

Statement by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand  
at the General Debate of the 74<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly  
Monday 30 September 2019  
United Nations, New York, USA

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Mr. President, Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
And the Greta Thunberg Generation of the world:

1. On behalf of a proud nation of the Kingdom of Thailand to the generation of the future, I would like to say, we heard your heartfelt plea to preserve and protect your livelihood. In fact, it is the **duty** of all of us who gather in this esteemed forum to demonstrate to you that we are, and shall be, trying our very best in good faith, to do just that.
2. The world is witnessing a sea change in many respects, and with it, challenges and opportunities abound. The 21<sup>st</sup> Century is often described as the age of disruption. The question is are we all ready for it?
3. Growth and prosperity requires peace. Political and economic advancements requires stability. Technology requires conscience. Environment requires hard work and sacrifice. Progress requires sustainability. These tautological notions are age-old, yet their achievement remains elusive. The most recalcitrant question is not the why, but the how—how to achieve those requisites in order to reach the desired objectives.
4. The past few years have seen the accelerating retrenchment from multinationalism to misguided nationalism, from globalization to anti-globalism, from free trade and rising-tide-lifts-all-boat mentality to that of the beggar-thy-neighbor and mercantilism.
5. We have also been observing increased disparaging wealth gap, degradation of the environment, segregation instead of inclusion, and winner-takes-all approach that lead to conflicts and confrontation. This is such a tragic irony because we are living the world where connectivity and interconnection are the norm rather than an exception. And yet, we still manage to dig our heels in the trenches we ourselves dug, and steadfastly cling to the posts that are so wide apart, often times merely for the myopic self-serving interests. Reaching out is considered weakness rather than strength.
6. Meanwhile, the Fourth Industrial Revolution has arrived irrespective of our preparedness. This Industrial Revolution will bring an avalanche of technological advancements that will have far reaching and weighty ramifications on all matters affecting our lives, our livelihood and our future. More seriously, unlike the previous three industrial revolutions, this Fourth will not give us little or no time to adjust.
7. So, in addition to the worsening traditional challenges with which we are relatively familiar, we now have new unfathomable non-traditional challenges in the realm of technology that we have to overcome. How successful we deal with them will determine the future of humankind. Nations have no choice but to put our heads together, not against one another, to get through this latest round of trials and tribulations, in order to come out ahead.

8. That is one reason why Thailand, as Chairman of ASEAN this year has adopted the theme “Advancing Partnership for Sustainability” as the core focus of ASEAN’s goals and undertaking. Imbedded in the notion of “partnership” and “sustainability” is the fundamental requirements of a mindset that calls for turning conflicts into cooperation. It also entails inclusiveness and far-sightedness that would replace the prisoner dilemma and lopsided short-term gain with long-term and sustainable advancements reflective of the shared interests and mutual benefits principle.
9. During this 74<sup>th</sup> UNGA, our Prime Minister attended three leadership sessions that reflected Thailand’s resolute commitments to their respective causes. They are the Universal Health Coverage, Climate Change and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). For Thailand, these causes are not just abstract, we have concretized them in earnest with our policies and their implementation because they matter much to the livelihood not only of our peoples, but of those around the world as well.
10. Thailand now ranks sixth globally in terms of our health care system. It is not an easy task, considering countless competing demands in terms of resources. It requires a balanced approach of budgetary management and priorities. It also requires the unwavering political will of the leadership to remain on track despite all the distracting clamors. Our achievements speak aplenty about Thailand’s commitment to the people-centric policy that aims at leaving no one behind.
11. On climate change, Thailand as Chair of ASEAN pressed successfully for our regional grouping to adopt for the first time, the collective stand on one of the most critical environmental debacles—marine debris. We also ratified the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) because we believe that the environmental crises are a global problem, and therefore demand a global solution, and a globally collaborative effort. The acceleration of environmental degradation at the rates and occurrences never seen before obliges all of us to do more to right the wrongs we committed to the environment. For so long, we have taken the sustenance of nature for granted, and it has suffered boundlessly from both neglect and abuses. This time, nature is getting back, telling us—this far and no more.
12. As for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Thailand has adopted the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP) espoused by our late King Rama 9, as the fundamental approach to SDGs. In fact, if adequately and wisely implemented, the SDG # 1 namely poverty eradication will no longer be in the equation. In fact, as the Chair of the Group 77 two years ago, Thailand has shared this approach with the group members. Inherent in the SEP approach is the thrive for “balance” between development and progress and social factors and coherence. Without “balance” the road out of economically deprived existence of millions will lead nowhere.

Mr. President

13. These three issues have been among our government’s pillars of foreign policy. Equally important is our recognition that none of them could be achieved without preserving their underpinning prerequisites namely peace and stability. That leads us to our current dedicated effort together with our ASEAN members, to push for partnership and to turn conflicts into cooperation so that development and progress could be sustainable. This may sound too idealistic given the current global trends of choosing confrontation over dialogues to settle our differences, but in fact, it is not. Essentially, it is the duty of all of

us gather here today to give partnership and cooperation a chance; to prove that with a different mindset, peace and common benefits can be achieved and sustained, that they are not just an idealist's zeal with no practical wherewithal and real-life application.

14. The onerous task for us is how to convince all nations, large and small, that in the face of our current tumultuous challenges, both traditionally and technologically, and for the sake of our future generation, there is absolutely no room for a winner-take-all and zero-sum mentality. We shall sink or swim together, not alone, and not at the expense of the drowning of others. It is a not such a bad cliché at this juncture to say that we are in the same boat, and we are all in it together.
15. Lastly, we have to address the rising counter-globalism movement. It is the elephant in the room that the world can no longer afford to ignore. The movement such as xenophobic populism stems mainly from the peoples' disenfranchisement of economic globalization that in many cases lead to what the British economist William Forster Lloyd dubbed "the tragedy of the commons." Many of the anti-globalism activists do not oppose globalization in general. They just want to change the way it has been allowed to run unabated, that results in exclusion, alienation, human rights violation, unfair trade, and "development" that is detrimental, not beneficial to the many segments of the society. Military conflicts and extreme climate change that triggers refugees and mass migration exacerbate the rising distrust and disgruntlement, as they got thrown into the mix of anti-globalism narrative and actions.

Mr. President

16. That is why Thailand has been promoting the "people-centric" national and international policy as the essential part of our economic and social development policies. Needless to say, each nation either individually or collectively must put the balanced improvement of the livelihood of the people at the top of its priorities. We must foster the development model that aims at leaving no one behind. It is the duty of every government, and of this esteemed body, the UN, to create and adopt a growth approach that gives a chance to the people at large, not just to only a handful of privileged few. To do otherwise would lead to the subsidence of the economic order and widespread calamity.

Mr. President,

17. Thailand is a country that geographically straddles between two vast oceans—the Pacific and the Indian Oceans. Through time, Thailand has conscientiously maintained its centrality while promoting partnership via regionalism and multilateralism. History has shown us time and again that great powers get the first hand in writing the rules. History has also shown us that the privileges that come with great strength must know the limits. Most importantly, they must be accompanied by an even greater sense of responsibility and accountability. Without due regard to the lessons that history has taught us, we shall remain trapped in the vicious circle that has brought this esteemed body into existence in the first place. We owe it to our future generation to prevent history from repeating itself. To that end, Thailand has been trying to do its part, and we are certain that we are not alone. We would also like to believe that is the reason why we are gathering here today. If we fail to learn from history and conducting ourselves differently, all shall be lost, and that includes our collective future.

I Thank you very much.