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Statement

by

H.E. Dr. Sorajak Kasemsuvan

Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs of Thailand

**at the High Level Meeting on the Midterm Comprehensive
Global Review of the Implementation of the Programme of Action
for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010**

New York, 18 September 2006

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Mr. President,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to acknowledge with appreciation the Secretary-General's Report on the *Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action*. This meeting gives us an opportunity to discuss how the international community can do more to achieve the global goals of poverty eradication, peace and development for the least developed countries and their peoples, as well as to integrate them into the global economy and end their marginalization.

My delegation is pleased to learn from the Report that the overall economic growth of 50 LDC nations has risen towards the target of 7 per cent set out in the Brussels Programme, with substantial progress in human development. Nevertheless, we all know that malnutrition and extreme poverty are still acute in most LDCs. Moreover, the LDCs' economy which mostly depends on the income from mineral and primary commodities is highly vulnerable to the fluctuation of world market prices. We do agree with the overall picture of the Report which indicates that unified actions need to be taken by both the LDCs and their development partners at all levels and in all aspects for the more effective implementation of the Programme of Action.

Mr. President,
Distinguished Delegates,

Thailand reaffirms our commitment to join hands with both the North and the South partners in bringing the Brussels Programme Plan into concrete action in order to meet its targets by the year 2010. We attach great importance to meeting the special needs of the LDCs, especially in human development targets, such as the reduction of extreme poverty and the improvement of the quality of life. We also support the recommendation made in the Report which urges that an official development assistance or ODA from donor countries to LDCs be allocated more effectively and sufficiently to ensure that all LDCs fulfill the internationally agreed development goals, including the

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In this respect, Thailand has extended our technical assistance and development cooperation to our neighbouring LDC partners in the fields of our expertise. Thailand, as a middle-income developing country, provided ODA to other developing countries and LDCs at 0.13 per cent of our gross national income in 2003, of which about 93 per cent, or 0.12 per cent of GNI, went to the LDCs, mainly our neighbouring countries. This level of assistance is a substantive contribution in light of Thailand's own economic development level.

Besides development assistance, Thailand has opened up our market to imports from LDCs by imposing the lowest trade-weighted tariffs on, and giving trade preferences for, their imports. Consequently, Thailand's import from LDCs as a percentage of our total imports was over 3 per cent in 2003, which higher than imports from LDCs by any other middle-income and developed countries. In addition, Thailand shared a large proportion of foreign direct investment (FDI) in basic infrastructure, which is an essential prerequisite for the attainment of the MDGs, in our neighbouring LDCs. The Thai FDIs are channelled into agricultural, manufacturing and tourism sectors which generate potential income and employment for the people in these LDCs.

At the regional level, Thailand has played an active role in promoting regional cooperation and integration, which are vital for the economies of the LDCs in the region. Thailand is an important partner in a number of regional and sub-regional development cooperation frameworks, such as the Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy or ACMECS, the Greater Mekong Sub-region or GMS, which aim at alleviating economic disparity between countries in the region through trade and investment facilitations, improvement of physical infrastructure, and social programmes.

We also place emphasis on extending assistance to the LDCs in other parts of the world. We believe that a strong foundation in human resources and satisfied labour, free from hunger and diseases, are the quintessences of stable economies. Therefore, Thailand has pursued technical cooperation with our friends in Africa, drawing on our own experiences and best practices, especially in agriculture and rural development, education, as well as healthcare including HIV/AIDS prevention and care. We also believe that long-term investment and short-term immediate help must be placed hand in hand so as to quickly address the scale and depth of poverty and hunger.

We are pleased to learn from the Report of the Secretary-General that there has been positive progress by developed countries in accommodating the LDCs in international trade. The initiative of the Group of Seven in increasing funding for the Aid-for-Trade is a welcoming contribution since it would help the LDCs to reap greater benefits from the world trading system and to raise their capacities to diversify and move up a value-added ladder in the long run.

Mr. President,
Distinguished Delegates,

The primary responsibility for national development rests with each nation. For our part, Thailand has taken many decades to eradicate poverty. Extensive rural development programmes have resulted in overall achievement in reducing poverty, improving nutrition, and meeting basic human needs of Thai citizens, especially those in rural areas. We benefit greatly from His Majesty the King's royal projects in rural development, water resource management, disaster mitigation, among others, which help improve the living of the poor across the country. His Majesty's philosophy of "Sufficiency Economy", which stresses the middle path as an overriding principle for people at both individual and community levels, as well as for the conduct of business and government affairs, also serves to enhance the Thai people's capacity to better meet the challenges and vulnerability arising from globalization.

At present Thailand has already achieved the MDG poverty target of halving the proportion of people living in extreme poverty between 1990 and 2015. The poverty incidence in Thailand has been reduced by two-thirds from 38.18 per cent of the total population in 1990 to 11.25 per cent in 2004. In spite of this achievement, challenges remain—we must ensure that our economic growth is inclusive, with no sectors of the society marginalized, and that the quality of social services is improved further still.

Finally, I would like to reaffirm that Thailand stands ready to cooperate with the LDCs, developing countries, international organizations, and other development partners in anyway possible, including in the exchange of knowledge, experiences and lessons learnt in reducing poverty, and in advancing economic and social development at all levels. We also reaffirm our strong commitment to contribute to the global partnership for the successful implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action.

Thank you for your attention.
