

15TH ASIA SECURITY SUMMIT
THE IISS SHANGRI-LA DIALOGUE

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

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GENERAL (RETD) PRAYUT CHAN-O-CHA,
PRIME MINISTER OF THAILAND

General (Retd) Prayut Chan-o-cha, Prime Minister, Thailand

His Excellency Mr Lee Hsien Loong, the Prime Minister of Singapore, Dr John Chipman, Director of the International Institute for Strategic Studies, honourable guests, ladies and gentlemen, today I am honoured to have been invited by the Prime Minister of Singapore and the Director to give an address at the Shangri-La Dialogue this year. Based on the success we've achieved during the past 14–15 years, we can confirm that this meeting has played a significant role in the promotion of cooperation in terms of regional security among all our countries.

In addition, I am pleased to visit the Republic of Singapore once more after attending the celebrations of the 50th anniversary of independence last year. Singapore is a praiseworthy country as not only has it succeeded in national development, but it has also played a significant role in the promotion of regional security. Fourteen years ago, Mr Lee Kuan Yew, Singapore's founding father and first prime minister, became the first Asia-Pacific leader to give an address on this stage. The key points that Mr Lee Kuan Yew observed about regional security have not changed significantly in terms of the main players, but regional security has become more complicated, more interdependent and more challenging. Mr Lee Kuan Yew predicted that many more countries would play a role in our region, that international terrorism would spread, as well as many other issues.

I think our world has gone through many eras, from the Cold War, where the world was divided into two poles, to the present, where we have a multi-polar system and global security is interdependent. We have to rely on each other more. We have to face significant issues that affect global stability, whether in terms of long-standing threats, such as conflicts at sea or on land – the South China Sea and the Korean Peninsula – or new types of threats, which the whole world must face together in the same way, or in a similar way. This also extends to political conflicts, the economy, society, democracy – which may not yet be perfect – lack of good governance, energy and food insecurity, natural disasters, epidemics, international terrorism, the international drug trade, global warming, trans-boundary haze pollution, cyber crime, illegal fishing, human trafficking, irregular migration, ageing societies and so on. As a result, it is more difficult to maintain a security balance in today's world.

Thailand is an example of one country that has lost its balance in the last several years, even though we have had success in maintaining such balance in the past, such as in times of war and previous crises. At present, I think Thailand, with the cooperation of many parties both domestic and international, has returned to a more normal situation, even though there are still many more challenges awaiting us in the future. And that is why I am here today. The age of borderless globalisation, where communications and information technology allow us to reach each other in just a few seconds, continually gives rise to both crises and opportunity, and problems take on an international dimension. Based on this, everyone must consider that if the people of this world are happy, they will be happy together; and if they suffer, they will suffer together due to the issues I

have mentioned. Consequently, the world is gradually shifting from the idea of one country, one goal to one world, one goal. All countries should consider how to cooperate to resolve these issues for equal benefit, to reduce suspicion and to build trust.

Our regional architecture still lacks balance. Honourable guests, our regional architecture lacks balance. Resolving security issues together within the region must be based on a good regional architecture. The end of the Cold War saw this architecture become one of many powers, and there may not yet be any clear regulations or rules, which has resulted in uncertainty and has become an increasing challenge for all the countries of the region, especially small and developing countries. At present, the security and potential of the Asia-Pacific region has encouraged countries to implement policies to expand their role in terms of politics, the economy and society. The United States has implemented a rebalancing policy and has introduced the TPP free-trade policy, in which Thailand itself is interested and is considering joining. Studies and public hearings should be arranged by all regions, and I ask all member countries to consider the effects of this policy. This may enable many countries to come to a decision more quickly.

In addition, China has introduced the One Belt, One Road policy, and drives free trade via the Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (FTAAP) and the Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership (ASEP), while Russia has a policy of focusing on Asia and the Eurasia Free Trade Area. India has a policy of focusing on the East. The United States, China and Japan are still significant players in the region, and India, Russia, South Korea and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) are becoming more significant players. While China believes that economic growth and its security developments are peaceful and constructive, many countries are concerned that these developments will affect the balance of power and security in the Asia-Pacific region. ASEAN must therefore be united and play a critical role in creating a new strategic balance in the region in order to promote an area of peace and assist all parties in following mutually accepted regulations and values in a constructive way.

For almost half a century, ASEAN has shown, to our satisfaction, that we have been able to create an area of peace among members that may have once been in conflict, and achieve the vision of ASEAN's founders to be a dynamic community for the future. This is a challenge for which I think the experts at this meeting today will be able to find a solution or find the appropriate balance for the region, by searching for ways to cooperate, lay foundations, set common standards and practices, search for cooperation and engage in joint activities, regardless of the differences between each country, in order to close the gaps, quickly create balance in the regional architecture, prevent potential future issues and, most importantly, bring sustainable security, prosperity and stability to all the countries of the region. We will not leave any country or anyone behind, and we will do this for our mutual benefit and for the future of the next generation.

Honourable guests, we must consider how to prepare ourselves. Are we ready? Security must be the starting point for every country. Stability in every aspect is the key. No country can face all these

different types of threat alone. Consequently, concepts that focus on each country's own national security may not be so effective in resolving the issue as a whole.

We must expand our focus to regional security and global security. How can we cover economic, food, water, energy and cyber security, and many other issues? Everything I've been talking about relates to the issue of security, and not just military strength. We must brainstorm in an effort to solve this jigsaw in a constructive way, to create our ideal of a beautiful world as quickly as possible. Honourable guests, regarding the concept of creating regional balance: even though we must face issues that significantly affect global security, we can find a way. How will we cooperate? I think the basic principles are as follows: 1) understanding each other; 2) cooperating with each other; 3) supporting each other; and 4) giving opportunities to and supporting countries confronting these issues, so that they are able to resolve their internal problems. Because if a country does not receive outside support to resolve its internal problems itself, those problems may become even more complicated, and escalate to affect the security of all countries worldwide, such as has happened and is currently happening in every corner of the world. We must find a new balance as soon as possible to resolve this problem. Otherwise, those of us with the duty of maintaining security will fail in our work.

We must therefore work together towards four common goals in regional and global security: to secure peace, sustainable growth, mutual progress and environmental conservation. As a result, we must establish a common standpoint to reach our common goal by searching for agreement and reserving our differences as much as possible. All countries must change all their paradigms from confrontation to cooperation under the notion that we must be strong together, and most importantly, must not leave anyone behind – from conflict to connections, from mutual benefit to mutual values, and from the concept of win-lose to the concept of win-win. These paradigms are based on the 3M principle: mutual trust, mutual respect and mutual benefit, which will become the new balance of supporting each other and not leaving anyone behind.

I believe that the way to adjust this balance must be based on a supportive environment, which must include the following seven components:

1. Promotion of trust between countries in the region takes time and familiarity, so countries must cooperate on a continual basis following Asia's culture of giving; that is, the more you give, the more you receive; so the more you trust, the more security you enjoy.

2. Appropriate partnership and assistance, such as group or tripartite partnerships. Countries in the region should promote these partnerships, such as through international cooperation between medium-developed countries, international development between highly developed countries and less-developed countries, or through superpowers cooperating with and supporting highly

developed countries, developing countries and underdeveloped countries simultaneously, in line with each country's potential, in order to reduce the gap as much as possible in every aspect.

3. Not choosing sides or causing divisions. There are many powers in today's world. Small and medium-sized countries need to build allegiances with other surrounding countries and must work closely together to build an appropriate balance. Most countries do not want to be forced to choose sides. We want sincerity and understanding from all our allies.

4. Promotion of cooperation between superpowers who will become significant players in the region. Superpowers should find ways to cooperate more in order to promote balance. This will not only benefit the superpowers, but also all the countries in the region as a whole. So we will be able to say that we really helped each other to make this world more equal.

5. Countries in the region should change how they maintain their sovereignty to promote each other more in order to strengthen mutual security in the long term. It is true that countries still focus on national-security policies, but the foundation of ASEAN 49 years ago is an example of integration to all cooperative organisations in every region of the world. This clearly reflects a better choice by participating in maintaining mutual security, consideration of mutual benefit, and respect for international law and international rules. I believe this will be the real direction of security in the future, whereby boundary lines are lines of cooperation, rather than lines of division that cause increased conflict.

6. Promotion of development in tandem with security. Security is the foundation on which economic progress, society and culture is built. On the other hand, mankind's security issues can cause devastation. Thailand focuses on resolving issues at the root cause through internal development. The government has laid a balanced, secure, and politically, economically and socially sustainable foundation. The introduction of civil policies to every sector of society can play a part in national development, as well as the application of the philosophical principle of a sustainable economy of His Majesty the King, who has more than 40 years' experience in development and was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award for Human Development by the United Nations ten years ago, which is consistent with the United Nations' sustainable-development agenda. As Thailand chairs the Group of 77 in 2016, my and the Thai government's proposal at this meeting is that in Thailand today we are not just working for Thailand or Thai people. This proposal is based on the concept of reducing inequality between countries and is consistent with the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Most importantly, it is consistent with resolving issues by mutual development, searching for the potential of every country and helping to support each other, without leaving any country behind, and creating a role in which we can cooperate with ASEAN and other communities with honour upon the world stage. For me, having been a soldier for several decades, I believe that soldiers should not limit their role to the protection of their country's sovereignty alone. We should

also play a role in supporting national development in order to help to lay a foundation of sustainable security, which is a role that has been established in every edition of the Thai Constitution. Thailand itself has participated in United Nations peacekeeping missions in various countries, such as in Timor Leste, Burundi, Sudan and many other places, where Thai peacekeeping forces not only fought to maintain security, but also spread the philosophical principle of a sustainable economy and to help improve the quality of life for the people of those countries.

7. Regional and global peace and stability is of mutual benefit to all countries. Thailand supports and is ready to cooperate in maintaining regional peace and stability by peaceful means, on the basis of international law, and in the various missions we must engage in together. There are at least seven critical challenges and security issues about which we must cooperate in our debates and seminars, and find ways of alleviating in these two days:

Number one: The issue of tensions in the South China Sea and East China Sea. Thailand believes that ASEAN should be united on this issue, as the peace and stability of the seas in the region is of mutual benefit to all countries. All parties must consider the importance of maintaining peace and stability in the South China Sea, East China Sea and South China Sea, the stability of airspace, shipping and supporting the resolution of regional maritime-territory issues peacefully on the basis of international law and maritime law. Thailand believes that complying with every article of the Declaration of Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) fully and effectively will create an environment that is able to facilitate negotiations to directly resolve related international issues and expedite the completion of DOC. Countries that lay territorial claims must display the political will to alleviate conflict at every opportunity and on every stage, in order to cooperate in considering the possibility of alleviating the problem. The crux of the matter is that a regional maritime-territory issue should not become a game of win-lose, as this will damage long-standing good relations and ultimately no one will benefit. Countries in the region should change their perspectives on maritime-territory issues to consider the mutual benefit of all parties. Thailand proposes that countries in the region, both those laying and not laying a claim to maritime territory, carry out constructive activities together for their own mutual benefit, focusing on tangible results on the basis of international law. We should first consider how to conduct constructive joint activities with all stakeholders in tandem with negotiations, as we do not want border issues to escalate into major obstacles. Let them be boundaries of cooperation, both today and in the future.

Number two: The situation in the Korean Peninsula. North Korea's nuclear-weapons programme continues to create tensions and to be a regional concern. There should be a renewal of the Six-Party Talks mechanism in order to build trust and reduce tensions on the basis of diplomatic principles, patience and tolerance. Countries should consider strengthening the foundation of humanitarian aid to the population and maintain a channel of engagement with the government at an appropriate level in order to allow North Korea sufficient space in the global community to facilitate negotiations and

support a change in attitudes in line with the global community, rather than simply leaving North Korea in isolation.

Number three: Terrorism and extremism, such as the terrorist attacks that have taken place in many locations, have confirmed that international terrorism is a mutual threat to the region and the international community. We must cooperate to prevent the expansion of terrorism by using both development and military measures, understanding the law, and promoting the exchange of experiences and best practices relating to the middle way: knowledge, understanding of religion and ethnicity, and resolving issues at the root cause. For example, a lack of economic and social opportunity, poverty, drought, violations of human rights and unfair treatment, as well as deeply rooted conflicts, if left unresolved, undeterred and not prevented, may lead to internal uprisings in many countries.

Number four: The proliferation of arms should be limited to that which is required in order to protect a nation's sovereignty and maintain national interests. Arms should not be held for the purpose of invading or threatening other countries.

Number five: Irregular migration should be the mutual responsibility of the source countries, intermediate countries and destination countries. The burden to resolve the issue must not be forced on any one country. The appropriate way to resolve the problem is to start at the source by improving education and quality of life, reducing inequality and eliminating injustice on the basis of humanity and human rights. In the past, Thailand has participated in supporting this issue, and a meeting on irregular migration in the Indian Ocean has also been held in Thailand for all parties to discuss the issue together. If we fail to completely resolve this problem, the intermediate countries will become tacit waiting rooms for gangs of human-traffickers.

Number six: Cyber security. We must establish designated monitoring organisations in every country, employ the same measures to apply the law consistently, build cooperation in terms of intelligence, technology, personnel development and training, and consider how to balance human rights and security when enforcing the law.

Final point: Environmental changes and alleviating natural disasters. Natural disasters affect regional and global prosperity and sustainability. Droughts and floods affect the agricultural sector and food security, and natural and environmental resources are global property. We must therefore help each other to preserve them, no matter in which country they reside. In order to alleviate natural disasters and public hazards, countries in the region should cooperate, exchange technology and support knowledge, such as in terms of medicine, which will in turn provide humanitarian assistance and help to alleviate disasters, including in terms of armed forces and army-engineer development.

Honourable guests, Thailand is currently in a period of transition. There is a correlation between the security of each country and regional security. The future of Thailand is linked to regional security, progress and stability. Thailand is ready to be a partner and play a role in laying the foundation for the promotion of sustainable regional security. Similarly, what must we do to ensure that Thai national-security issues do not affect the stability of ASEAN and the region?

I would like to share Thailand's experiences and ideas with you regarding this. Thailand is in a period of transition to a robust and sustainable democracy. We are also facing challenging, complex and multidimensional security issues. Thai national security is plagued by issues of poverty and an unequal society. We are stuck in a middle-income trap, exacerbated by reduced agricultural productivity due to drought and a slump in prices caused by the global economic crisis. Thailand is also facing unrest in some areas, which is an issue within Thailand, but not a religious conflict, and no foreign nationals have become involved. We are in the process of resolving these issues using the law and the usual judicial process, and by building understanding in each of these areas. In addition, Thailand is also facing the issue of refugees and is in need of international workers to support as many as **a million refugees**. This has caused social problems, human-trafficking and illegal fishing, as well as crime and human-rights violations.

The current Thai government is resolving these issues as quickly as possible. However, the issue that affects us most is political conflict and a more divided population than has never been seen before. The roots of the problem are political parties that claim to be democratic and demand unlimited rights to freedom, but ultimately act in a way that leads to poor governance and misuse of the government budget, whether for personal gain or in terms of populist policies which cause further problems, or for corruption, which leads to conflict or political conflict, and often it is not possible to find a solution to these problems by democratic means. We are constrained by the law, large numbers of people are mobilised, there is fighting, the media is prone to choosing sides, the facts are distorted until conflict escalates into violence, violations of the law, and ultimately the use of weapons in fighting between groups. This has resulted in a disorderly society. Many groups demand only their own rights to freedom, while violating the rights of others, which is considered an offence. We must consider other people too, so that the enforcement of the law does not lead to the army being called on to put an end to the situation, leading to a coup.

It should not have to be like this. We have to consider how to reform the country and how to unlock these issues. If we ignore them, Thailand will lose its balance, which may lead to conflict and civil war. These circumstances gave me no choice but one internal method, which is to use military force to restabilise the country – which had developed a power vacuum at that time – and to use the democratic process in order to stop the violence and economic damage being done to our society, and to bring peace and stability, so that we are able to repair and strengthen our democracy to make it robust and sustainable. This is what everyone wants, as soon as possible. At this time, there may still

be defamation, distortion of the truth, and a lack of facts on social media, both domestically and abroad, perpetrated by certain groups.

The challenge to Thailand at present is how to resolve these issues and what to do to make the global community understand that we do not wish to violate the rights of the people and limit their basic rights to freedom. However, in these circumstances it is necessary for the army and officials to control the situation for a short period only in order to prevent more violence and further escalation, and to enforce the law and to return order to society. Our reforms have so far been effective. However, all actions taken at this time must be on the basis of the law. Everyone must respect all existing laws. When an offence is committed, the law will be enforced. This does not, therefore, constitute a violation of human rights, though there is a fine between law enforcement and such violations. Additionally, officials must be punished if they deliberately commit an offence.

The current resolution of Thailand's issues is for the purpose of maintaining peace and order, and to resolve political issues, which will in turn lead to democracy, bringing harmony to the population, resolving economic issues, expediting the building of confidence in Thai and foreign investors – both domestically and overseas, putting [the topic of] corruption on the national agenda, modernising the law and bringing it up to international standards, reforming the civil service, bringing order to society, reducing inequality, strengthening the country from the inside – from the household level to the national level, inviting all sectors of society to resolve these issues together, reducing inequality at its source, and bringing forth an era of sustainable development.

In addition, Thailand is also focused on improving the country's competitiveness in order to step beyond the middle-income trap and be ready to sustainably enter the fourth industrial revolution with the Thailand 4.0 policy. This will be achieved by reforming Thailand's existing five industries and also promoting five new industries in which Thailand has the potential to succeed. Honourable guests, in creating a new balance, Thailand believes that there are various issues that must be taken care of together, and it is not possible to succeed in everything within a limited period of time. Thailand has a 20-year national strategy, as do many other countries. At this time, we have the first, second and third road maps. We will complete what we can as soon as possible. Whatever we are unable to complete, we will allocate to the 20-year national strategy. We would like, I would like, all our allies to stand with us during this period of Thai history. If we are able to bring peace and security to the country successfully, other reforms will be easier. We will be able to create a new balance, a new understanding.

Today, I can confirm that Thailand will return to democracy according to the established road maps in every respect. There have been no changes. We continue to be committed to the democratic process and the legal obligations of the global community, as always. I believe you may be able to use some of what I have said to your benefit. In summary, the balance and strength of Thailand will also help to maintain balance within ASEAN to ensure that it remains robust and sustainable, and plays a role in

creating a new balance in the Asia-Pacific region. Improving security in a sustainable way takes time, trust and political will from all countries concerned on the basis of mutual benefit, respect for sovereignty and international law, and refraining from using your own ideology as a precondition and an obstacle to cooperation. I believe that we must first look from the outside in to see these issues and apply appropriate methods of conflict management, as we seek to resolve these issues from the inside out. The balance of security or of sustainability should be all-encompassing, covering military security and developmental security, which will bring safety and sustainable progress to local populations. I believe that the Asia-Pacific region is large enough to create a new strategic balance and progress together.

Thailand is ready to be a partner and to play a constructive role in order to improve security, prosperity and sustainability in the region, without leaving any party behind. Finally, I believe that the UNESCO Constitution is correct about what we must all do in order to bring about sustainable security: since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defence of peace must begin. Thank you. Goodbye.