

Statement by
H.E. Mr. Sihasak Phuangketkeow,
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand,
at the High-level Segment of the 61st Session of the Human Rights Council
24 February 2026 at 16.20 hrs.,
Assembly Hall, Palais des Nations, Geneva

Mr. Vice President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

1. Over ten years ago, I had the privilege of serving as President of the Human Rights Council during a pivotal moment of institutional review.

2. I still recall our retreat in Bangkok, where we gathered for frank and candid conversations. We did not resolve every issue then. But we were able to work across different regional and political groupings to ensure that the Council could better deliver on its mandate to promote and protect human rights for all.

3. As we confront the challenges of multilateralism today, we must think and act collectively, for the success and effectiveness of the Council is not measured by the number of resolutions we adopt, but by how our work translates into real improvements on the ground.

Mr. Vice President,

4. Human rights challenges today take many forms. One of the most urgent threats is the rapid expansion of transnational online scams.

5. Millions of people worldwide fall victim to these crimes. Trafficked persons are trapped in scam compounds, subjected to coercion, violence and forced criminality. What we are witnessing are industrial-scale scam networks that have evolved into a global human rights crisis.

6. These operations are allowed to fester because of the lack of the rule of law in the countries they operate.

7. Thailand stands both on the front line of impact and at the forefront of international efforts to address this scourge. And we will continue advancing cooperation to dismantle these criminal networks.

Mr. Vice President,

8. Improving the effectiveness of the Council also means ensuring that we do not squander the Council's time on bilateral issues that have their proper place elsewhere.

9. I intended to talk more about human rights challenges and the important work of this Council. But once again, I find myself compelled to respond to far-fetched remarks made earlier by my Cambodian colleague.

10. Rather than contributing to peace as they vocally desire, it is regrettable that Cambodia has chosen, time and again, to demonise Thailand through false accusations and distorted narratives.

11. If we are to speak honestly, we must ask how this conflict came about in the first place.

12. The reality is that tensions occurred following *years* of encroachment and repeated provocations seemingly intended to test Thailand's restraint and resolve. This included even attempts to interfere in Thailand's internal politics.

13. This is why tensions escalated, culminating in indiscriminate attacks and civilian deaths. It is a tragic episode in the relations between two neighbouring countries.

14. Throughout history, Thailand has had nothing but good intention for our neighbour.

15. We provided refuge to those fleeing conflict. We supported humanitarian assistance and reconstruction following Cambodia's civil war.

16. Our intention has never been confrontation. Because we understand that our peace is inseparable from Cambodia's peace.

17. Today, a ceasefire is in place. This should have marked a turning point toward rebuilding trust and moving forward as good neighbours.

18. Yet, instead of prioritising reconciliation, Cambodia continues to internationalise the issue and undermine the prospects for peace.

19. The allegations made by Cambodia are that we are seizing territory. But the truth is that both sides have negotiated a ceasefire and agreed that troops are to remain where they are at the time of ceasefire, pending a final resolution through dialogue.

20. What we need now is to de-escalate tensions and not stir up public sentiments. Instead, after the ceasefire, premeditated provocations continue to occur. Thai soldiers continue to encounter landmines and shots are still fired across borders – even today.

21. But let me be clear, Thailand remains committed to dialogue, and I repeat, it is our duty to defend our sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the safety of our people at all cost.

22. So I must ask my Cambodian colleague, once again. Do you choose the path of peace or the path of continued tensions and conflict, which unfortunately leads to more losses and suffering.

23. Thailand's choice has been clear from the start. The onus rests on Cambodia to decide whether they would like to move forward with us. Because we all have that commitment to our peoples.

Mr. Vice President,

24. Peace is not just the absence of conflict between states. Real peace begins at home.

25. Human rights can only thrive where there is respect for the rule of law and accountable leadership – where people can pursue their livelihoods in an open and free society, and most importantly where there is full respect for human rights for all.

Thank you.
