

**Remarks of Mr. Luc Stevens, UN Resident Coordinator
ABND Launch – 10 May 2013
Government House**

Your Excellencies Ms. Yingluck Shinawatra, Prime Minister of Thailand,

Mr. Santi Prompat, Minister for Social Development and Human Security,

Mr. Padermchai Sasomsap, Minister for Labour,

Mr. Arkhom Termpittayapaisith, Secretary-General of NESDB,

Distinguished Delegates,

Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the United Nations. Adopted in the midst of human ruin and personal agony, 50 member states stood up and guaranteed the rights of all people.

After its passage, one member said he was part of a historic event in which a consensus had been reached about the absolute value of a human being—a value that didn't come from world powers, but an inalienable right of people to live free from want, oppression and to fully develop one's personality.

These rights are up to member states to uphold. It is these rights that we as leaders have the utmost responsibility to fulfill. It's the responsibility that comes with power and an equal burden that all states must share in holding the Declaration true.

But we cannot admit that we have done so. To say we have allowed people to develop to their full potential is a half-truth. It is incumbent upon societies to allow people to try, fail or succeed in their pursuit of happiness. And it is the responsibility of us all to ensure that people are empowered to strive for a better life. When we remove ceilings and build stronger floors, we allow people to use their full potentials and build their resilience.

Building a robust social protection floor is our shared commitment. And the United Nations is here to support Thailand in this endeavour. Over the years, Thailand has put in place a range of social protection schemes, including a universal coverage scheme for health care—an example for ASEAN and the Asia-Pacific. But that's not enough. Thailand requires a strategy to provide that floor to all—a solid ground on which all can equally stand, from which you can only rise further.

We have established a Social Protection Floor Joint Team under the UN Partnership Framework with the Royal Thai

Government for 2012-16. The team, comprised by several UN agencies and government's ministries and agencies, has been working closely together for the past two years under the shared leadership of the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security and the International Labour Organisation. Today, we are proud and honored to be here today to launch the outcome of their work: The Assessment Based National Dialogue.

As the title says, it was a dialogue, a long process of shaping a vision of the social security in Thailand through consensus. It identified policy gaps and implementation issues, and makes policy recommendations for the achievement of a comprehensive social protection floor in Thailand. We hope that the recommendations will be taken forward with all due consideration.

These recommendations cover all four main guarantees of social protection throughout the lifecycle—health, children, working age and elderly, including introducing child support grants, maternity and sickness benefits for informal workers, expanding vocational training programmes and adjusting the allowances for the elderly and people living with disability.

The best news is that it is achievable. To make these recommendations reality by 2020, it would cost Thailand less than

between .5% to 1.2% of its GDP. Rather, social protection will foster social cohesion by reducing inequalities and will ensure that people stay above the national poverty line level throughout their lives.

Let me take this opportunity to express my appreciation to all the ministries and agencies of the Royal Thai Government that actively participated and contributed to this process.

Your Excellencies, Madame Prime Minister, the United Nations stands ready to support you in making these recommendations a reality.

Thank you.

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