

Delivered.

Remarks

By

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Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand

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Honourable Ministers,  
Distinguished Delegates,

Thank you very much for the warm words of welcome. First of all, I am honoured to head the Thai delegation to this distinguished forum. It is the first time that Thailand has participated in a Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) gathering since becoming a PIF Dialogue Partner in August last year.

Thailand is proud to have a seat here amongst our Pacific friends. We particularly value the rich opportunities it presents us to exchange experiences of our shared pursuit of regional development and other issues of mutual interest.

Thailand and our friends in the Pacific have never allowed distance to separate us. Productive diplomatic relations have been progressively established over the last 30 years on a foundation of mutual goodwill and partnership. Our goodwill was reflected and strengthened by the assistance we offered our Pacific partners in the destructive wake of Cyclone Heta in early 2004 and the generous assistance we received in the aftermath of the tsunami later that same year.

The Royal Family of Thailand has also enjoyed excellent relations with many Pacific islands nations. Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn has paid royal visits to Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Fiji, Tonga, and the Cook Islands. We were honoured to have received His Royal Highness Crown Prince Tupouto'a and Prince 'Ulukalala Lavaka Ata upon their visits to Thailand.

Honourable Ministers,

I have the honour of speaking to you today because Thailand and her neighbours share many of the same challenges and enjoy many of the same

opportunities as the Pacific Islands states. We share the same goals and aspirations in promoting international peace and prosperity.

Thailand is proud to be a Dialogue Partner with the Pacific Islands Forum because we believe that we can all benefit from sharing our approaches to regional development. Thailand initiated a number of economic cooperation programmes with our neighbours of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Viet Nam during my tenure as Foreign Minister. By adhering to the principle of “Prosper thy neighbour”, we believe that we will be more prosperous and more secure if we pursue our economic and human development in cooperation with one another and strive to close the developmental gaps.

The then Foreign Minister Phil Goff of New Zealand was quick to see the value of applying these universal principles to his own Pacific Islands region when we discussed them in 2003. Thailand was privileged to be invited to share its experiences in these endeavours – from the application of the “Sufficiency Economy” of His Majesty the King to the creation of the East-West Economic Corridor – and I was honoured to initiate the partnership that brings me here today.

Let me add that I have a strong personal commitment to fostering South-South cooperation and in fostering participatory approaches to development and poverty alleviation. There can be no “one size fits all” approach to development. I believe that this rings particularly true for the countries of the Pacific. As Small Island Developing States (SIDS), many of you are courageously facing up to challenges that begin and end beyond your shores including HIV/AIDS, climate change, natural disasters and transnational crime which have implications beyond your immediate vicinity. Your cooperative endeavours are invaluable to meeting these challenges be it through sub-regional fora such as the Pacific Islands Forum to global institutions such as the United Nations.

Honourable Ministers,

I have read your Pacific Plan with great interests and admiration. Great interest because I can see many areas under the 4 pillars that Thailand can participate to add value to cooperation among the PIF countries. Admiration, because it is gratifying to see countries in the same sub-region can set aside differences and work together to come up with home-grown plan for the benefit of all. As I have advocated sub-regional cooperation as important building blocks for a larger multilateral cooperation, the Pacific Plan is

indeed the important block as a foundation for peace, security and prosperity for the Asia-Pacific and the world.

As a new comer, may I propose that Thailand starts her partnership with the Pacific Islands Forum on two areas that are of particular importance today, namely agriculture and tourism, and another two areas that are of particular importance to our future prosperity, namely education and healthcare. Our regular exchange of high-level visits have included discussions on sustainable economic development strategies that are based on small-and-medium enterprise and export promotion. These issues were discussed with Mr. Sato Kilman, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Vanuatu, together with Mr. David Adeang, Foreign Minister and Finance Minister of Nauru, upon their visits to Thailand last May.

It is precisely in these areas of sustainable economic development that Thailand hopes to make its contribution to the PIF. We have found that financial aid alone is not the path to long term and sustainable economic development. We have learnt to look to our own strengths and those of our neighbours to build a strong foundation of sub-regional cooperation. We now look to our neighbours for support in the global marketplace as well as in enhancing our competitiveness. In the spirit of these experiences, there are increased opportunities for the expansion of trade and investment between Thailand and the Pacific island countries.

Honourable Ministers,  
Distinguished Delegates,

In closing, I wish to emphasize our commitment to strengthening partnerships with the PIF countries bilaterally, through this Forum, and within broader international frameworks. Thailand shares the Leaders' Vision of pursuing integrated but outward-looking regional partnerships. We look forward to supporting the efforts of the PIF towards realizing these goals whilst forging new linkages with Thailand and the international community. Thailand looks forward to working closely with fellow Pacific island countries and to make constructive contributions through our dialogue and project dimensions.

Thank you.

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