

Statement by
H.E. Mr. Sihasak Phuanketkeow
Permanent Secretary for Foreign Affairs
and Special Envoy of the Royal Thai Government
at the Consideration of the Universal Periodic Review Report of Thailand
19th Session of the UN Human Rights Council
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Thank you, Madame Vice President.

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I am very pleased to have this opportunity to be back at the Human Rights Council again, and to see the familiar faces of old friends and colleagues.

On behalf of the Royal Thai Government, I would like to begin by expressing our appreciation for this opportunity to inform the Council of our position on the UPR recommendations we have received, as well as provide updates on actions taken since our review.

But before I proceed, I would like to introduce my colleagues who have joined me on the podium today.

On my right, Ambassador Pisanu Chanvitan, the Permanent Representative of Thailand who I am sure you all know. On my left is Mr. Vijavat Isarabhakdi, the Director-General of the Department of International Organizations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who was also the Deputy Permanent Representative here in Geneva before taking up his present capacity. And next to him is Police Lieutenant General Chatchawal Suksomjit, Assistant Commissioner-General of the Royal Thai Police.

Distinguished Delegates,

During Thailand's review last October, a total of 172 recommendations were received, 100 of which Thailand was able to accept immediately as they were clearly consistent with our policies and practices. We took back with us 72 recommendations for further consideration. No recommendations were rejected by Thailand during the review.

Following the review, Thailand organized a series of consultations with relevant agencies and experts to carefully consider the pending 72 recommendations, with the aim of accepting as many of them as possible. The outcome of these deliberations was endorsed by the Cabinet last month.

Taking this opportunity, I wish, first of all, to point out that each and every one of the 172 recommendations we received has been given serious and thorough consideration by the Thai Government. Let me make it clear that we do share the concerns raised on some issues, but I believe we should be allowed time to work on these issues within our national context.

In sum, Thailand is able to accept, in whole or in part, 34 out of the 72 pending recommendations. Therefore, I am pleased to say that, altogether, Thailand accepts a total of 134 recommendations. Thailand's position with regard to the 72 recommendations is contained in the addendum to the report of the UPR Working Group on Thailand.

Madame Vice President,

A country's acceptance of UPR recommendations is surely important. But what is even more important is implementing the recommendations accepted. Let me take this opportunity to assure all of you that Thailand is committed, in earnest, and to the fullest extent, to implement each and every one of the recommendations we have accepted. Indeed, we have already taken steps in this regard. Last month, the Cabinet of the Thai Government endorsed a decision to amend the mandate of Thailand's UPR Committee to include monitoring and follow-up of UPR recommendations. In addition, all relevant agencies were tasked with the preparation of action plans to implement the recommendations and voluntary pledges.

I should further stress that Thailand places great importance on the participation of all stakeholders at every stage of our UPR process.

Since Thailand's review in October, various sectors of Thai society have shown keen interest in the UPR process. On different occasions, senior government officials, including myself, met with Parliamentary committees to discuss positions on UPR recommendations. The National Human Rights Commission of Thailand has also organized several briefings on the UPR for the public and members of the Commission's sub-committees. Discussions have also been conducted with civil society organizations regarding the recommendations received, including ways to enhance cooperation between the Government and CSOs. Although many difficult questions were raised on these occasions, we very much appreciate the interaction with all stakeholders and believe that this is part and parcel of the UPR process, which is to help generate greater awareness about human rights at the national level.

In the same spirit in which we have worked in the preparation of our UPR report, Thailand believes that the successful implementation of the UPR recommendations requires the widest participation of all stakeholders. Therefore, we have embarked on a nationwide consultation process earlier this month, the objective of which is to disseminate information regarding the UPR process and the recommendations received, as well as to seek inputs on ways to forge closer cooperation among all stakeholders to effectively implement the accepted

recommendations. A series of further consultations will be carried out during the next few months in all regions of the country.

Madame Vice President,

Since our review, Thailand has already begun implementing some of the UPR recommendations and voluntary pledges. Allow me to elaborate on some of the progress that we have made.

Certain countries as you may recall recommended that Thailand become a party to various international human rights instruments, in addition to 7 of the 9 core instruments that we are already a party to. In this regard, Thailand is pleased to announce that in January this year, we have signed the Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. And currently, we are reviewing our legislation in preparation for future ratification.

Also, Thailand has begun a process to consider the possibility of becoming a Party to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure, which has already been opened for signature and ratification. As a member of the Core Group advocating for this instrument, Thailand is determined to complete the consultation process as soon as possible.

With regard to the withdrawal of reservations to international human rights instruments, the relevant national committees have taken important decisions in this regard. Decisions have thus been taken for Thailand to withdraw our reservation to Article 16 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women regarding marriage and family relations and to withdraw interpretative declarations on Articles 6 and 9 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights regarding the death penalty on persons below eighteen and the bringing of arrested or detained persons promptly before the judge. Meanwhile, with regard to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, we are considering withdrawing Thailand's interpretative declaration on Article 18 of the Convention regarding nationality of persons with disabilities.

May I also recall that, as part of our voluntary pledges, Thailand agreed to issue a standing invitation to all Special Procedures of the Council, which was welcomed by all countries during the review. We have already proceeded with the preparation, and are pleased to announce our intention to invite at this initial stage three special rapporteurs to visit the country. They are the Special Rapporteur on the right to safe drinking water and sanitation, the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment, and the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

Some countries also recommended Thailand to enhance protection for vulnerable groups. In this regard, in January the Senate approved the draft Nationality Bill, which, once promulgated, will provide a channel for additional groups of persons with status problems to apply for and be granted Thai nationality.

Also, last month, the Thai Government issued an announcement describing the types of work that foreign victims of human trafficking may take up in Thailand, pending their return to their home countries. It is hoped that this will help empower the victims, enhance their independence and better prepare them for their eventual return.

It may also be recalled that various countries recommended that Thailand, within the context of our national domestic political situation, pursue further efforts on national reconciliation. Indeed, we are moving in this direction. The Cabinet has approved a compensation package for all those affected by the past political violence. Investigations and legal proceedings are also ongoing in order to bring perpetrators to account and provide justice for all.

An additional compensation package for those who have been affected by the violent incidents in the Southern Border Provinces has also been approved by the committee on rehabilitation of people affected by the Southern violence. It is now awaiting the Cabinet's approval. We very much recognize that providing such remedies to victims must be coupled with determined efforts to further address the root causes of the problem, be they social justice, development, the rule of law, or the recognition of cultural identities of the people living in our Southern Provinces.

Madame Vice President,

These are just some of our efforts so far. We admit that challenges continue to exist in various areas, which need to be tackled effectively. The Thai delegation today, comprising representatives from the Royal Thai Police, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, looks forward to receiving suggestions from countries, as well as National Human Rights Commission of Thailand and NGOs, on ways to address these challenges and move forward with the implementation of our UPR recommendations.

Thank you.
