

Statement by H.E. Anutin Charnvirakul
Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand
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81st Session of the United Nations General Assembly
United Nations Headquarters, New York

Theme: Restoring Trust, Managing Transformation:
A United Nations that Delivers for All

Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

At the outset, I congratulate you, Mr. President, on assuming the presidency of the 81st Session of the General Assembly.

It is an honour to address this Assembly for the first time, as Thailand marks 80 years of membership in the United Nations.

When Thailand joined this Organization, the post-war international order was still taking shape. Today, it is being reshaped once again.

Many of its old certainties are giving way. But what comes next is not yet settled.

We are seeing many transformations taking place. Power is becoming more fragmented. Strategic competition is becoming sharper and international rules are under strain.

At the same time, technology is transforming our societies, while climate change is testing our resilience. Our institutions, however, are struggling to keep pace.

Confidence in our ability to work together is weakening.

That is why this year's theme speaks directly to the task before us. Managing the transformation requires trust: trust between countries, trust in the rules we share, and trust that our institutions can deliver.

But trust cannot be taken for granted. It must be earned.

Trust weakens when principles are applied selectively. When countries have little say in decisions that shape their future. And when promises made in this Assembly fail to improve lives beyond it.

Rebuilding trust means addressing each of these concerns.

We must uphold common principles consistently. We must give countries a genuine stake in the international system, including a stronger voice for the Global South. And we must take shared responsibility for turning commitments into results.

Mr. President,

The UN's purposes remain as relevant as ever: to promote peace and security, human rights and dignity, sustainable development and cooperation among sovereign equals.

But we cannot build lasting peace if security is assured for some and denied to others. Universal human rights lose their meaning when applied selectively. Development loses its purpose when prosperity remains in the hands of a few.

For Thailand, peace means more than the absence of war. It requires dialogue to settle differences and respect for international law, so that all countries can live with security and dignity.

The situation in Palestine continues to demand our attention. It reminds us that the principles we uphold must protect people when they need them the most.

That is why human rights must be universal in practice. As a member of the Human Rights Council, Thailand believes that our work must reach beyond resolutions and make a real difference in people's lives.

Development must be people-centered and sustainable. Growth must improve people's lives today without closing off the opportunities of tomorrow.

Consistent application of principles gives countries the confidence that they will be treated fairly. But that confidence must also extend to how decisions are made. Countries need to know that their voices count.

Mr. President,

Today the UN's membership has become nearly universal. But representation has not evolved at the same pace.

An international system cannot command trust if large parts of its membership feel they have too little say in shaping it.

Rebuilding trust requires shared ownership. The United Nations must reflect today's world, not the distribution of power eighty years ago.

That is why Thailand supports Security Council reform that gives developing countries and underrepresented regions, particularly in the Global South, a greater role in decision making.

Asia, too, must be better represented. For all its economic weight, Asia must be able to help shape global decisions and carry more responsibility for the outcomes.

And representation must also mean that women have a meaningful voice in the decisions that shape our common future. They are already at the forefront of this Organization's work – from development to peacekeeping. As the United Nations considers its next Secretary General, maybe it is time that this representation be reflected at the highest level.

Representation and effectiveness must advance together. We commend Secretary-General António Guterres for his commitment to reform, including through the UN80 Initiative. We stand ready to work with his successor to carry this work forward.

Mr. President,

Having a stronger voice in global institutions means countries working together on the problems closest to them. This is where regional cooperation has a vital role.

The United Nations must remain the centerpiece of the multilateral system. But we cannot expect it to do everything. It cannot settle problems when Member States are not willing to act.

Regional institutions can help turn that willingness into cooperation. They bring countries together around shared challenges and translate global principles suited to local realities.

In this way, regionalism becomes a building block of effective multilateralism.

ASEAN has demonstrated this for almost six decades. It has grown from five to eleven members. We do not always agree. But we have learned to manage differences and preserve space for cooperation.

For Thailand, that practical cooperation means serving as a trusted platform. We want to leverage our strengths as a logistical hub and manufacturing base to connect markets and supply chains across our region.

Our conviction is that together we should combine Asia's diversity for co-creation, bringing together the different strengths of our countries to promote shared prosperity.

The same thinking should also extend beyond Asia. Thailand continues to pursue free trade agreements with partners across regions, to expand trade and opportunities for both sides.

Additionally, our Thailand–Africa Initiative seeks to deepen political, economic and development cooperation -- to build partnerships of equals across our regions.

Mr. President,

Institutions earn trust through what their members are prepared to do. A greater voice must come with a willingness to contribute. Shared ownership therefore must lead to shared responsibility.

The Charter begins with the words “We the peoples.” Thailand believes that this work must begin at home.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide us with an important framework that goes beyond development. Ultimately, they are about enabling people to live in peace and dignity. Progress towards achieving the SDGs also shapes how we are building a strong and resilient economy and how we remain accountable to our people.

Thailand will leverage our strengths. We are building upon our strong agricultural base to be a source of food security for the world. Meanwhile, our Universal Health Coverage ensures that people have access to affordable and quality healthcare, while also developing Thailand into a medical and wellness hub.

Additionally, our energy transition efforts take Thailand closer to meeting climate obligations. And through our solar rooftop policy, we are also creating greater economic opportunities for households by allowing them to sell excess electricity back to the grid.

However, this responsibility goes beyond development.

Thailand’s humanitarian tradition demonstrates this conviction. In the late 1970s, Thailand provided temporary refuge and assistance to large numbers of Cambodians fleeing violence and famine.

Today, we are giving displaced persons from Myanmar who have lived in temporary shelters in Thailand for decades greater opportunities to work and support their families.

For the Rohingya transiting in Thailand, we have adopted a community-based alternative to immigration detention for Rohingya children to better protect their rights and access to services.

Our responsibility as a neighbor also means addressing the challenges in our own neighborhood.

One of those challenges is the dispute between Thailand and Cambodia. We have been through a difficult period. When I met with Prime Minister Hun Manet in May, we sought to resolve difficult issues through bilateral dialogue, while rebuilding trust and confidence in order to move forward together.

It is regrettable that Cambodia did not give dialogue a genuine chance and chose a different path by initiating compulsory conciliation proceedings under UNCLOS. Nevertheless, Thailand is engaging in good faith. But our position is clear -- this process concerns the delimitation of maritime boundaries only.

In the meantime, Cambodia must work with us to strengthen security along our shared border, including through concrete cooperation to combat online scams and demining. Our communities will not be safe if we do not make concrete progress on these matters. Ultimately our shared border must be a place of shared prosperity, not one that continues to bear the scars of conflict.

Let me be clear. Thailand has never sought conflict. But peace can only be built when we work together in earnest. And surely this will require genuine effort from Cambodia.

That same commitment guides our approach to Myanmar. Thailand supports peace, national reconciliation and a durable solution that is Myanmar-led and Myanmar-owned.

We believe in constructive and calibrated re-engagement, within ASEAN and in coordination with relevant partners, while encouraging concrete progress on the ground.

In both cases, our responsibility is to make dialogue possible and progress achievable.

And when threats cross borders, responsibility must be shared more widely. Thailand has stepped up efforts on prevention and suppression of narcotics through our partnership with the UNODC, other regional and international organizations as well as neighboring countries.

And through the Global Partnership against Online Scams, Thailand is bringing together all the relevant stakeholders together to prevent these crimes.

Mr. President,

Eighty years ago, in our first address to this Assembly, the Kingdom of Siam affirmed that it “followed the path of peaceful settlement and friendly co-operation.” That path still guides Thailand today.

As a new international order takes shape, we must carry that spirit forward. No country can write its future alone. And no international order can earn lasting trust if too many countries feel that the system is written for them, but not with them.

A rules-based international order with shared ownership in shaping our common future is the condition that will help rebuild that trust.

The future of the United Nations will depend on the trust we rebuild through our actions today.

Let us give every nation reason to believe in the United Nations, and every person reason to believe that the United Nations can deliver for them.

I thank you.
