

Welcoming Remarks
by H.E. Gen. Tanasak Patimapragorn
Deputy Prime Minister
and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand
at the Seminar “On the Path to Reform”
3 December 2014, Shangri-La Hotel, Bangkok

President of the National Legislative Assembly,

Mr. Martin Chungong, Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,

Members of the National Legislative Assembly,

Members of the National Reform Council,

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good afternoon and welcome to the Seminar.

We plan to organize more seminars like this one – where we invite our friends in the international community to share their expertise and experiences.

I am confident that your contributions today – and in the period to come – will benefit us in our efforts to strengthen the foundations of our democracy.

I do not wish to dwell on the events leading up to 22 May.

You all know that the country was in a very serious crisis. There was division in society. Our political parties could not overcome their differences. And there was a risk of civil war.

If nothing was done, Thailand and the region would be affected.

Now, we are moving beyond 22 May. We have a Road Map. And we are implementing it in line with the announced timetable.

Reconciliation and reform are at the heart of this Road Map.

Without reconciliation, we cannot move beyond the political conflict in our society, which is deeply-rooted.

And without reform, we cannot build a strong democracy. That is why we have identified 11 key sectors for reform under the Road Map.

Of course, implementing the Road Map is a joint effort – by the Government, the National Legislative Assembly, and the National Reform Council.

But for this process to be credible, it must be truly inclusive and engage all segments of society.

In addition, we also wish to listen to – and learn from – our friends in the international community. We believe that we can benefit from your best practices and successes.

**Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I wish to assure you that Thailand remains fully committed to democracy and democratic values.

But the true democracy that we want must be more than just elections. It must be based on good governance, accountability, the rule of law and respect for human rights.

So we must turn this crisis into opportunity. And we must strengthen the foundations of our democracy for future generations.

While we will benefit from the experiences and insights of other democratic societies, it is up to the Thai people to move this process forward.

That is why many of us in this room today – from the National Legislative Assembly and National Reform Council – will listen with great interest to what you have to say.

I am sure that your thoughts and advice will enrich our discussions in the days and months ahead.

In this connection, I wish to thank Mr. Martin Chungong, Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, for kindly accepting our invitation and agreeing to give a keynote address to this Seminar.

All of us here look forward to a fruitful discussion and hope to take our dialogue further in the months to come.

Thank you all for coming today, especially our foreign friends. I wish you a pleasant stay in Thailand.
