



**STATEMENT BY H.E. GENERAL PRAYUT CHAN-O-CHA (RET.), PRIME MINISTER OF THE KINGDOM OF THAILAND AND CHAIR OF THE FORTIETH ANNUAL MEETING OF MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE GROUP OF 77 AT THE INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE ON SUFFICIENCY ECONOMY PHILOSOPHY FOR SDGS (New York, 23 September 2016)**

President of the 71st session of the United Nations General Assembly,  
Secretary-General of the United Nations,  
Ministers and representatives of the G77,

1. Last September, and here at the UN, we adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We realized that after completion of the Millennium Development Goals, challenges, old and new, remained, including climate change, natural disasters, epidemics, food and energy security and man-made disasters such as armed conflicts, which have led to forced migration and displacement.
2. Over several past decades, we rushed to develop because we believed in economic growth. This brought about fierce competition, where only the strongest prevailed.
3. While we strived for 'modernity', for urbanization and industrialization, we left behind the rural areas. This led to increased social disparity as well as environmental and societal degradation. The saying 'pollute first and then clean later' doesn't work here. Due to the Butterfly Effect, even small, seemingly insignificant, actions can have grave consequences.
4. Over the past year, I met, on several occasions, leaders and high-level representatives from the G77 countries. My discussions with them confirm my belief that global challenges will continue to multiply and intensify, even become more interconnected and complicated. These are common challenges that all countries will have to collectively address and overcome.
5. Thailand has faced many crises in the past, including the 1997 Asian financial crisis, natural disasters like the 2004 tsunami and the 2011 floods, and many other crises, seemingly difficult to overcome, but we always managed to build back better and 'stronger together'. This is neither a coincidence, nor a miracle, but rather, the result of determination, commitment and perseverance.
6. The 1997 financial crisis was an important turning point. It gave us the thought to address the problem at its root cause. We realized that relying on the global economy without self-immunity would only make the country weak and vulnerable to external shocks. That was not the way to sustain development.
7. Thailand adopted the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP) of His Majesty the King of Thailand as our guiding principle or 'guiding light' for the country. The SEP helped us to overcome challenges and to move forward on a secure footing. 'Sufficiency' here does not mean to be satisfied with living in poverty, but means to live our lives in a balanced manner and in moderation. People can still become prosperous, but must not exploit others in doing so.
8. The Royal Thai Government attaches great importance to grassroots development, known as the "State of the People" policy. This is in line with a people-centered approach, as it is aimed at creating opportunities for all, particularly the vulnerable, and promoting a public, private and people

partnership for sustainable development.

This policy is an important mechanism towards the "Thailand 4.0" model in order to re-structure the country into an innovation-driven society and so graduate from the middle-income trap. Success here lies in the participation of everyone and every sector, their understanding of their own responsibilities and their readiness to share experiences and lessons learnt. This collective effort would help to drive society forward.

9. I believe that many of you are already familiar with the SEP. I have talked about the concept and its applications on different occasions, such as at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit in New York last year and at least two G77 meetings in Thailand earlier this year.

10. On those occasions, I spoke mostly about agriculture-based SEP development projects. That was only because the socio-economic structures of most G77 countries and our peoples rely on agriculture. However, many studies have indicated that the SEP - with its key principles of moderation, reasonableness, and prudence - is a practical approach for all sectors to achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

11. The very core of the SEP starts with people and community. The SEP is a decision-making framework and encourages living a balanced life -- all of which could help achieve many SDGs, be they ending poverty, eradicating hunger, promoting public health, education and gender equality, enhancing resilient urban development, or promoting sustainable consumption.

12. Over the past 40 years, we have applied SEP principles, particularly moderation and reasonableness, in the conservation of the planet, including natural resources and environment.

I would like to raise an example of the Huai Hong Khrai Royal Development Study Center. The Center showcases integrated reforestation projects. Vetiver grass planting, among other things, helps the land retain moisture and prevents soil erosion. In terms of land management, King Bhumibol Adulyadej's "three forests, four benefits" strategy recommends plant diversification on a farm to help improve the soil and protect watersheds -- such as planting trees so that we can use the wood for energy and also for general farming, for example.

13. In terms of prosperity, the SEP has been widely known since the 1997 financial crisis, especially for its holistic approach, risk management, self-immunity, reasonableness and responsibility for the society. It promotes profit-making without exploiting society or the social fabric. The SEP, therefore, contributes to the achievement of the SDGs concerning sustainable and inclusive economic growth, employment and decent work as well as infrastructure and industrial development.

14. The SEP also encourages people, society and nature to live in harmony. Thailand stands ready to take a leading role in promoting a just and peaceful society. Applications of the SEP on this Goal include the Bangkok Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners, and the establishment of a Juvenile Training Centre that applies the SEP to its curriculum to promote a balanced way of living.

15. In 1967 when the Charter of Algiers was adopted at the Group's First Ministerial Meeting, Ministers reiterated that the primary responsibility for our development rests on us. It is our common goal, therefore, to strengthen ourselves to be able to take on such responsibility in an effective manner. This goes hand in hand with the core concept of the SEP that advocates building strength from within. Only when we are stronger from within and have a desire to make changes -- or letting our strength "explode from within" --, will our development efforts bear fruit.

16. I am pleased that many countries have begun to appreciate the SEP. This reflects the universality of the philosophy. This is the first step to strengthening global mechanisms for sustainable development.
17. Thailand has forged sustainable development partnerships with G77 members from almost every region, and initiated a network of SEP advocates or "Friends of SEP" that would translate into development partnerships. This includes youth partnerships as their needs are important, too. Sustainable development *must meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.* (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987)
18. I am delighted that one of our friends, Timor - Leste, has developed a model village under the SEP approach in Hera township, Dili, where for more than six years the technique of integrated farming has yielded concrete outcomes. The success of this model village attracted interest from a development partner and led to a Thai - German - Timor trilateral cooperation arrangement, built on enhanced production capability, and focusing on commercial production that responds to market demand as well as on product improvement.
19. Aside from the agricultural sector, SEP partnerships could support development in all sectors, varying from environmental conservation, human development or business management. Thailand has been providing scholarships and training programmes, coupled with development cooperation projects such as SEP learning centres in Lesotho, the Lao PDR, SEP villages in Cambodia, SEP-based integrated farming in Tonga, and a project in Fiji to be commenced shortly.
20. I am delighted that since January this year, more than 22 members of the G77 have expressed their interest in forging cooperation on SEP-based development with Thailand. We will remain committed to promoting and sharing our lesson learnt in bringing the principle of the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy into practice with the international community, including after our G77 chairmanship, through scholarships, study visits and development projects, etc., under bilateral, South - South and trilateral cooperation arrangements.
21. Earlier this month, I was invited to attend the G-20 Summit in the capacity of Chair of the G77. This could be the beginning of global partnership between the G-20 and the G77. The G-20 is interested in extending cooperation in supporting the successful implementation of sustainable development. Thailand stands ready to be a bridge builder for this trilateral cooperation in the same manner as already mentioned between Timor -Leste, Thailand, and Germany, who is going to assume the Chairmanship of the G-20 later this year.
22. I have learnt that Ecuador has also shown initial interest in the SEP. I truly hope that we could develop this into full cooperation with Ecuador, who is going to be our Chair for 2017.
23. There is no ready-made formula in applying the SEP to address today's challenges. Each time, we need to study carefully the social and geographical context around a new project and adjust the application accordingly.
24. Achieving all 17 Sustainable Development Goals should not be only a dream. But it shall be a reality. The pace that we take - fast or slow - is up to us, that is, our commitment and capacity to work together. To genuinely leave no one behind, we have to join hands in building up the capacity of our society to overcome development challenges, promote cooperation, caring and sharing, and not exploit or take advantage of one another. Each and every one of us should be aware of our responsibilities and do our best in discharging our duties.

25. I would like to emphasise that it is not only important that we join hands but also hearts. We need shared commitment and strong political will.

26. If we are committed to working together, to joining hands and hearts, to sharing lessons learnt, and to creating 'a universal push to transform our world', our global community will then be truly sustainable and peaceful.

I thank you.