

Press Release
ASEAN – UN Cooperation
Inaugural Relief Flight from UN Staging Area at Don Mueang International Airport
24 May 2008

On 15 May 2008, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon requested assistance from the Royal Thai Government for access to, and use of, facilities to set up a UN Staging Area in Thailand to launch humanitarian relief supply operations to victims of cyclone Nargis in Myanmar. The Prime Minister of Thailand agreed to the request of the UNSG on 19 May 2008, opening the way for the use of the Cargo Terminal at Don Mueang International Airport for channeling relief to Myanmar. The Thai authorities concerned such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Royal Thai Armed Forces, the Customs Department, the Department of Civil Aviation, Airports of Thailand Public Company Limited, and the Thai Red Cross have closely coordinated to facilitate the establishment by the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) of the Staging Area at Don Mueang International Airport.

The Special ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting on Assistance and Relief for Victims of Cyclone Nargis on 19 May 2008 in Singapore took note of the positive response of the Royal Thai Government and decided that ASEAN be the focal point for coordinating with the international community to assist Myanmar. An ASEAN-led coordinating mechanism was also established to facilitate the effective distribution and utilization of assistance. This ASEAN-led Task Force headed by ASEAN Secretary-General Surin Pitsuwan will work closely with the UN to ensure the effective management of disaster relief. Meanwhile, the WFP was assigned to be the focal point within Thailand for all UN logistics matters, so as to consolidate and coordinate relief and rehabilitation cargoes from international community and to streamline transport operations into Myanmar. The launching of the inaugural flight is scheduled on 24 May 2008.

The operation marks a crucial and meaningful phase in the cooperation between ASEAN and the United Nations in supporting the international relief and rehabilitation effort. Mr. Samak Sundaravej, Prime Minister of Thailand, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, the UN Secretary-General, and Mr. Surin Pitsuwan, the Secretary-General of ASEAN, will jointly preside over the launching ceremony and witness the inaugural relief flight from the UN Staging area at Don Mueang International Airport on 24 May 2008, together with the Ambassadors of ASEAN countries, Thai agencies and the representatives of UN and other international organizations.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
24 May 2008