gaps. Moreover, we have to address the shortage of water in the future and ensure access to clean water according to UNESCO's approach. We have to swiftly address and prepare for all these challenges.

7. Certainly, these challenges are in the hands of each individual government. However, enhancing development cooperation and partnership through North-South, South-South, and triangular cooperation can help alleviate inequalities and narrow development gaps between countries.

8. As governments, we must work together to address these challenges in Asia-Pacific and set a good example for the world.

**Distinguished participants,**

9. My Government's vision is to see Thailand in the years 2015-2020 enjoying "**Stability, Prosperity and Sustainability**".

10. **Stability** includes political stability as well as safety of people's lives and properties. The rule of law and access to justice are the foundation of development. At the same time, stability is the cornerstone of **prosperity** as it provides an atmosphere conducive to economic growth, trade and investment. Trade and investment must have prudent measures, risk protection, as well as resistance to shocks such as fluctuations in the global economy or natural disasters. Most importantly, to ensure **sustainability**, economic growth must be environment-friendly so not to impact on the development capital of future generations.

11. Sustainable development must embrace people's needs and build on a genuine understanding of their concerns on the grounds, from their communities. In this regard, Thailand has been guided by His Majesty the King's Sufficiency Economy Philosophy in formulating our development policies.

12. Sufficiency Economy Philosophy teaches us to build strength from within, at the individual, community and society levels. It teaches us to act with knowledge, understanding and moderation. In business terms, this translates to resource efficiency, evidence-based policy-making, as well as having insurance, immunity and resilience.

**Distinguished participants,**

13. Thailand will strive for a balance between the three pillars of development, namely, economic, social and environment.

14. **Economic pillar:** A strong economy is one that expands inclusively, strives to alleviate poverty and inequality, narrows development gaps, and provides opportunities for equal access to resources. Thus, Thailand emphasizes strengthening the development of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and the agricultural sector. To enhance national competitiveness, we have given high priority to science and technology as well as innovation to create high-value added products.

15. **Social pillar:** Societies must be equal and equitable, adhere to good governance, and geared towards raising the living standards of people in terms of health, education and welfare. Thailand has promoted universal health coverage and has focused on human life-cycle development to promote quality growth of children from birth on, so that one can have a decent employment and retirement with dignity.

16. **Environmental pillar:** The impacts of climate change and natural disasters are common challenges for humankind. Economic growth must not be achieved at the expense of the environment. We should promote renewable energy and environment-friendly industrial development. Moreover, countries must accord priority to disaster risk reduction and strengthening resilience to disasters which are increasing in severity. Other areas in which Thailand attaches great importance to are integrated water resources management, restoration of upstream forests, and incorporating resiliency to urban planning and development to lower losses of lives and properties.

17. Lastly, I wish to emphasize that a balanced and sustainable development can only be achieved with people, quality people. The development of human capital should encompass their physical, mental and intellectual growth. A country's competitive edge cannot be heightened in the absence of human resources. Access to quality education is a common challenge for many countries. Social development begins in families and schools. Life-long learning must be promoted. Moreover, the digital age we are living in now allows us to learn and communicate in every single minute. Therefore, we should use social media to create value and knowledge rather than provoke division and hatred.

#### **Distinguished participants,**

18. Any country, however prosperous it is, cannot stand in isolation amidst inequality and instability. We should promote all dimensions of intra-regional and inter-regional integration. This includes promoting connectivity in terms of infrastructure, transportation and information technology, as well as people-to-people and institutional connectivity to foster inclusive and equitable economic growth, robust development and competitiveness.

19. We, governments, public and private sectors, civil societies, the media and academia, must all think and act as one to overcome these challenges so that we can really achieve sustainable development.

**Distinguished participants,**

20. I would now like to officially declare the Seventy-First Commission Session of the ESCAP open and wish all of you successful deliberations.

Thank you.

.....