

A summary of the special lecture in celebration of
the 150th Anniversary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
*“Building a BETTER WORLD Thailand’s Legacy & Contributions:
เหลียวหลัง แลหน้า สถานการณ์ด้านมนุษยธรรมในไทยและภูมิภาค”*

In the present, people facing difficulties and hardship look for humanitarian assistances from other nations. One of the most common case is the conflict displaced persons, when their lives are significantly affected by uncontrollable factors and crises, such as internal disputes or natural disasters, requiring the needs for humanitarian assistance in another country. Like many nations allowing people fleeing hardship to stay on their lands, Thailand also plays a crucial role in welcoming and providing them shelters as well as necessities, offering them peace and safety. This lecture discusses the humanitarian assistance situation in Thailand from the past until now, and how it should further design as well as develop potential policies for migrants and related organizations.

Mr. Rapee Lochaiyakul, Director of the Internal Security Division at the NSC, points out that irregular migration to Thailand is consistently on the rise due to Thailand’s outstanding roles from the past until now. According to Thailand’s past experiences, people from Indo-China temporarily moved to Thailand because of impacts from the tensions between democratic and communist ideology in the Cold War, whereas people from Myanmar sought help in Thailand due to the armed conflict in their homeland. Because of several threats that force individuals to displace, they vary in their story both short-term and long-term. While short-term migrants often escape from certain conflicts in their home country and return right after the issues are resolved, migrants in long-term displacement stay for a longer period due to more serious condition of the crises, and are inclined to build a family as well as have children, leading to permanent residences.

H.E. Kittiphong Na Ranong, former Thai Ambassador to the United Kingdom, further highlights the major causes for migration, including conflict or war within a nation, natural disasters, and epidemics. As these circumstances last for a very long time, they severely impact the

livelihood of the population to the extent that migration is the only option. In this case, International Humanitarian Laws, which aims to assist conflict displaced persons who are impacted by different threats in their homelands, are important. Many nations also use humanitarian law and humanitarian assistance as a tool for self-rebranding as well as international policies.

Mr. Kritsada Boonrach, Director of the Thai Red Cross Chapters Administration Office, discusses the humanitarian circumstances in Thailand by comparing situations of migration in the past to modern time. In the past, tasks as well as duties were clearly and structurally assigned to different organizations, making it easy for them to focus and accomplish their goals. Furthermore, international acceptance of migration was also easy as migrants would be transferred to another country after their interviews. However, at present, transferring them to another country becomes much more complicated due to the limitations of the related government funds as well as immigration regulations of many countries. Therefore, Mr. Boonrach suggests that the collaboration between Thai government and related organizations is necessary in solving challenges from the shifts in migration as well as developing the process to be more efficient and suitable to current situations.

Despite the depiction of Thailand's prominent role, Mr. Darren Hertz, Country Director of International Rescue Committee, emphasizes challenges to Thailand humanitarian assistances. Although Thai government and related organizations have set up various camps and holding centers to offer safety for conflict displaced persons and allow them to return when the circumstances in their homeland improve, he suggests that the model that has been used should be altered to respond to diverse changes in Thailand and their reduced efficiency.

Asst. Prof. Dr. Bhanubhatra Jittiang, Director of MAIDS-GRID and Lecturer in International Relations, Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University, also supports this point by underlining several factors. Firstly, the push and pull theory: Thailand's welcoming attitude without pushing them back attracts more migrants and conflict displaced persons. Because of

this, the numbers of migrants in Thailand are inclined to consistently increase, which can result in certain issues, such as growing expenditures. Lastly, no policy for conflict displaced persons to work. Due to this, how can they develop their potentials and be a part in Thailand's progress is a question of concern.

To address these challenges and encourage migrants to have better lives, the speakers suggest that Thai organizations should not only offer shelter and necessities but also to improve their potentials, such as skills to enable them to stand for themselves in the future. Moreover, Thai government should also create a policy that allows for their contributions and opportunities, such as allowing them to work in Thailand and earn income to be able to pay for basic rights and access to basic services, such as hospital fees, education, as well as taxes. With the assistance from foreign countries and international governmental organizations, such as United Nations (UN), Thailand and other countries can work out the best way to help manage and deal with humanitarian situation across the world. Consequently, respecting the rights of migrants and conflict displaced persons will help evoke soft power of Thailand, which will further shape Thailand's image and role on the world stage.

Summarized by

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