

Statement by Mr. Vitavas Srivihok
Deputy Permanent Secretary of Foreign Affairs of Thailand
at the General Debate of the Eight Bali Democracy Forum
“Democracy and Effective Public Governance: Challenges, Choices and Prospects
for Asia Pacific”
Bali, Indonesia, 10 December 2015

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Your Excellency Minister Marsudi,
Distinguished Delegates,

1. I would like to, at the outset, thank the Government of the Republic of Indonesia for hosting the Bali Democracy Forum at this lovely island. I always love coming to Bali.
2. The topic of Democracy and Effective Public Governance is highly relevant and timely. **Effective public governance is a prerequisite for a strong democracy.** It is, therefore, important that we understand what constitutes effective public governance. I would like to share with you three main points.
3. **First**, I would like to stress that **governance is not about the State**. To be effective, governance should not evolve around government officials. **Rather, it has to be a process that is not top down, but an inclusive, consultative and collaborative one.** The public means all stakeholders must be involved, be they government officials, local communities, private sector, NGOs, civil society, and every single member of the society. The more participation we encourage, the stronger our community will be, and the better democracy we can have. In Thailand, the anti-corruption campaign has active involvement from the private sector because they realize that corruption is the enemy of the development, and of good governance. Corruption is a serious obstacle to their businesses and national competitiveness and fighting corruption does not rest solely in the responsibility of the State.
4. **Second**, **Effective public governance must be responsive to the aspirations and the needs of the people. Effective public governance should not mean effective in terms of delivering output and outcome.** To be effective, we need to also pay special attention to the process. We do not want high output or good outcome, but based on governance which is unjust. **The question is how can we gain the trust and confidence of our people?**
5. **Third**, effective public governance is not a luxury that comes only with time or with economic development. Effective public governance is a necessity, a prerequisite for democratic development. **To have an effective public governance, we need to work on it.** We need to genuinely dedicate ourselves. **We need to put in place accountable and transparent institutions. We need laws and regulations. And**

most importantly, we need to cultivate the right mindset and public awareness. An effective public governance needs a competent and conscientious public citizen. Each and every one of us as a public citizen enables an effective public governance.

6. Now I would also wish to leave you with two questions to ponder.
7. **First, how should we measure the effectiveness of public governance?** We need to have proper evaluation to help identify our progress and remaining gaps and challenges. We need to be sincere to ourselves how far we have come, how fast or how slow we have progressed, and how much more could be done to make public governance more effective. At the same time, we need to understand social context and particularities and refrain from making premature judgment on other societies. Do we simply measure democracy and effective public governance by the mere fact of holding elections? Or are there many other ways?
8. **The second question is how are we going to address the new dynamics in today's world which have presented both opportunities and challenges to democracy.** One of the new dynamics is the emergence of the social media which can have both uniting and disrupting effects.
9. On the positive side, the growth and widespread of social media creates more active citizens. Social media has made people more aware of what is happening in their community and the country or even in remote communities so far away and allowed them to express their opinions and voice out their concerns. We have seen that nowadays protests can spring up so spontaneously through the use of social media..
10. On the negative side, false allegations and hate messages can be easily spread through the use of social media. Democracy can be very fragile. Social divisiveness and tension can bring down a weak democratic society. What are we going to do about this?

Excellencies,

11. Thailand is now undertaking a comprehensive reform. One of 11 main areas in our reform agenda focuses on public administration in order to bring about a more efficient and transparent administration that is responsive to the needs of the people. The Government is also fully committed to fighting against corruption and to promoting transparency and accountability.
12. The new constitution is currently being drafted. The Constitution Drafting Committee has tried to ensure that the drafting process be done in an inclusive and consultative manner. After the draft is finalized, it will also be submitted for a national referendum to seek approval from the people so that it will be a real people's constitution.

13. The Government has also introduced a mechanism called “Pracharat” (ประชารัฐ) or “state of the people” which encourages government agencies to work in close cooperation with other sectors to push forward policies and reform agenda from bottom up.
14. We hope that our efforts will ultimately bring about a strong and sustainable democracy. After over 80 years of the so-called democratic system in Thailand, we remain fully committed to the true spirit and value of democracy. We know from our own experience that democracy cannot be taken for granted.
15. Let us all remain attentive to our democracy and work to attain effective public governance. The road may not be smooth and easy and I wish you the best of luck.
16. I thank you for your attention.

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