

Statement by

His Excellency Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand,

at the 2nd CICA Ministerial Meeting

Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia

Almaty, Republic of Kazakhstan

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Mr. Chairman,

Excellencies, Distinguished Colleagues,

I wish first of all to express my sincere appreciation to all CICA members for your support for Thailand to become a new member of CICA. I also commend our host, the Republic of Kazakhstan, for the commitment in pushing forward the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia or CICA. I also would like to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, in successfully arranging this very important Meeting. I am honoured to represent Thailand as the latest CICA member. Thailand is proud to share CICA's common vision and aspiration for sustained peace and security in Asia and the international community at large.

Mr. Chairman,

Asia is a continent of diversity in culture, economic and socio-political aspects. Yet, no one can underestimate the enormous wealth and assets of Asia. Its people account for over 60 percent of the world's population. Asian international foreign reserves account for over 75 percent of the total international reserves of all developing countries. Yet, we have failed to fully utilize Asia's indigenous and inner strengths in building mutual prosperity.

Some may say that diversity is a cause of weakness; that it is a cause of mistrust; and that it is *even* a cause of conflicts. But in our view, it is definitely *not* so. On the contrary, Thailand looks at the heterogeneity of Asia as the potential root of our strength *not* weakness, our trust and confidence *not* mistrust, and our peaceful co-existence *not* conflicts.

It is even more so when considering how the world and, we, in Asia, are facing with the new international strategic landscape and the challenges of globalization. It is even more so when considering how much collective effort is now needed to build up confidence, and to enhance

regional cooperation as building blocks for partnership and effective multilateralism. It is even more so when considering the need for the emergence of a new Asia. That is why we believe CICA is so timely.

CICA represents our joint efforts to strengthen a culture of peace and tolerance within our diverse region for peace and security. CICA represents the commitment of its members to promote dialogues while building confidence among each of us in our diverse continent. Thailand totally shares with CICA its conceptual premises and its noble objectives. The diversity and differences in Asia shall not and must not serve as impediments but a great source of our continent's strength. Here, I wish to commend H.E. President Nazarbayev for his far-sightedness in initiating CICA in 1992 and for his commitment in pushing forward this process. I also share his view that confidence in each other in Asia is a pre-requisite for economic, social and development cooperation. And confidence building has so far been CICA's main contribution.

Both the Almaty Act and the Declaration on the Principles Guiding Relations between the CICA Member-States as well as the CICA Declaration on Eliminating Terrorism and Promoting Dialogue among Civilizations are testimony of the confidence, political will and commitment of all members to forge coordinated positions on security issues and settle the conflicts among the members peacefully in accordance with the principles of the UN Charter.

Having participated at several expert and senior official level meetings and the Summit in 2002, Thailand, as CICA's new member and the only member from South-east Asia, looks forward to working with CICA, sharing our experiences in regional cooperation in confidence building measures and capacity building.

Mr. Chairman,

Thailand believes in the effective functioning of the world's multilateral system. We believe in consolidating regional cooperation and partnership at various levels to serve as building blocks for effective multilateralism. We believe in stronger Asia for the benefit of all Asians, the multilateral system and the rest of the world. And we believe that all the intra and inter sub-regional cooperation frameworks in Asia are for the benefits of a stronger Asia.

In Southeast Asia, as we move towards the realization of the ASEAN Community, comprising 10 countries, Thailand has initiated the new economic cooperation strategy to bridge the development gaps that exist between the old ASEAN and the new ASEAN members, the latter being our adjacent and immediate neighbours. At the same time, we attach great importance to bridging the gap between countries in South-east Asia and our neighbours in South Asia, especially those around the Bay of Bengal. We strongly support the East Asia Community comprising ASEAN, China, Japan, and the Republic of Korea. And we initiated the new pan-Asia cooperation called the Asia Cooperation Dialogue or the ACD, which was inaugurated in Thailand in June 2002, and the Third Ministerial Meeting was successfully held in Qingdao, China, this past year.

The objectives of CICA and those of the ACD are to complement each other. The ACD, like CICA, is to draw strength from Asia's diversity. With 26 participating countries from north to south and from east to west of the Asian continent, including several CICA members, the ACD continues to make progress through annual ministerial dialogues and joint projects. The ACD will create a cobweb of development network in 18 areas of functional cooperation with the coverage of the entire geographical span of the Asian continent. In ACD, the participation in these cooperation projects are voluntary, based on each member's comfort level, readiness and comparative advantage. In this way, everyone has a sense of participation and willingness while no one feels isolated or left behind. This is how we recognize differences and how we could build our strength based on diversity.

While the ACD can concentrate on development agenda and CICA on security and confidence-building measures, together, the ACD and CICA, with support from other sub-regional frameworks of cooperation could finally, and sooner rather than later, help bring about the ultimate of the emergence of the new Asia. That is an 'Asian Community'.

Mr. Chairman,

Central in Thailand's foreign policy are the principles of "prosper thy neighbours" and "looking always beyond Thailand". Based on these principles, as we are making effective economic growth, we have reached out to make others prosperous also. As we are trying to achieve sustainable development, we have offered our help for others to accomplish their development more sustainably. As we are stronger as a nation and as an economy, we have made sure that our neighbourhood in Asia and Asia as a continent are also stronger in every aspect.

That is why Thailand believes that as the new and the first ASEAN member of CICA, we will take a constructive role, bridging and linking CICA with many of Asia's intra and inter sub-regional cooperation frameworks, such as ACMECS, ASEAN, BIMSTEC, East Asian Community, and ACD, on the one hand. We believe, on the other, that we can serve to bridge and link CICA with inter-regional cooperation between Asia and our external allies such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation or APEC, the Asia-Europe Meeting or ASEM and the ASEAN Regional Forum or ARF.

With CICA and with ACD, we are looking forward to the exciting future of a new Asia. We are looking forward to the prosperous future for all Asian peoples. We are looking forward to peace and understanding based on the culture of peace and tolerance in Asia. We are looking forward to succeeding in turning our diversity into strength. And ultimately we are looking forward to a stronger Asia for the benefits of all Asia and the rest of the world.

Once again, Thailand wishes to convey our sincere appreciation to the Republic of Kazakhstan for facilitating our membership. The road ahead for a stronger Asia and for a better world is within sight only if we have our political resolve and commitment and translate them into reality.

Thank you.