

**Closing Statement by H.E. Mr. Watana Muangsook
Ministry of Social Development and Human Security
And Head of the Thai Delegation
To the 34th Session of the Committee on the Elimination of
Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
January 20, 2006, New York**

Madame Chairperson,
Distinguished Members of the CEDAW Committee,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. The Thai delegation would like to express our utmost appreciation to the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women for the opportunity to present Thailand's combined fourth and fifth report and to the Committee's views, comments and suggestions in a very candid and constructive atmosphere.

2. The CEDAW Convention stands as an important pillar and guiding instrument for the advancement of women in Thailand. Not only does it shed light on how to move forward towards the elimination of some persisting laws, norms, attitudes, and practices that remain gender-biased, but it also encourages dialogue, both nationally and internationally. The preparation and presentation of this Report, similar to the two previous ones, have also been a useful learning process, enabling many different government agencies and the civil society to review on the successes, to learn from the past lessons, and to open a window of opportunity for better changes in the future.

Madame Chairperson,

3. Before I continue, I would like to express my sincere thought. This is actually my first time as a Minister to attend a conference relating to social issues. Before posting as a Minister of this Ministry, my experience remained purely in economic and trade ministerial position. Attending today's

meeting on women's rights fulfill me with an impressive social experience.

4. As the head of the Thai delegation, as part of the Royal Thai Government, and as a Thai man, I believe that the whole process of implementing the Convention, of conducting the reports, and of reporting the progress and issues on women's rights in Thailand, is nothing like a burden or difficulties to our country. It is instead a valuable opportunity that CEDAW kindly offers to us. The principles in the Convention enable Thailand to realize the roads toward promoting positive changes. The effective monitoring system provided by the Convention has helped us to fully utilize the capacity of our human capital. The true understanding of the Convention's spirit and objective will inspire us to be aware of existing gender disparities and allow us to concentrate on the transformation that will greatly change the face of Thailand; the change that will eventually benefit our people and the mankind at large.

5. This is why I would like to sincerely thank all the members of the Committee and experts for their questions. The Thai delegations have listened attentively to all the comments and have taken the questions into our careful consideration so that next time when Thailand appears with our future reports, we will be able to make satisfying progress. We will make changes and accomplish progress, not to please the Committee, but because these are fair changes that will benefit Thailand and the global community. As you can see, the Royal Thai Government has made several initiatives to draft new or amend existing domestic laws to be in accordance with those required by the Convention. Some of the efforts, for example, the law on marital rape, or the nationality of foreign women who marry Thai men, may not be well received among those with the national security concern. But be my witness that I, on behalf of the Thai Government, will continue to cooperate and find agreeable solutions among us for the best interests of our women.

6. I would like to ensure that the Thai Government will continue our commitment, not only to eliminate gender discrimination but also to protect and promote the human rights of women domestically and internationally just like what we have done in the past and even more so in the years to come. We shall look forward to the Committee's constructive recommendations in advancing the status of women in Thailand.

7. To this end, I would like to thank many members of NGOs who take part in the effort to bring in practical and candid opinions. Their constructive points of view contribute to our development plan for women's advancement. Many ideas, some may even be conflicting, instead reflect real thoughts from the grassroots that allow the government to use as an input into the formulation of constructive policies and regulations. Communications with NGOs also help create common understanding and interests among us so that Thailand can unite in the same front to together push forward effective measures for our women.

8. Finally, I wish to sincerely thank you, Madame Chairperson, and all the distinguished members of the Committee for your valuable contribution and your continued interests in the promotion of women's rights and the elimination of discrimination against women in Thailand.

Thank you very much.