

**Presentation by  
H.E. Mr. Thani Thongphakdi  
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Thailand  
at the New Report Presentation on  
“Multiple Pathways to Sustainable Development”  
21 July 2015, International Environment House II**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me first say how pleased I am to join today’s event to launch the new report on “Multiple Pathways to Sustainable Development”, which emphasizes South-South Cooperation and the sharing of national pathways towards inclusive green economies.

I also wish to thank UNEP’s Economics and Trade Branch (ETB) and the Government of the People’s Republic of China for their support in this project.

As you well know, each country is unique in terms of its culture, economy, local context and priority. Shaping one country’s developmental model to achieve a green economy and the common end goal of sustainable development therefore requires approaches that are tailored to address the challenges faced by each country and, in particular, its people.

Here, I wish to share with you Thailand’s pathway to sustainable development and our perspective on what we see as the underlying, cross-cutting issues fundamental to achieving sustainable development.

Looking back over the past 30-40 years, Thailand’s economy has grown significantly. Our GDP grew from 32 billion US dollars in 1980 to 366 billion US dollars in 2012.

The country’s rapid economic growth lifted millions of people out of poverty, providing the majority of the people with basic necessities and ensuring that they are able to earn their living with adequate means and capable of contributing meaningfully towards national development.

As the Thai economy opened up and joined the mainstream world economy, our export industries took off. Double digit growth was the order of the day. It was not to last however. With the Kingdom emerging as the latest economic tiger in Asia, cheap foreign capital flowed in and eventually ended up being used for unproductive purposes. By 1997, we were expanding and consuming well beyond our means. Soon, foreign investors started withdrawing their capital and we had to float our baht currency which nearly halved in value. The rest is history.

It is against this backdrop that we recognized the need to pursue growth that is more people-centred and sustainable. Here, we have been guided by His Majesty the King of Thailand’s Sufficiency Economy Philosophy, which is based upon the three pillars of moderation, reasonableness and self-immunity. The philosophy underscores the importance of achieving balanced development between material and non-material advancement, between self-reliance, resilience and integration in the global community. It also incorporates the promotion of moral principles, emphasizing the importance of knowledge, integrity and ethical practices—the very foundation of good governance.

From a practical perspective, this entails more investment in human capital and in building people’s capacities, motivating each and every individual to be agents of change. A

change that needs to start at the community level by engaging people to take part in making a difference, teaching them to earn enough for their living, to have a dignified life, and to live in harmony with and protect the environment. This will help build a more resilient community, extend the fruits of development to the poor and vulnerable people and help lay a more solid, secure and balanced foundation for sustainable development. It will also eventually drive change at the national level.

Given the problems faced by farmers, His Majesty the King also developed a “New Theory” for agriculture to promote sustainable agricultural practices, production and marketing cooperatives to keep pace with our globalising world and the building of partnerships and networks to ensure further development. This concept has been put into practice through over 4,000 royal projects in rural areas of Thailand, from water resources management and forest ecology to soil improvement and coastal environment conservation.

The Sufficiency Economy Philosophy has also guided our overall developmental policies. It has been embedded in our economic and social development plan to drive the country towards a more sustainable and balanced economic, social and environmental development.

It has also helped us to meet several of the Millennium Development Goals. We have halved the poverty rate and are now committed towards the MDG Plus goal of reducing the poverty rate to 4 percent. On education, 12-year free basic education has been provided for every child in Thailand regardless of their sex. Our Universal Health Coverage (UHC) scheme has also helped lower our under-five mortality rate.

Despite these achievements, however, some challenges remain, including the need to raise labour productivity, improve the quality of education, promote a more positive attitude towards gender equality, decrease underage pregnancy and achieve sustainable environmental management.

At this critical juncture where we will soon be finalizing the Post-2015 development agenda, core principles of the sufficiency economy philosophy, adopting a people-centred approach and ensuring that no one is left behind should be considered as an alternative pathway towards sustainable development.

Thailand has also been sharing our experience in applying sufficiency economy as an alternative development endeavour towards sustainable development with other developing countries, particularly through our international development cooperation programmes under the South-South and triangular cooperation framework.

As I mentioned earlier, each country is unique. Sharing sufficiency economy to other countries therefore means applying its core principles to local conditions.

We also need to realize that for development to be sustainable, it is essential to strike the right balance between economic and social development whilst conserving and protecting our natural environment through the efficient and effective usage of our resources. Only thus will we be able to achieve sustainable and green development.

Thank you.

\*\*\*\*\*