

INTERVENTION BY
HIS EXCELLENCY DR. SURAKIART SATHIRATHAI,
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THAILAND
AT THE MEETING OF THE MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT
“REFORM OF THE UN TO MEET GLOBAL THREATS AND CHALLENGES”
NEW YORK, 29 SEPTEMBER 2004

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Mr. Chairman,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to thank Their Excellencies Secretary General Kofi Annan and Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi of Malaysia for their penetrating insights, which have set the tone for our deliberations today. Thailand greatly appreciates Malaysia's leadership in seeking a more active and meaningful role for the Non-Aligned Movement in strengthening multilateralism and the United Nations.

Overview of Global Threats and Challenges

The global threats and challenges facing us today are quite unlike those of 1945. Terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and transnational organized crime have spread more easily, thanks to the borderless world. At the same time, outbreaks of sectarian violence and humanitarian tragedies suggest that parochial interests and rivalries have intensified under globalization. On the economic side, poverty and inequity remain constant challenges to many developing countries.

In August at Durban, we issued a Declaration reaffirming our firm commitment to multilateralism, and extensively discussed ways to tackle these issues. It is crucial that we take those discussions into account as we work to improve the international system so that it responds more effectively to these threats to global peace and security.

High Level Panel

Thailand appreciates Malaysia's proposal for the Movement to provide inputs to the UN Secretary-General's High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change. We look forward to the recommendations of the Panel when it presents its findings at the end of this year. We are hopeful that its recommendations will help bring about a UN that could serve us all even better.

We also need to recognize that not even the best recommendations can work without their being implemented. Our Movement must play a key role in supporting the work of the High Level Panel. And we must ensure that the report of the Panel, once released, is given serious consideration and translated into concrete actions wherever possible.

If NAM is to be recognized as a united group and force to be reckoned with, our efforts must go beyond issuing declarations and statements. As NAM is one of the largest groupings of developing nations, our input will help ensure that the interests of developing countries are taken into account as the High Level Panel prepares its report.

UN Reform

Whatever changes we bring to the UN system, it must give equal attention to both security and development aspects, since development is an important factor in conflict prevention.

There is a need for review of the roles and functions of the UN General Assembly and other existing mechanism or bodies within the UN such as the Economic and Social Council or ECOSOC in responding to the changing threats and challenges that we are now facing. In particular, we will need to consider the kind of mechanisms that should take the leading role in development, post-conflict reconstruction and peace building. Closer coordination among key UN bodies as well as between UN bodies and other major international institutions is needed to enhance more efficient use of resources, and to better synchronize international responses to problems.

Thailand regards the UN as much more than the sum of its parts. We therefore favor an approach to UN reform that is not piecemeal but takes into account the workings of the UN as a whole.

UNSC reform, of course, is an issue of interest to many of us at this stage. In reforming the UNSC, what is important is for it to function more effectively. Although there is

not yet a consensus on the nature of the reform, views on the expansion of UNSC membership seems to be emerging.

However, whether the expanded membership will include both the non-permanent members and the permanent members is still inconclusive. In addition, identifying criteria for new potential candidates for the permanent category will not be easy. On this issue, one consideration will be what the potential candidates can offer the UN and the international community.

At the same time, the working process of an enlarged UNSC must be revised to make its decision-making process more timely and efficient, while taking into account the widest possible range of views, particularly those of developing nations. And let us not forget that closer engagement between the UN and outside partners, in particular civil society and the private sector, will help produce solutions that truly reflect the diversity of today's world.

Building Blocks

The UN alone will not be able to cope with all the global threats and challenges confronting us. Another approach that we must continue to pursue is to strengthen our Movement as well as other cooperation frameworks, both regional and inter-regional, so that they become building blocks in the global fight against the new threats and challenges.

Not least of these challenges is the persistence, and in some cases deepening, of poverty in many NAM member countries. Unlike terrorism and transnational crime, poverty is an immediate problem in the lives of millions of people. Poverty, we believe, can be overcome through determined action and cooperation at the local and regional levels.

Thailand believes that NAM can help strengthen South-South cooperation by becoming a forum where various regional and sub-regional groupings can come together to exchange information and experience on how to enhance their links and cooperation to form coordinated responses to global threats.

On our part, Thailand has launched a number of initiatives with the aim of promoting greater cooperation at the regional and sub-regional levels. For example, the Asia Cooperation Dialogue or ACD, which now comprises 25 countries from all corners of Asia, continues to make progress through annual ministerial dialogues and numerous joint projects. The (Ayewaddy-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy) ACMECS, a joint scheme between Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Vietnam and Thailand, was initiated to share the benefits of socio-economic development between our five countries through joint

development of our comparative strengths. Participation is also open to outside development partners to forge greater dynamism. The (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) BIMSTEC which groups together seven countries in Southeast Asia and South Asia and held its first Summit in Bangkok in July, provides a forum for close cooperation on development and issues that affect development.

In addition, Thailand is working to developing closer ties with Africa, including through the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) by providing technical support and sharing our experiences in areas where we have a comparative advantage. In promoting regional cooperation, we are guided by His Majesty the King of Thailand's philosophy of "Sufficiency Economy," which has given rise to numerous alternative development projects, especially in the areas of agriculture, poverty reduction and rural development. This November, Thailand will host the Ministerial International Conference on Alternative Development: "Sufficiency Economy," to share our experiences with fellow developing countries in applying His Majesty's philosophy.

I am sure that other regional cooperation frameworks are also making progress from which we could all learn. If all this information on the progress of these fora could be compiled and exchanged, with the NAM as a coordinating body, it would generate a virtuous cycle of learning and self-help among developing countries. This is one area where the Movement can contribute, translating local and regional action into global results.

Mr. Chairman,

As we become ever more interdependent, we must each pool our inner strengths to forge a stronger partnership. We must recognize that our diversity can be a source of strength if we can learn to live with one another's differences to create a culture of tolerance and harmony. NAM's very existence attests to our shared aspirations. We must now ensure that, through our actions, NAM remains relevant and useful to its members. That is our responsibility, to one another and to future generations.

Thank you.