



PERMANENT MISSION OF THAILAND TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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AS WRITTEN

Statement by Mr. Voravee Wirasamban, Minister and Deputy Permanent Representative of Thailand to the United Nations at the Twenty-First Special Session of the General Assembly Devoted to the Overall Review and Appraisal of the Implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, United Nations, New York, 2 July 1999

Mr. President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation and congratulations to the United Nations for arranging this Special Session on the ICPD + 5 which **affords** us an opportunity to renew our focus on the issues of population and development **after** a series of preparatory meetings in the past six months. For us from developing and developed countries, NGOs as well as donor agencies throughout the world, it is such a timely reminder for a follow up and reflection of what has been an excellent start five years ago in Cairo, Egypt, with a **forward-looking** view in mind. I do believe that we have thus far made positive steps towards the goal of global reproductive health.

Currently, Thailand's population constitutes approximately one percent of the world population. It is estimated that our population growth will continue to slightly increase at a rate of one percent annually. Our pattern of changes in population structure will be similar to many other countries which have been successful in their family planning. There is a trend of an increase in the proportion of older age population with a decrease in the younger age population. This so-called "demographic bonus" is not expected to last long, thanks to various precautionary measures now in place.

Thailand's current Constitution, which took **years** in the amendment process and was passed by the Parliament last year, has been drafted with the prime objective of promoting and protecting people much more than ever before. For the first time, the constitution provides for greater opportunity for the Thai people to education, greater access to information and services, gender equality and equity. Regardless of their ethnic background, we in Thailand, will enjoy the fruit of this constitution.

The current National Five-Year Plan (1997-2001) also place emphasis on the environment, population and developmental issues with human at the center of all development activities. The National Development Plan is consistent with the ICPD's Programme of Action. It will also tremendously benefit the agencies concerned in reaching the ICPD goal.

Mr. President.

I take pride in saying that Thailand attaches high priority to reproductive health, which has taken its prominent place on our agenda. Many reproductive health program initiatives at the grassroots have been launched, covering as many components and as wide the scope as possible. Integral to the programs is the issue of reproductive right. The whole process has evolved gradually starting from the policy makers advocacy to formulating the national reproductive health policy, to sensitizing the government health personnel and communities in realizing the importance of human as part and parcel of development programs. Thailand has tried applying a good practice model to consolidate the reproductive health services at the primary and secondary health care, taking into account gender sensitivity. Sex education and adolescent health are also among the top priority areas which are seen as the major key factors in solving the reproductive health problems of the present and future generations.

Moreover, despite these efforts, we still face challenges. One of our major problems lies in the cross-border illegal migratory inflow. Many diseases, which were eradicated or under control, rear their ugly heads once again along the border. This adds a heavy burden to our meagre resources in terms of health facilities and expenses along the border provinces. Nevertheless, on a humanitarian ground, the Thai government cannot turn a blind eye on the plight of these people. Thailand has provided appropriate necessary health services and relevant supports to these illegal migrant labors, although we in Thailand have to tighten up our belt because of the economic hardship, and money has to be wisely spent on other national priority areas. We are deeply concerned that the reproductive health problem among illegal migrant workers may soon reach an uncontrollable proportion and become additional public health hazard. I would like to urge the international community to lend a helping hand in curbing this mounting problem.

Mr. President,

Thailand attaches importance to the migratory issue particularly undocumented migrants. As such, we together with the International Organization on Migration initiated an International Symposium on Migration (ISM) early this year in Bangkok. The Symposium received supports, and attended by many interested countries from various regions as well as the UN bodies concerned. The meeting proved to be very successful. A declaration was adopted paving a way and laying a ground rule for further consultations aimed at a comprehensive solution to the irregular migratory problem.

I would also like to take this opportunity to join the fellow developing countries in renewing our efforts in the South-to-South Cooperation through sharing practical experience, skills and technical expertise in the field of population development and reproductive health. Through our creation of the alliance of "Partners in Population and Development: A South-South Initiative" some four years ago, we can leap ahead by learning from each other's strengths and weaknesses and working in partnership to effectively and successfully reduce maternal and infant mortality, improve adolescent reproductive health, prevent and control of the devastating diseases notably HIV/AIDS and STDs as well as many other issues of reproductive rights, particularly for women and youth. We also wish to urge the international community and donors to continue to provide substantial support to the south-south technical cooperation towards the attainment of the ICPD's Programme of Action for these countries.

In closing, I am privileged to say that the various actions in line with the ICPD's Programme of Action in Thailand have gradually transformed from highly program-based and agency-oriented into a more participatory and decentralized approach. Technical advancement in tandem with management improvement has also significantly contributed to the progress of reproductive health, i.e. quality of care and HIV/AIDS prevention. However, resource mobilization for population and development still calls for greater attention. In the next five years, more stakeholders or partners will have to march with the people on the high road towards a healthy reproductive life which can be measured by the outcome and impact indicators derived from standardized monitoring and evaluation system. By the year 2014, we will attain the goal of "All Thais, both men and women, will enjoy good and more equitable reproductive life." We also hope that this ICPD + 5 would add impetus to our forward move in implementing the Programme of Action for our common good.

Thank you.