

Opening Remarks by  
H.E. Mr. Virasakdi Futrakul  
Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand  
at the 4<sup>th</sup> TICA Connect: Five Decades of Thailand and UNFPA Partnership:  
Advancing towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)  
Thursday 16 August 2018, 13.00-16.30 hrs.  
Vithes Samosorn, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

\*\*\*\*\*

Ms. Deidre Boyd,  
UN Resident Coordinator and Representative for UNFPA Thailand Country  
Office,  
Mrs. Marcela Suazo,  
UNFPA Country Director for Thailand,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Participants,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour and pleasure for me to welcome all of you to the Fourth TICA Connect under the theme “Five Decades of Thailand and UNFPA Partnership: Advancing towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)”. This is indeed a fitting moment to celebrate 47 years of Thailand’s partnership with the United Nations Population Fund or UNFPA, whose developmental work can best be described as “Anything about People”.

Eighteen years ago, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were adopted, providing us with an important framework and targets for development. While significant progress has been made in many areas, health-related targets, particularly those regarding maternal, newborn, child health and reproductive health, have yet to be achieved. With the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, we recommitted ourselves to nourish our “People” from their birth with more sustainable, focused, and scaled-up solutions and assistance to complete this unfinished business, and particularly, in reaching out to those most vulnerable in our societies.

This is important as we all have to grapple with the challenge of population or demographic change. It is an issue that has to be addressed both at the global and national levels and one that needs to be taken into account and mainstreamed into our national developmental policies. For Thailand, we have been doing our part domestically and internationally to invest in people of all age groups as we believe they are the essential driving force of national development.

All of Thailand's long-term development plans – be it our 20-Year National Strategic Plan, our 20-Year Population Development Plan or our 12<sup>th</sup> National Economic and Social Development Plan – underscore the importance of human capital development as the key driver of our national economic growth. As a reflection of our efforts to “localize the SDGs” under the Goal 3 – *Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages*, Thailand's 20-Year National Strategic Framework on Healthcare and 12<sup>th</sup> National Health Development Plan (2017-2021) also emphasizes the promotion of a healthy livelihood among the Thai people, minimizing disparities in the country's public health system, and enhancing the efficiency of health personnel management and good governance in the public health sector.

In 2002, a few years after the adoption of the MDGs, Thailand introduced Universal Health Coverage (UHC) to ensure equitable access to quality healthcare and services, and health security to all Thais. UHC has been a crucial factor in the improvement of healthcare services in Thailand with current coverage standing at 99 per cent. At the same time, we have also attached importance to preventive medicine and have successfully reduced maternal and neonatal mortality rates to well below the global targets, at 99.6 per cent of birth attended by skilled health personnel.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

All countries can use a helping hand. Of the 17 SDGs, Goal 17 – global partnership for sustainable development – may therefore be the most important as it could support our efforts to achieve all the other goals and targets. Here, Thailand and UNFPA have since 1972 been playing an active role in providing technical assistance to other countries, particularly those in the

Asia-Pacific region. During this time, we have provided approximately one thousand courses covering a wide range of issues from maternal health to population and development to more than twenty partner countries, particularly during the past decade under the UNFPA Country Programme which is now in its 11<sup>th</sup> Cycle. Through the Thailand International Cooperation Agency or TICA, this spirit of cooperation has been synergized through various initiatives, including through trilateral partnership with Bhutan and Lao PDR on such issues as safe motherhood.

Thailand also values the work done by the UNFPA in providing policy advocacy, enhancing the capacity of our institutions and scaling up of South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives to promote the SDGs and population and development agenda over the past five decades. Cooperation with UNFPA represents a unique opportunity for us to accumulate and share our best practices, leading to cost-effective, sustainable and innovative solutions on this issue. The launch of the “UNFPA-Thailand Solution Network on Making Motherhood Safer” later this afternoon will mark another important milestone in TICA-UNFPA’s global partnership.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

A key factor in the success of Thailand’s public health sector has been the inspiration we derived from His Majesty the Late King’s Sufficiency Economy Philosophy or SEP. The SEP is Thailand’s home-grown approach to development and to life. In promoting a “thinking process” based on moderation, reasonableness and prudent decision-making, the SEP seeks to build resilience to cope with change and better manage risks. The SEP calls for communities to work together in harmony and for common benefits, which is indeed, the definition of “partnerships”.

By applying the SEP, the Ministry of Public Health has implemented holistic action plans focusing on prevention over profit, with a view to develop the quality of health services based on virtue and up-to-date knowledge for our citizens, including maternal health care policy to ensure quality pregnancy. At the community level, knowledge-sharing on pregnancy, pre- and post-delivery process, with the participation of pregnant mothers and other members of the community, has helped reduce significantly mortality rates in rural areas.

In this connection, Thailand has been sharing some of our best practices in various sectors, based on the application of the SEP, with our friends around the world under Thailand's initiative of "SEP for SDGs Partnership". This initiative is in line with our policy to further promote South-South and triangular cooperation through exchanges of resources, technology and knowledge to ensure that no one is left behind.

Achieving the SDGs requires commitment and strong partnerships. It also requires multi-stakeholder efforts, both within and across countries and regions. While we value the strong partnership with UNFPA and the continuing support from other partners under the "UNFPA-Thailand Solutions Network on Making Motherhood Safer", we also look forward to working with new partners to further enhance maternal and child health and population and development agenda.

I therefore hope that this year's TICA Connect will not only be a platform for discussions and exchanges of views, but also an opportunity to strengthen further cooperation with current and new partners with a view to achieving together the SDGs through partnership for the benefit of all "Peoples".

On this note, I now have the honour of declaring open the Fourth TICA Connect. I wish you all the best in your deliberations as well as productive and pleasant stay in Thailand.

Thank you very much.

\*\*\*\*\*