

PERMANENT MISSION OF THAILAND TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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Statement

by

Ms. Pratana Udommongkolkul First Secretary

at the Third Committee

of the 67th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

Agenda Item 28: Advancement of Women 15-17 October 2012, New York

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Mr. Chairman,

Allow me first to express, on behalf of the Thai delegation, my appreciation for the reports submitted under this agenda item. These reports accurately reflect the challenges still faced by women in this day and age, and present a pragmatic approach towards finding sustainable solutions for such issues as trafficking in women and girls, violence against women, women's health, the rights of women with disabilities and female migrant labour.

Mr. Chairman,

The 21st Century is increasingly becoming the age of women. The number of women occupying senior positions in the public and private sectors is on the rise. In many countries, women have emerged as world and national leaders, further broadening the economic and social space for women. The General Assembly's General Debate this year recorded overwhelming support for the empowerment of women, a tacit recognition of their inherent ability to create reconciliation and peace. The role of women in the promotion of democracy, the rule of law and development cannot therefore be underestimated.

In Thailand, women's political participation has witnessed an expansion marked by female representation accounting for one fourth of both the upper and lower houses. Moreover, the initiatives of our first female Prime Minister, Ms. Yingluck Shinawatra, have strengthened gender equality and empowered women to pursue interests in various fields, such as science, business, civil service, politics and diplomacy. The rights of women, including women with disabilities, and their voices have been mainstreamed in national policy. The Prime Minister also chairs the National Committee on the Policy and Strategy for the Advancement of Women to consolidate strategic policies for women's development. Several measures and laws have been developed to realize equal rights between women and men according to the Thai Constitution. Among others is Thailand's recent withdrawal of its reservation on Article 16 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination

Against Women (CEDAW) which guarantees the rights of women in all matters relating to marriage and family relations. The withdrawal of the reservation is among

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Thailand's voluntary pledges under the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism of the Human Rights Council (HRC).

Mr. Chairman,

Despite endeavours to enable women to tap into the benefits of this interconnected world, there remain women who are marginalized and have become victims of violence and trafficking in persons. These women and girls need to be empowered with quality education, including human rights education, healthcare coverage, equal socio-economic opportunities and vocational training as preventive measures and to tackle the root causes, as highlighted in the Secretary General's reports on trafficking in women and girls and violence against women. The consolidation of networks of law enforcement and government agencies, the private sector and civil society is essential to the effective promotion of policy, prevention, prosecution, protection and partnership.

For Thailand, the principles of a multi-stakeholder and victim-centred approach have been upheld in the provision of assistance, return, rehabilitation and reintegration for victims of trafficking and violence. Healthcare, hotline counselling, legal aid, education, skills training, and interpretation services are provided in victim shelters throughout the country. Trafficking victim identification is conducted by a professional multidisciplinary team comprising police, immigration officers, prosecutors, lawyers, doctors, nurses, social workers, psychologists, labour welfare and protection officers, local administrative organizations and NGOs. Temporary stay and work permission is granted to trafficked victims to allow them to earn income during the trial process. In the case of Thai trafficking victims overseas, central government agencies co-operate with NGOs and Thai embassies overseas to ensure the safe and secure return of victims via a process of nationality confirmation, household registration and risk assessment, as well as follow-up reintegration.

Likewise, the One Stop Crisis Centre (OSCC) has been established in hospitals to provide immediate comprehensive services for victims of violence. NGO Networks and Family Networks in the community play a vital role in assistance, protection, prevention, awareness-building and correction on domestic violence in local

communities. Community-based Family Development Centres monitor and provide consultation and solutions to family and social problems, including violence against women. Nationwide awareness-raising campaigns to prevent violence and trafficking have additionally been undertaken for vulnerable groups, notably Thai and migrant women workers and women with disabilities.

As far as prosecution is concerned, the Department of Special Investigations under the Ministry of Justice has been working closely with the Royal Thai Police to suppress all forms of abuse, exploitation and trafficking in persons. Major legal frameworks are the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act and the Protection of Domestic Violence Victims Act, with relevant legislation constantly being developed to encourage vigorous enforcement. Efforts have been made to also expedite trafficking cases through the establishment of a special department within the Office of the Attorney General, as well as fast-track consideration, inclusive of deposition and pretrial discovery conducted within the Court of First Instance.

In addition, Thailand places importance on the rights of women prisoners. With Her Royal Highness Princess Bajrakitiyabha's initiative in advocacy of the "UN Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders", or "Bangkok Rules", various mechanisms have been created to cater to female inmates' specific needs. The Thailand Institute of Justice (TIJ) has been established to provide technical support on the implementation of the "Bangkok Rules" to requesting states worldwide.

Mr. Chairman,

When the year 2015 arrives, some women will benefit more fully than others from the accomplishment of the MDGs and the ASEAN Community. Unfortunately, some will still have to struggle to retain their dignity and right to development. These women cannot be left weakened and susceptible to discrimination, exploitation or violence. The time has come to eliminate the negative stereotyping of women and gender roles that cause underdevelopment of women.

Finding root-cause solutions has been the focus of Thailand's fight against gender inequality, trafficking in persons and domestic violence. A Women

Development Fund has been set up to complement the Thai Women's Development Plan, which aims to enrich the quality and security of women's life. From a young age, girls are equipped with 15 years of free education, leading to a drop in the employment of children under the age of 15. Sexual reproductive health education has proven to be an effective preventive measure against teen pregnancy. Universal health coverage schemes and reproductive health protection measures also help lower mother and child mortality. The National Economic and Social Development Plan additionally seeks to enhance women's economic independence by providing assistance programmes, such as Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) incentives, micro-credit facilities and farmer's temporary debt suspension schemes.

Mr. Chairman.

The protection of women's rights and elimination of threats to women in the modern world is a shared burden and mutual responsibility that can be overcome by closer co-operation within the international community. In this regard, Thailand has engaged with neighbouring countries and regional allies, including the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking (COMMIT), ASEAN, and the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime. We hope that with a solidarity of spirit to translate various UN and regional mechanisms into action, we will one day create a society in which all women are safe from violence, particularly human trafficking.

Thank you.

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