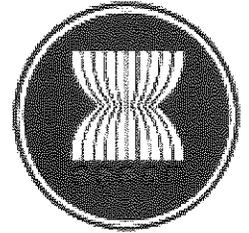




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Statement

by

**His Excellency Mr. Surapong Tovichakchaikul
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs
of the Kingdom of Thailand**

**at the General Debate
of the 68th Session of the United Nations General Assembly**

New York, 28 September 2013

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**“Putting the United Nations at the heart of
renewed multilateralism and global partnership”**

Mr. President,

1. On behalf of the delegation of the Kingdom of Thailand, allow me to congratulate the Honourable John Ashe on his election to the Presidency of the Sixty-eighth Session of the United Nations General Assembly. My delegation stands ready to render our full support and cooperation.
2. I would also like to express our appreciation to the outgoing President, His Excellency Mr. Vuk Jeremic, for his exceptional leadership during the previous session. I am particularly grateful for his contributions to the 2nd Asia-Pacific Water Summit in Chiang Mai, Thailand, earlier this year.

Mr. President,

3. Thailand is committed to the United Nations. Our faith in the principles and values it stands for has never wavered. The UN's three pillars of security, development and human rights continue to inspire us and motivate us.
4. When the fifty founding states came together in San Francisco in 1945, the world had high hopes for the United Nations.
5. The United Nations was created in response to the demands of a different time, after millions of lives were lost by a conflict between states.
6. Today, it is conflict within states that takes the heaviest human toll, as we have witnessed in the still unfolding events in Syria.
7. So as we look ahead to the post-2015 future, we must not shy away from asking the hard questions.
8. We must ask ourselves whether multilateralism has lived up to expectations, be it in security, trade or the environment.

9. We must ask how we, the member states, can do better in the face of critical challenges. This is because ultimately, the success of the United Nations depends on all of us. With such diversity of viewpoints, it is all the more important for us to work together to find the unity and consensus we need.
10. The challenges facing us are particularly clear in the case of Syria.
11. On the twenty-first of August, we learned that chemical weapons were used against innocent civilians in Syria. Despite widespread condemnation and outrage, the United Nations was initially unable to act, the Security Council deadlocked.
12. We therefore welcome the resolution on Syria adopted yesterday by the Security Council. We urge Syria to ensure the full and effective implementation of the resolution, and to allow monitoring and enforcement by the international community. It is our hope that the Security Council, and especially the permanent members, will continue to work together to find a durable political solution for the sake of the Syrian people.

Mr. President,

13. In setting the stage for the post-2015 development agenda, we must recognize that development cannot take root without peace and security, democracy and human rights. The three pillars of the United Nations must be developed together and nurtured together.
14. To strengthen the United Nations, we need to seek ways to achieve unity and consensus on the issues that matter most.
15. In the area of security, this means thinking of new, creative ways to respond to the changing threats.
16. For instance, when states fail to protect their own populations, or even cause them harm, all our words will amount to little unless matched with action.
17. But what kind of action would make the most difference on the ground? When, and how, is it most effective? There are no simple answers.
18. It is on such issues that the world looks to the Security Council for leadership. Too often, however, the Council is paralyzed just when action is most needed. Overcoming deadlock and achieving consensus must be a central objective of Security Council reform.

Mr. President,

19. The United Nations is, of course, much more than the Security Council. Unity and consensus are also needed on development.
20. Thailand believes that **sustainable development must be at the heart of the United Nations agenda.**
21. The world has made great strides in tackling poverty and hunger, thanks in no small part to the MDGs.
22. But all of us still need to make a final push on the MDGs. This would enable us to tackle the deep-rooted poverty that still afflicts the so-called bottom billion.
23. Following the MDGs, the post-2015 development agenda must provide both continuity and a new source of hope.
24. To build on the MDGs, Thailand believes we should give special emphasis to the needs of the most vulnerable countries. This includes conflict and post-conflict societies, as well as those of the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. If we fail to do so, millions will be left behind.

Mr. President,

25. The most pressing challenge to sustainable development that demands our concerted action is climate change.
26. For a number of countries, particularly small island states, climate change strikes at the very heart of survival. For much of the world, climate change is also linked to another important challenge: food security. Extreme weather can cause great damage to agriculture. The impact will be felt not only in food producing countries, but worldwide.
27. This is why we need to work together to put in place systems that will mitigate the impact of climate change – better weather prediction technology, better storage silos, and more resilient strains of staple crops.
28. These are areas where countries should help one another by sharing their experiences and know-how.
29. For development to be sustainable, Thailand believes that it should be people-centered. We welcome the Secretary-General's report "A Life of Dignity for All" which puts people at the center of the development agenda. People need to be given the chance, and the tools, to make the most of their potential. This can happen if we focus more on promoting human security, such as through education and health care.

30. On education, we believe that the Secretary-General's "Global Education First Initiative" is an important contribution to the post-2015 agenda and deserves the support of all stakeholders.
31. Health is also very much a development issue. When people are unhealthy, it imposes a cost on state finances and can even undo development gains.
32. As we look to the post-2015 future, we must not limit our goals to specific health challenges. We should now set our sights on the more general objective of universal health care or UHC.
33. Initiated by the administration of former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra ten years ago, Thailand has been implementing a program that charges only one US dollar per doctor visit. This UHC scheme is universal in its coverage of treatments ranging from common illnesses, chronic diseases to life saving surgeries.
34. Statistics have shown that through this program around 300,000 households have been saved from falling into poverty.
35. Even non-Thai nationals, especially migrant workers from neighbouring countries are also benefiting from UHC, making it truly universal.
36. The socio-economic impact of this program has therefore been tremendous.
37. Those who benefit most from our universal health care have been the poor and the vulnerable.
38. By working to empower the most vulnerable among us, we ensure that development is more inclusive.
39. We believe the model could be adapted to other developing countries, and we are willing to share the lessons we learned from our experience.
40. We also believe that women, children, the elderly and persons with disabilities must be treated fairly and encouraged to participate fully in all aspects of life.
41. Particularly in situations of conflict, vulnerable groups are often at the greatest risk of violence. We therefore support the UN initiative to end sexual violence in conflict. We also commend the United Kingdom for her leadership in realizing the declaration of commitment on this important issue.

Mr. President,

42. To provide an environment that facilitates unity and consensus, the international community must also forge a new global partnership.

43. This new global partnership must rest on a common agenda for action. It will need to involve states, in particular like-minded states, the United Nations, regional organizations, civil society and other stakeholders.
44. In Southeast Asia, the process is well underway. ASEAN is strengthening its partnership to become a Community of over 600 million people by end 2015. Regional discussions on the post-2015 agenda are also complementing ongoing global efforts.
45. As a moderate, medium-sized country with an open society, Thailand is ready to work with all countries and partners. We want to do our part in helping bridge the gaps – in communication, in understanding, in opportunity.
46. That is why we have put forward our candidature to the Security Council for the term 2017-2018 and in the Human Rights Council for the term 2015-2017. We are keen to help build the bridges to connect all stakeholders into a more cohesive, action-oriented global partnership.
47. Building a global partnership means forging a common agenda for action on our most important challenges. It means reaching out beyond our borders, beyond our region, and beyond our comfort zone.
48. On Thailand's part, we have been building bridges not only within Asia, but also to Africa and Latin America. We believe developing countries everywhere need to come together in a spirit of partnership to make their voices heard.
49. What is more, that same sense of partnership must also cross the development divide, embracing developed and developing economies alike.

Mr. President,

50. Since the beginning, the United Nations has been a force for good. As its membership grew, as the issues became more complex, we have now reached a crossroads. Whether the United Nations takes the right path rests on our ability to achieve consensus and act together in a meaningful manner.
51. Now is the time for us to set aside our outdated assumptions and our differences. Our common future depends on our ability to come together to forge consensus on the new realities before us.
52. The way forward is not through politics as usual, but constructive dialogue and mutual respect. With goodwill and common purpose, the international community can once again rise to the challenge.
53. Together, we can fulfill the promise of this organization and the loftiest goals toward which we, the member states, have always aspired.
54. Thank you.