

**STATEMENT BY H.E. ADISAK PANUPONG,
AMBASSADOR AND PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF THAILAND TO OSCE,
AT THE 16TH OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL IN HELSINKI**

Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

Allow me at the outset to express my sincere gratitude to the Government of Finland, and especially to H.E. Mr. Alexander Stubb, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Finland and as Chairman in Office of the Organisation of Security Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) for the kind hospitality and warm welcome extended to me and my delegation. I wish to take this opportunity also to express my gratitude to all the relevant bodies of the OSCE for the efficient and smooth organization of this Ministerial Council. I have been asked to deliver this statement on behalf of H.E. Dr. Manaspas Xuto who wishes me to convey his regrets for not being able to attend this Council.

Since last year, many important events have taken place around the globe. The international community faced many challenges both in the traditional and non-traditional areas, ranging from the conflict in Chechnya, South Ossetia, Georgia, Afghanistan, as well as natural disasters such as the earthquake in China, the cyclone Nargis which hit Myanmar, to name but a few. The most recent challenge has been the global financial crisis which will need the concerted efforts and cooperation of all countries and relevant multilateral financial institutions to handle this matter and mitigate the impact of the crisis affecting us all.

At home, political situation in the country is viewed as a development of political process with public participation. The events reflected Thailand's effort to find the right balance between our political culture, democratic ideals and political stability. Currently, the situation in Thailand has returned to its normalcy, particularly the recent reopening of the main international airports in Bangkok, namely Suvarnabhumi and Bangkok Airports, on 2 December 2008, which is now fully operational, and the stranded foreign travelers are now departing to their destinations. The Royal Thai Government wishes to express our regrets to the inconvenience which may have caused to all the foreign travelers. However, it is worthy to stress that our daily life goes on and we are

confident that our fundamentals remain strong, and that Thailand will regain her footing, learning from our experience, and emerge stronger than before.

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates,

Since July, Thailand has assumed her task as Chairman of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and will hold this Chairmanship until December 2009. We are very honoured by and attach highest priority to this Chairmanship at this important juncture for ASEAN. During this Chairmanship, Thailand will focus on

Firstly, Thailand is determined to move towards achieving the set goal for the realization of ASEAN Community by 2015. Our ambition is for ASEAN to be more rule-based and effective.

Secondly, Thailand aims to help set up bodies as specified in the ASEAN Charter by the end of next year. An important development and example in this area is the setting up of an ASEAN Human Rights Body, the establishment of which Thailand has played a leading role.

Thirdly, Thailand is driven towards making ASEAN more people-centred. This is an important recognition as we have seen from the European Community's experience that the constituents should participate in the process of integration and learn how beneficial this process can be to them. It is equally important for ASEAN citizens to know where the benefits are coming from. Consequently, Thailand has placed a strong priority on ensuring that ASEAN citizens understand and what ASEAN means to, and can become, for them.

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates,

As Chairman of ASEAN and ARF, Thailand attaches importance to the ASEAN Regional Forum and will coordinate in the relevant activities to ensure that the ARF will continue as the premier forum for political security dialogue for our region.

Before the Ministerial Council last year in Madrid, I made two key proposals which could help to forge the links between the OSCE and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). Both organizations play important roles in their respective capacities with similarities in their objectives and methods in promoting preventive diplomacy as well as act towards confidence-building in their respective regions.

The first proposal that Thailand made last year was on how the link between OSCE-ARF could become stronger through systematic cross representation between OSCE and ARF officials in our activities. In my second proposal, Thailand stressed how we could share experiences and best practices in regional security cooperation by taking note of the two organisations' respective advantages. From now until the end of 2009, while we are ARF Chair, Thailand stands ready to transform some of these proposed ideas into action.

The ARF has reached maturity after 14 years. We are now rethinking the ARF's role as well as revitalizing the organization's spirit. The ARF needs to evolve along with the changing regional security architecture and emerging challenges in the region.

In line with the proposals I made at this Council last year, Thailand as ARF Chair will focus on three major areas where the ARF can cooperate with the OSCE for our mutual effectiveness and relevance.

Firstly, Thailand hopes to encourage a mutual learning process, particularly through the ARF's active engagement with the OSCE. This could be done by inviting OSCE personnel to join ARF workshops and seminars and vice versa. We have much to offer each other in terms of best experiences and practices. The OSCE is an organization with strong institutional features, but the complexity and diversity of ARF's membership means that we have had to deal with challenges perhaps unfamiliar to the OSCE. These challenges can be more effectively addressed when we learn more from each other.

Secondly, we hope that the OSCE Chairman-in-Office (CIO) and the ARF Chair can meet to compare notes of our experiences at the margins of international meetings. Such high-level meetings can ensure that the momentum for enhancing cooperation between both organizations is carried forward.

Thirdly, we would like to step up efforts to make certain that the ARF learns from the OSCE's vast experience in confidence-building measures and preventive diplomacy. To this end, Thailand would like to encourage the OSCE to invite the ASEAN Secretary-General as well as the ASEAN Secretariat to the OSCE's training programs.

The ARF could learn from the OSCE in the area of preventive diplomacy, such as in the early warning mechanisms undertaken by the OSCE's CIO. In more practical terms, the ARF can learn from the OSCE's experience in standardized reporting. The ARF is currently looking into drafting a template to

establish a standardized ARF Annual Security Outlook, the inputs of which will be encouraged on a voluntary basis without a strict format.

Links between the OSCE and ASEAN secretariats will make certain that we, the ASEAN secretariat, are firmly prepared for the ARF's constant evolution and ready for the security challenges ahead of us.

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates.

Thailand knows that non-traditional security threats cannot be taken lightly. In the inter-sessional year 2006/2007 alone, the ARF undertook a total of 19 activities which for the most part addressed non-traditional security issues.

Thailand has also individually taken full account of these non-traditional security threats, and currently we place high priority on the issue of food and energy security – issues which should never be taken for granted. Food and energy security are on Thai national agenda, and we urge that international cooperation in this regard be deepened through international organizations such as the United Nations, as well as the OSCE. Thailand fully supports the Bangkok Statement on ASEAN plus Three Food and Energy Security, which will be adopted during the next ASEAN Summit and includes among others, measures to create a rice reserve to safeguard against future regional food crisis.

Another area which Thailand is proud of is the successful eradication of poppy cultivation and crop substitution in the northern region of Thailand – the so-called Golden triangle area. The key role played by the Mae Fah Luang Foundation (MFLF) in the development project in Doi Tung, Chiang Rai province, which can now be set as an example from their experience and expertise in promoting sustainable development and livelihood. The Mae Fah Luang Foundation is known for bringing sustainable alternative livelihood development to Afghanistan and Aceh, and continues to be at the forefront in such efforts to share Thailand's experiences on eliminating narcotic crop cultivation through sustainable poverty alleviation with the support of key partners.

On the critical issue of disaster management and relief, ASEAN has taken a leading role in providing humanitarian assistance to Myanmar after Cyclone Nargis, together with the international community, and particularly through the Tripartite Core Group (TCG). In addition, Thailand is a member of the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center which is an international organization under the mandate of 12 countries within the region, and acts as a regional warning

center. We should not forget how the Tsunami Regional Trust Fund¹ can contribute to disaster management. Thailand has donated US\$10 million to the fund and would like to thank Sweden for donating an additional US\$2.5 million. We hope that more countries will join us in donating to the fund in order to support establishment of early warning systems and provide aid to vulnerable countries in establishing increasingly effective national warning centres.

Food security, poverty alleviation, drug trafficking, and disaster management and relief are just a few of the wide-ranging non-traditional security threats which need to be addressed. Through the sharing of experiences and best practices, we can join hands in fighting these threats together.

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Guests,

Only through concerted international efforts can the evolving security threats, traditional and non-traditional, be solved. Thailand, as ARF Chair, welcomes suggestions that will help to pave the way for our closer and effective partnership.

We already know that the ARF needs to build more concrete and practical cooperation between its members and with other international organizations. We would like to develop institutional features similar to the OSCE's, in order to make the ARF a more relevant and effective body.

These visions for development need to be conducted with careful consideration to the ARF's, as well as the OSCE's strengths and limitations. Our respective nations' social constructs - our different cultures, histories, and traditions - will sometimes cause difficulties, but our uniqueness will more often highlight our respective strengths. We need to focus on these strengths, because our ultimate goals will always be something we have in common. A peaceful world. Prosperous citizens. A world where our children can be raised and nurtured without having to fear environmental degradation and disasters.

¹ Multi-Donor Voluntary Trust Fund on Tsunami Early Warning Arrangements in the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia.

To conclude, Thailand would like to reaffirm our commitment and readiness to working closely with the OSCE and we are very much looking forward to strengthening our partnership and further co-operation with the Greek Chairman-in-Office next year.

Thank you.
