

**Remarks by H.E. Ambassador Penprapa Vongkovit
on the Occasion of the National Day of the Kingdom of Thailand
6 December 2018, Sheraton Tel Aviv Hotel**

*Your Excellency Mr. Eli Cohen, Minister of Economy and Industry of the State of Israel,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

Good evening, Sawasdee ka. A very warm welcome to all friends of Thailand here on the occasion of the National Day of the Kingdom of Thailand.

Every 5th of December, the Thai people celebrate the National Day of Thailand which is also commemorated as the birthday anniversary of His Majesty the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej as well as Father's Day in Thailand. Moreover, the 63th UN General Assembly adopted a resolution declaring 5th December as "World Soil Day" in recognition of H.M. the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej's lifetime's work on soil utilization and research, including its preservation in areas of severe deforestation.

For the Thai people, the 5th December remains a unifying occasion, when the whole Thai nation come together to remember the achievements of His Majesty the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej. His Majesty King Maha Vajiralongkorn Bodindradebayavarankun, who ascended the throne in December 2016, has pledged to follow His Majesty the late King's commitment and dedication to bringing happiness and well-being to the Thai people.

With the year 2018 almost over, Thailand can look back at a year of political stability and continued economic recovery. Our economic growth remains steady at 4.2 percent, while exports have grown by 7.2 percent; the number of tourists have continued to grow, reaching 35.38 million; Thailand also received several awards as top destination for tourists.

I am also delighted that the friendship between Thailand and Israel – reaching its 64th anniversary this year – has remained as strong as ever:

- In May, the Minister of Science and Technology of Thailand visited Israel; and in October, H.E. Mr. Ofir Akunis, Minister of Science and Technology of Israel, paid a return visit to Thailand; we are now working on an MOU on scientific cooperation, which is expected to be concluded soon.

- The Vice Minister for Industry of Thailand also attended the Industry 4.0 Conference held in Tel Aviv in October.

- Since the beginning of this year, Thailand and Israel had several meetings in all four major mechanisms to discuss various issues of cooperation namely, the Working Group Dialogue, the Security Dialogue, the Development Dialogue and the Joint Trade Committee.

- We are currently working on a bilateral trade and economic cooperation, which we hope will boost our trade from around USD 1.1 billion currently to USD 2 billion by 2020.

- Israeli visitors to Thailand continue to grow, reaching 174,000 this year, and we hope next year's figure will surpass 200,000.

- And of course, the support and assistance from Israel during the dramatic and ultimately successful rescue of the young footballers trapped in a cave in Northern Thailand in July. The communication devices provided by Maxtech Networks of Israel was significant in ensuring the success of this operation.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As for the next year, 2019 will be a busy year for Thailand. The Thai people look forward to general elections scheduled for early next year as outlined in the political roadmap. In addition, we will be taking up the Chairmanship of ASEAN, during which we are committed to work on our theme of "Advancing Partnership for Sustainability", to bring prosperity to our region.

At the same time, I look forward to enhanced ties with Israel. As the Thai Government has implemented the “Thailand 4.0” strategy which focuses on technology and innovation, we will be deepening our cooperation with Israel on research and development, especially on learning from Israel’s in how to transform “results in the lab” to “profits in the market”.

Before ending, I take this opportunity to thank once again all friends of Thailand, from the officials, and private sector, for their valuable support given to me and the Thai Embassy since my arrival last year, which has made my time here in Israel so memorable and rewarding.

Thank you, and may I now invite Your Excellency Mr. Eli Cohen to give the remarks.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

May I now invite all of you to join me in a toast to the good health of His Majesty King Maha Vajiralongkorn Bodindradebayavarangkun of Thailand and His Excellency President Reuven Rivlin of the State of Israel, and to the everlasting friendship and cooperation between our two countries and people.
