

**Opening Remarks**

**By H.E. Mr. Don Pramudwinai, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand**

**At the 2nd Special Meeting on Irregular Migration in the Indian Ocean**

**4 December 2015, Anantara Siam Bangkok Hotel, Bangkok**

**Excellencies,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

1. Let me begin by welcoming all of you to Thailand – and to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Special Meeting on Irregular Migration in the Indian Ocean.
2. Last May, Thailand hosted the 1<sup>st</sup> Special Meeting to galvanize international action in the short-, medium- and long-terms to the challenge of irregular maritime movements in the Indian Ocean, which were of a particular intensity at the time. Just over six months have passed since then, and we have made progress together in undertaking measures to address this issue.
3. But the monsoon season is ending; and it is very likely that maritime movements in the Indian Ocean will soon begin again. We, therefore, need to continue to work together towards a truly comprehensive and sustainable solution.
4. Allow me then to share with you four points that I believe are fundamental considerations for all of us as we address this issue; and I hope that you would keep these points in mind over the course of your discussions.
5. **First**, this is not a problem for any one country or one region alone to face and handle. As I speak, a massive flood of migrants continues to make their way across the Mediterranean and the Balkans to Europe, whose countries are still struggling to cope with the influx. So we must recognize that this issue requires burden sharing by all of us – as countries of origin, transit or destination, or as members of the international community.
6. **Second**, given the complexity of the problem, we need to address this issue comprehensively, in all its dimensions, and through a multi-faceted approach. Tailored and goal-oriented solutions are needed for each country along the migration path. All stakeholders, both inside and outside the region, also need to contribute to such solutions.
7. These solutions must run the gamut from prevention to cure. They can include the promotion of livelihoods at home as well as safe migration; strict law enforcement against transnational criminal syndicates preying on vulnerable migrants; temporary protection measures for those who have already left while pending more durable solutions, which may include voluntary repatriation and resettlement.

8. We must engage in constructive cooperation and collaboration. We must not point fingers and place blame.
9. **Third**, this problem is surely not a short-lived one. It will not simply just go away. If I may borrow Ambassador Swing's timeless dictum – that migration is a reality to be managed – it is clear that we need an explicit and efficient mechanism to manage and control the negative impacts of irregular migration.
10. **Fourth and most importantly**, we must always keep in mind that irregular migration has a human face. These migrants are women and children – our brothers and sisters, our children. We must, therefore, do all that we can to uphold our humanitarian traditions and the very sanctity of human life itself.

**Excellencies,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

11. If I can leave you with one single message to keep in the back of your minds as you go forward with your discussions today, it is this: the time for promises is past; now is the time for action. Therefore, it is my hope that today's discussion will result in concrete and goal-oriented actions that countries can start implementing not in some distant future, but now.
12. Let us not leave it to the weather to deter people from taking the risky journey across the sea in hopes of a better future. This Meeting is an important opportunity for us to work together to ensure a sustainable solution to the problem of irregular migration. I thank all affected countries for making time to come to this Meeting, and also other countries and relevant international organizations for joining and wanting to work with us in a spirit of friendship and partnership.
13. I now declare this Meeting open and wish all of you fruitful deliberations.
14. Thank you.

\* \* \* \* \*