

**Joint Press Release for the Second Session of the Thailand-UK Strategic Dialogue,
22 March 2016, Lancaster House, London**

The second session of the Thailand-UK Strategic Dialogue was held at Lancaster House, London, on 22 March 2016. The session was co-chaired by Sir Simon McDonald, Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and His Excellency Mr Apichart Chinwanno, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand.

The Strategic Dialogue was established in 2012 and designed to be a high-level forum for regular consultations between the United Kingdom and the Kingdom of Thailand on areas of bilateral collaboration as well as regional and global issues of mutual interest, in view of the growing strategic partnership between the two countries. The inaugural session of the Strategic Dialogue took place on 20 May 2013 in Bangkok.

The two sides recognised the strength and strategic importance of the Thailand/UK bilateral relationship, especially in trade and investment exchanges, education, science and innovation, security and consular cooperation. They welcomed the wide range of areas of bilateral cooperation, and discussed ways to further expand and strengthen this collaboration. The meeting underscored the significance of high-level contacts and welcomed the recent visit by National Legislative Assembly's Thailand-United Kingdom Parliamentarians Friendship Group from 5-9 March 2016, at the invitation of the All Party Parliamentary Group on ASEAN.

Both delegations discussed the potential to further enhance the bilateral trade and investment relationship. Thailand continues to be one of the UK's largest trading partners in ASEAN and the UK is a leading EU investor and trading partner with Thailand. Likewise, Thailand is an emerging investor in the UK. The Thai delegation welcomed the appointment of Mr Mark Garnier MP as the UK Trade Envoy to Thailand and the confirmation that Mr Garnier will make his first official visit to Bangkok in April 2016. Both delegations also welcomed the Board of Trade of Thailand's Action Plan on Trade and Investment Promotion between Thailand and the UK. In 2016, priorities under the Action Plan will include the upcoming visit to the UK by a prominent business delegation (June 2016) and a seminar/briefing to inform potential Thai investors about business opportunities between Thailand and the UK. The two sides looked forward to the resumption of negotiations on the Thailand-EU Free Trade Agreement.

The meeting noted the suggestion in the first session that both Governments wished to see bilateral trade volume double by 2018. The meeting acknowledged that the challenging global economic climate and other negative factors had made the target unrealistic, but agreed that both Governments would pursue the same goal, in order to hit the target as soon after 2018 as possible.

The meeting recognised the potential for further UK investment in Thailand as the country moves forward with reforms, including revamping the investment and tax regimes and expediting infrastructure projects, and emerges as a gateway to the ASEAN Economic Community. The two sides also welcomed the progress made in co-operation on transparency, including Thailand's membership of the Construction Sector Transparency Initiative (CoST) and Thailand's interest in the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI). The two delegations agreed to explore further areas of co-operation.

Recognising the importance of people-to-people contacts, the two sides welcomed the holding of the first Thailand-UK Consular Dialogue, which took place under the auspices of the Strategic Dialogue, on 21 March 2016. During the Consular Dialogue the two delegations took note of Thailand's efforts and measures in ensuring the safety of foreign tourists and discussed bilateral cooperation in this area, including measures to support the victims of those targeted by serious crimes. In addition, the meetings reviewed legalisation procedures and UK visa issues with a view to facilitating closer ties. The two sides also welcomed closer cooperation in rendering consular support to Thai and British nationals, including by clarifying contact points. The meeting discussed issues relating to humanitarian support for British nationals imprisoned or detained in Thailand, and the UK side thanked the Thai authorities for their involvement in a pilot project to provide healthcare support to British detainees.

The delegations agreed to examine visa procedures with a view to facilitating mobility and travel for tourists, students, skilled labour and residents while recognising the need to prevent abuses. The two sides were updated on Thailand's proposed bilateral agreement on a visa exemption for holders of diplomatic passports. In view of promoting strong human bonds among the young generations, the two sides agreed to consider reviewing the opportunities available for young people to undertake work experience, research and training. The UK delegation noted the concern from the Thai restaurant industry about a shortage of skilled chefs and undertook to examine this issue further with the Thai side.

The two delegations noted the importance of education and the English language in supporting economic growth and the emerging ASEAN Community. Both sides welcomed the fact that a Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand and the Government of the United Kingdom on an Education Partnership would be signed soon by the Minister of Education of the Kingdom of Thailand and the British Ambassador to Thailand and agreed it would strengthen the relations between the two countries through cooperation in the fields of assessment, STEM education, vocational training and English language teaching as well as ongoing projects in areas such as transnational and vocational education. They also welcomed the agreement between the Ministry of Education and the British Council to begin a teacher training project which commenced in Pattaya on 7 March 2016. The Thai side appreciated the implementation of the Thailand English Teaching Programme which has already brought over 600 young British Teaching Assistants to teach English during summer holidays since 2012, and the two sides agreed to explore possible expansion of this project, both in terms of the extended length of stay and potential English Teaching Assistants.

The two sides welcomed the strong progress made so far under the Newton UK-Thailand Research and Innovation Partnership, which is supporting excellent scientific collaboration including joint research on health and agriculture. Both sides looked forward to continuing to extend and deepen scientific collaboration through the Research and Innovation Partnership, and the UK noted Thailand's proposed strategic areas of cooperation for 2016-2017. Both sides agreed to look for opportunities to enhance science collaboration further in both directions, including to stimulate business potential and start-ups.

The delegations took note of the BBC's intention to renew the Agreement between Thailand and the UK Relating to the Establishment and Operation of a British Broadcasting Corporation Relay Station in Thailand, which will expire in December 2016. The BBC's longstanding presence in Thailand is another

reflection of the two countries' goodwill. Thailand welcomed extended cooperation with the BBC on training, capacity-building and sharing of knowledge and expertise in the realm of media.

The two sides welcomed the vibrant cultural exchanges in connection with the important anniversaries in 2014 through 2016 and agreed to further enhance such exchanges inter alia through collaboration among museums and cultural institutions.

The two sides welcomed the range of areas of cooperation on law enforcement and agreed that the focus of efforts should be on prevention. They agreed to conclude a Memorandum of Understanding on police-to-police cooperation covering organised crime, narcotic/illicit drugs, smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons, transnational sex offences, cyber crime, money laundering and corruption, transnational economic crime, identity fraud, and illegal firearms trafficking. The British delegation proposed areas of possible defence and security collaboration including education, capacity-building and sharing experience of defence matters. The Thai side welcomed the re-establishment, since the first Strategic Dialogue, of a resident British Defence Attaché post in Bangkok.

The two delegations exchanged views on political developments in Thailand and UK. The meeting discussed the UK's Referendum on EU Membership to be held in June 2016 and welcomed the upcoming general election in Thailand scheduled for 2017. Both sides also recognised that the rule of law, human rights and democratic values are keys to developing stable, inclusive, open and prosperous societies, and noted the importance of adhering to international legal obligations. The Thai side briefed the meeting on the process of comprehensive reforms in Thailand.

Recognising Thailand's role as G-77 chair and the UK's role as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, the delegations expressed their strong resolve to take a lead on global issues in order to promote peace, security and stability. They agreed to further their cooperation on international issues including human rights, terrorism and violent extremism, trafficking of persons, illegal wildlife trafficking and health security. Both sides welcomed the adoption of the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change at the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 21), and shared commitment to addressing climate change including achieving individual countries' nationally determined contributions made under the Paris Agreement.

The Meeting also exchanged views on the role of China, developments in the ASEAN Community, irregular migration in Asia and Europe and the situation in the Middle East and North Africa. They noted the importance of maintaining regional stability and protecting freedom of navigation in the South China Sea, and called on all parties to exercise restraint and behave responsibly, employing dialogue and diplomacy rather than force or coercion. Thailand briefed the Meeting on its proactive role as G-77 Chair, particularly its efforts to promote sufficiency economy philosophy as an approach to implementing the UN Sustainable Development Goals and its role as Country Coordinator for ASEAN-EU Dialogue Relations from August 2015 to mid 2018. The two sides highlighted the importance of the United Nations, and the UK noted Thailand's candidature for a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council for the term 2017-2018, as well as its participation in the upcoming Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process.

It was agreed that Thailand would host the third session of the Strategic Dialogue in 2017.