

**Statement
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Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand**

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“Towards Strategic New Equilibrium of the Asia – Pacific”

Your Excellency Mr. Lee Hsien Loong, Prime Minister of Singapore,
Dr. John Chipman, Director-General and Chief Executive of the International Institute for
Strategic Studies,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

(I) Introduction

1. Sawasdee krub. It is indeed an honour for me to have been invited by the Prime Minister of Singapore and the Director-General of the IISS to give the keynote speech at this year’s Shangri-La Dialogue. The success of your discussions and exchanges of ideas throughout the past 15 years prove that the Shangri-La Dialogue plays a constructive role in promoting regional security cooperation.

2. In addition, I am pleased to be back in Singapore once again. I was here last year to attend the 50th anniversary celebrations of Singapore’s independence. Singapore is a good example of a country that has not only successfully developed, but also plays an important role in promoting regional security.

3. Fourteen years ago, Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, Singapore’s founding father and its first Prime Minister, was the first leader in the Asia-Pacific region to give the keynote speech for the first Shangri-La Dialogue. Mr. Lee’s observations regarding the regional security situation remain relevant today. The key players remain largely the same, but the security situation has become more complicated, interconnected and challenging. Mr. Lee predicted that more countries would play a greater role in the region and that there would be an increase in the spread of international terrorism.

4. Our world has faced countless challenges throughout the generations, from the bipolar world of the Cold War era to the multipolar world in which we live in today. The security of all communities, countries and regions are interconnected. We live in an increasingly interdependent world. We face important challenges that affect global stability, whether they be traditional threats such as the conflicts in the South China Sea and on the Korean Peninsula, or non-traditional threats that are a global common concern, such as political, economic and social conflicts; challenges to democratization, especially the lack of good governance; energy and food security; natural disasters; infectious disease; international terrorism; drug trafficking; climate change; haze; cyber-crime; illegal, unreported and

unregulated fishing; human trafficking; irregular migration; and aging societies. Because of all this, maintaining security equilibrium has become increasingly difficult. Thailand is an example of a country that has perhaps lost its equilibrium in the past several years, despite having been successful in maintaining a good balance and equilibrium in the past, even during periods of war and crisis. But now, through cooperation between many sides both within Thailand and internationally, I believe that Thailand is increasingly getting back on track even though a number of challenges remain to be addressed.

5. We live in a globalised world without borders, because of advances in transport and communications technology that can connect us within seconds. This can cause both crisis and bring opportunity. The challenges that we face are increasingly transnational. So from now on, we must truly share not only in each other's happiness and success, but also in each other's trials and tribulations. And because of this, the international community is gradually moving from a mind-set of "One Country, One Destiny," to "One World, One Destiny." All countries should therefore join together to consider how to resolve problems and address the challenges that we face on the basis of equitable benefit, aiming to increase mutual trust and confidence.

Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

(II) Regional Architecture: Lacking Proper Equilibrium

6. The regional architecture today lacks proper equilibrium. Resolving the security challenges in the region together requires that we have in place a good regional architecture. The end of the Cold War brought about changes to the regional architecture, creating a multipolar situation without clear-cut rules and regulations, which has led to greater uncertainty and represents a growing challenge for all countries in the region, particularly for small and developing countries.

7. Today, the security and potentials of the Asia-Pacific region are pull factors for many countries to expand their role in the region, politically, economically and socially. The United States has its rebalancing policy and its policy to move forward the TPP¹, in which Thailand has expressed interest and is expediting the consideration process through studies and public hearings with all sectors. I hope that TPP members would also help consider some possible effects of the TPP as well, which would help many countries expedite their decision to join. In addition, China has its "One Belt, One Road" policy and is seeking to advance free trade through the FTAAP² and RCEP³, while Russia has a policy focusing on Asia and the Eurasian Economic Union, and India has its "Act East Policy."

8. In my view, the United States, China and Japan remain the most important players in the region, while India, Russia, Australia, South Korea and ASEAN are becoming more important. As for China, while it considers that its economic growth and the development of

¹ Trans-Pacific Partnership

² Free Trade Area in the Asia-Pacific

³ Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership

its security capabilities are being carried out in a peaceful and constructive manner, many countries remain concerned that these developments will affect the balance of power and security in the Asia-Pacific region. I believe that ASEAN must be united and increase its role in building a strategic new equilibrium in the region in order to support an atmosphere of peace and enable all sides to abide by principles, regulations and values that are universally accepted as constructive. It has been nearly half a century since ASEAN's founding, and ASEAN has clearly demonstrated that it is able to create a zone of peace among its members, some of whom were in conflict in the past, and has achieved the goals envisioned by its founding fathers in becoming a dynamic community.

9. This is a challenge that I believe that the experts at this meeting can find a solution to, or a suitable equilibrium for the region, by coming up with ways and means for joint cooperation in laying down the foundations, criteria and codes of conduct as well as initiating joint activities constructively so as to help narrow gaps and create balance in the regional architecture and to do so in good time in order to lead countries in the region towards sustainable security and stability without leaving any country behind. This is for our own mutual benefit as well as for succeeding generations.

Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

10. What sorts of preparations do we need to make then? Are we ready? All countries have to begin from a foundation of security and stability in all dimensions. No one country can face the challenges alone. Thinking only in terms of the national security, however, may no longer be sufficient to address the challenges that we face in a holistic manner. We have to broaden our thinking to include regional and global security, which covers economic security, food security, water security, energy security, cyber-security, among other things.

11. Everything that I have said so far touches on the issue of security. I believe that we should come together to brainstorm constructively, piecing together the various pieces of the jigsaw puzzle in order to create a better world for our children and our countries as soon as possible.

Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

(III) The Concept of Regional Equilibrium

12. How shall we address the various problems that affect global security together? Let's begin with the basics: First is through understanding; second, through cooperation; third, through giving one another support and encouragement; and fourth, through giving opportunities and support to countries facing internal issues so that they can solve domestic problems by themselves. Without outside encouragement for resolving internal issues, the problems faced by those countries could become more complicated, spiralling the situation out of control and ultimately affecting the security of other countries, as has happened and is happening in all corners of the globe.

13. We need to find a suitable equilibrium as soon as possible in order to address existing problems, or else those of us who have a direct duty to maintain security will have failed. In our quest for a new equilibrium, we need to have common goals for regional and global security as well as global security. I believe that there are 4 such goals: one, Secure Peace; two, Sustainable Growth; three, Shared Prosperity; and four, Preserving the Planet.

14. We need to establish common ground in order to reach our common goals. So we must find areas of collaboration, putting our differences aside as much as we can. Every country should make a paradigm shift, from confrontation to collaboration under the concept of becoming "Stronger Together." Most importantly, we must leave no one behind. We must move from conflict to coherence and harmony, from common interest to shared values, and from a zero-sum attitude to a positive sum attitude.

15. I like to think of this new paradigm as being built on a foundation of the "3 M's", namely, Mutual Trust, Mutual Respect and Mutual Benefit.

(IV) Guidelines for Regional Cooperation: A New Equilibrium that Supports Each Other and Leaves No One Behind

16. I believe that ensuring balance and building sustainable security in the region depends on a conducive environment. In my view, there are 7 important features of such an environment as follows:

17. First, **promoting trust and confidence between countries in the region**, which requires time and the cultivation of familiarity. Countries should, therefore, continue to work together, in line with the culture of "giving" in Asia, meaning the more you give, the more you receive in return. Therefore, the more trust and confidence we have in each other, the more security we will receive in return.

18. Second, **creating equitable and supportive partnerships** through regional groupings or trilateral partnerships. Partnerships can be formed between countries with intermediate levels of development; or between countries with high levels of development and those with lower levels of development; or with major powers providing support to countries with varying levels of development on the basis of each country's capabilities so as to bridge gaps and disparities in all areas.

19. Third, **avoiding the trap of having to choose sides or engaging in partisan divides**. Today's world is multipolar. Small and middle powers must seek friendly engagement with other countries around them and join together in order to build a suitable equilibrium. After all, no country wishes to be forced to choose sides. We hope for the continued goodwill and understanding of all our friends.

20. Fourth, **promoting cooperation between major powers**. The region's key players should find ways to cooperate to build greater equilibrium. This not only benefits them, but also benefits the countries in the region as a whole. And this will support our efforts to create a truly equitable world.

21. Fifth, **countries in the region should think of sovereignty** in less traditional terms in order to support collective security in the long term. Countries will of course continue to place importance on their defence policies. The examples of the founding of ASEAN, which was founded 49 years ago, and the establishment of international organizations across the globe clearly show that there are better choices. The choice of promoting mutual security, mutual benefits, and respect for the rule of law and international law. This, in my opinion, is the way forward for true security in the future, rather than increasing conflicts.

22. Sixth, **promoting development in tandem with security**. Security is the foundation for building economic, social and cultural prosperity. But on the other hand, challenges to human security could also affect national and regional security. Thailand therefore places importance on addressing the root causes and focusing on development from within. The Thai Government has laid down a secure and sustainable foundations, whether in terms of politics, economics and society, and initiated the "Pracharat 4Ps" policy (Public-Private-People Partnership) so that all sectors of society are involved in the country's development. In all this, we are guided by His Majesty the King's Sufficiency Economy Philosophy, which is based on His Majesty's development experiences accumulated over the course of 40 years and which places the people at the core. This year, in fact, is the 10th anniversary of His Majesty's being awarded the "UNDP Human Development Lifetime Achievement Award," in 2006, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations, which is in line with the United Nation's Sustainable Development Agenda.

23. As Thailand is chair of the Group of 77 in New York City for the year 2016, my proposal to this meeting and that of the Thai Government are not only for the benefit of Thailand alone, but they also support efforts to decrease the disparity between countries in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of the United Nations. Most importantly, it is a way to address problems through development cooperation, finding the potential of every country and facilitating collaboration, without leaving any country behind. It will also support ASEAN cooperation and cooperation with other communities so that we can stand dignified on the international stage.

24. As an ex-military officer for more than 30 years, I believe that soldiers should not limit their roles to safeguarding their country's sovereignty, but should also play a role in supporting their country's development by laying the foundations for sustainable security, a role which is enshrined in all of Thailand's Constitutions. Thailand has therefore taken part in United Nations peacekeeping operations in various countries, including Timor-Leste, Burundi and Sudan. Thai peacekeepers not only took part in combat missions in those countries to defend those countries, but also helped to develop the livelihoods of people in those countries as well.

25. Lastly, **peace and stability in the region and the world are in the common interest of all countries**. Thailand supports and is ready to cooperate to preserve peace and stability in the region and the world through peaceful means on the basis of international law in accordance with our obligations.

(V) Security Challenges

26. There are seven security challenges that I believe should be discussed at this meeting over the weekend in order to find a new equilibrium:

27. **First, the tensions in the South China Sea and East China Sea.** Thailand believes that ASEAN must be united on this issue because peace and stability in the region's maritime areas are beneficial to all. All sides must recognize the importance of maritime disputes to preserve peace and stability in the East China Sea and South China Sea; freedom of overflight and freedom of navigation; as well as support peaceful resolutions of the disputes in line with international law, including UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea). Thailand considers that full and effective implementation of the DOC (Declaration on the Conduct of the South China Sea) will create an atmosphere conducive to negotiations to address problems in a peaceful manner between all parties concerned. We support the early conclusion of the COC (Code of Conduct on the South China Sea). Therefore, the claimant states must take every opportunity and use every platform and should have the political will to resolve this issue.

28. Problems in the maritime areas of the region should not become a zero-sum game, as this would destroy the long-standing good relations and would benefit nobody in the end.

29. Countries should take a win-win approach to the situation in the region's maritime areas. Thailand proposes that all countries in the region, whether claimants or non-claimants, take part in constructive joint activities for their mutual benefit, which should focus on achieving concrete results and be carried out in line with international law. We should consider how such joint activities could be carried out in a constructive manner, and in tandem with negotiations, so that territorial claims do not become obstacles, and the borders between us become borders of cooperation.

30. **Second, the situation on the Korean Peninsula.** North Korea's nuclear programme continues to create tension and is a major cause for concern in the region. The Six Party Talks should be revitalised in order to support confidence and lessen tensions through diplomatic channels. In addition, all countries involved should consider increasing humanitarian assistance to the North Korean people and maintain channels of communication with the North Korean Government in order to create a conducive atmosphere for dialogue. North Korea should also change its behaviour to become more compatible with the international community and not isolate itself.

31. **Third, terrorism and extremism,** such as the acts that took place in many countries attest that international terrorism is a regional threat and must be swiftly dealt with through cooperation in order to prevent its spread as well as the spread of extremism. This involves both development measures and military measures, sharing of experiences and best practices regarding moderates, dissemination of knowledge and understanding between religion and race, and addressing the root causes of the problem, such as loss of economic and societal opportunities, poverty, famine, violation of human rights and injustice. If these issues are not addressed, it could tie in to situations of unrest in many countries.

32. **Fourth, the stockpiling of military arms** should take place in a limited manner and as necessary to safeguard sovereignty and national interests, and should not be used to assail or threaten other countries.

33. **Fifth, irregular migration** is the joint responsibility of the originating countries, transit countries and destination countries. Responsibility should not be the burden of any one country. The appropriate way to address this problem is to focus on the root causes, by helping to develop the quality of life in order to lower economic disparities and eliminate injustice on a humanitarian basis and in line with human rights. In this regard, Thailand has played a role in addressing this problem and hosted two Special Meetings on Irregular Migration in the Indian Ocean in order that all sides could jointly resolve this issue. If this issue is not addressed in all aspects, transit countries will tacitly become breeding grounds for human trafficking networks.

34. **Sixth, cyber-security.** In enhancing cyber-security, every country must set up a dedicated agency responsible for monitoring over cyber-security and ensure that there are laws that cover this issue using compatible standards, including facilitating cooperation on information sharing and technology, as well as human resources development and joint training. How do we balance human rights with security needs in enforcing the law?

35. **And last, climate change and disaster mitigation.** Climate change affects the prosperity and sustainability of the region and the world. Drought and floods affect the agricultural sector and food security. In this regard, natural resources and the environment are global treasures and we should cooperate to conserve and protect them no matter what country we live in. In the case of mitigating the effect of natural disasters and public hazards, countries in the region should enhance cooperation, share technology and best practices in various areas, such as military medicine, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, military development and military engineers.

Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

(VI) Thailand in Transition

36. The security of every country and the region is intertwined. Thailand's future is therefore connected with our stability, prosperity and to regional security. Thailand stands ready to be a partner and to play a constructive role in laying the foundations for sustainable regional security. At the same time, Thailand's stability will have an effect on ASEAN and regional stability. Therefore, I wish to share with you some experiences and viewpoints from the Thai perspective.

37. Thailand is in transition towards a strong and sustainable democracy. We are facing many complex challenges to our security. Thailand's national security has been affected by poverty, social disparities, the middle income trap, a fall in agricultural output as a result of drought, and falling commodity prices brought on by the global economic slump.

38. Thailand has also been experiencing unrest in the southern border provinces, which is an internal problem and not a conflict stemming from religious tensions or one with foreign involvement. We are addressing this problem through laws and the normal process of justice, as well as through developing and the fostering of understanding in all aspects.

39. In addition, Thailand is encountering many difficulties that have come with irregular migration and the need for foreign migrant workers who number in millions and this has led to many social problems, problems with human trafficking and IUU fishing, including crime and human rights violations, which Thailand is expediting the process of addressing these problems as soon as possible.

40. Nevertheless, our key problem recently has been political conflict and unprecedented divisiveness in the country. This has stemmed from a political setting that has produced democracy only in form but not in function, thus resulting in national administration that lacked good governance. The public budget was used for political gain. There was ineffective populism and rampant corruption, which then led to political conflicts that could not be addressed through democratic process. There were legal deadlocks and the rallying of opposing sides in clashes. There was manipulation of the media to take sides, the escalation of violence, the breakdown of the rule of law and ultimately, the use of weapons in conflict. There was no order in society, which was increasingly characterized by demands for unlimited rights and freedoms that violated communal peace and the rights of other members of the public. This required an intervention to end hostilities, prevent further conflict, and bring the country towards a new era of reform. If left unattended, Thailand would lose its equilibrium and head towards unprecedented civil unrest and perhaps even civil war. There was no other way other than to intervene and restore peace and order in society and rebuild our democracy so that is stronger and sustainable. I add that to this day, there are still politically motivated Thai individuals in and outside the country who abuse social media to distort the facts.

41. Thailand's current challenge is to find a way to solve these problems and to create understanding within the international community of our situation. We do not have any intentions to violate human rights, or to restrict basic rights and freedoms, but that it was necessary for the military to take control the situation to prevent the escalation of violence and conflict, and to restore the rule of law and social order only for a while. Given this, all our measures have been based on the rule of law, the equal application of the law and law enforcement. We have enforced the law only in situations when laws have been broken. Taking action in these stances should not be considered as in violation of any human rights, even though they are separated only by a very thin line.

(VII) Solving Thailand's Problems

42. The Royal Thai Government is currently committed to maintaining peacefulness and orderliness, addressing political problems through strengthening our democracy, fostering reconciliation, addressing economic problems, restoring confidence for investors and the international community, combating corruption, reforming and modernizing our laws, reforming our civil administration, instituting social orderliness, reducing disparities, developing the country to have a deep-rooted resilience through the adoption of His Majesty the King's Sufficiency Economy Philosophy in national administration, with the Pracharat

approach to cooperation to reduce social disparities and progress the country towards a Thailand 4.0 status through supporting modernisation of 5 existing industries and supporting capacity-building for 5 new industries of Thailand.

Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

43. In creating a new equilibrium for Thailand, many issues must first be addressed. Nonetheless, not all matters can be addressed within a limited amount of time, therefore, a 20-Year National Strategic Plan and a Roadmap including phase one, two, and three are needed. Anything that cannot be completed during this administration will be handed over to the succeeding one that will come to power through elections. But at this first phase, it has been necessary to create peacefulness and stability for the country in order for other substantive reforms to be carried out. I can assure you that Thailand will return to democracy in accordance with the Roadmap and that Thailand upholds the democratic process and all of our international obligations as a responsible member of the international community as we have always done.

(VIII) Conclusion: A New Equilibrium for Thailand and a New Equilibrium for the Region

44. Thailand's equilibrium and resilience will help maintain and protect ASEAN's equilibrium, which will be vital towards creating a new strategic equilibrium in the Asia Pacific. Building sustainable regional security will take time and require trust and political will from all countries, for our mutual benefit, and based on the mutual respect for sovereignty and international law, as well as including not stipulating one ideology as a condition or prerequisite for cooperation. Viewed from the outside in, one can see the problem and manage it appropriate from the inside out.

45. A security that has equilibrium and sustainability should have military security coupled with security for development, in particular, for the stability, safety and prosperity of all our peoples.

46. There is room for all of us in the Asia-Pacific to cooperate to build this new equilibrium and make progress together. Thailand stands ready to be a partner and play a constructive role in building stability, prosperity, and sustainability in the region, leaving no one behind.

47. Lastly, I believe that the UNESCO charter states it most appropriately with respect to what we all must do from now on to realize sustainable security. It states the following: "since war begins in the minds of men, it is in the mind of men that the defences of peace must be constructed."

Thank you.
