

Country Report of Thailand
delivered by
Hon. Col. Apiwan Wiriyachai
Leader of the Thai Delegation
at the 39th APPU General Assembly
Nara, Japan
10 - 12 August 2008

Hon. Mr. Taro Aso, President of the APPU General Assembly,

Excellencies,

Dear Colleagues,

Mr. Tetsuya, Secretary General,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, on behalf of the Delegation of Thailand, I would like to convey my congratulations to Hon. Mr. Aso, President of the 39th APPU General Assembly, who, I am sure, will lead our deliberations very ably and under your guidance, we will conclude a fruitful result.

Mr. President,

I am delighted to be here, in the beautiful and ancient Japanese city of Nara, in the General Assembly of the APPU which is the first inter-parliamentary forum in Asia-Pacific. I would like to express my appreciation to the Japanese National Group for wonderful arrangement.

Mr. President,

I and my fellow parliamentarians in the Thai Delegation are very glad to be here as elected representatives of the Thai people. Parliamentary democracy has now returned to Thailand following the elections of the members of the House of Representatives on 23rd December and the Senate in early 2008. Thailand firmly looks ahead to resume its place as being one of the more democratically developed countries in Asia and a major international player.

Thailand's democracy is undergoing refinement and reconceptualization in order to be more democratic and offers the best services to the nation. We ask our friends to support us during the difficult struggle to right our "ship of state". With an elected National Assembly and a civilian government in place, our democratic system is set on the right course of universal democracy, stipulating a foundation for the political system of which pre-eminent power is held and exercised by the people.

Mr. President,

On economic aspect, I would like to assure you that the Thai economy is fast growing and competitive. The Government has undertaken policies which create a favorable climate for foreign investment through the amendment of the Foreign Business Act and the development of infrastructure, especially transportation. The Government has investing in mega-projects to develop mass transit system over the country and also the transportation networks with neighbouring countries in the Mekong Sub-

region. Some countries here are our major economic partners. We fully welcome you to trade and invest with us.

In dealing the economic impact of soaring oil prices, and helping the poor and low income earners, in July, the Thai Cabinet has issued a new package of six measures starting from August 1 and remaining in effect for six months.

The measures are reduction of excise charges for gasohol and diesel, suspension of price adjustment for cooking gas for household use, reduction of water and electricity charges, free services for commuters of non air-conditioned buses in Bangkok and free charge for third class train services in every route nationwide. All these measures should contribute to a healthy economy in Thailand.

Mr. President,

On social aspect, the Government has emphasized the importance of social services and human security in every manners. In education, the quality of education for the Thai people has been raised in an integrated and complementary manner including measures to ensure equal access to twelve years of education free of charge, including supporting the indigent, disabled or invalid, or in situations of distress and teachers' curricula has been developed under changes of globalization. In addition, the use of information technology is seriously provided to enhance the efficiency of learning and to expand the role of creative learning through organizations such as the Office of Knowledge Management and Development. In connection with labour, a wide range of actions has been taken to accelerate

training and development of employed and unemployed for entering the manufacturing and services sectors at a higher level of technology and to provide comprehensive protection of formal and informal labour. In health, reform of the public health management system has been undergone comprehensively. Besides, tax measures on consumption of products harmful to health and public awareness of health-risk behaviour have been promoted to reduce health risk of chronic illnesses such as cancer, heart disease, and traffic accidents. Also the Government has promoted Buddhism, other religions and other relevant agencies including provincial cultural councils for peace and has developed archaeological places into world heritage sites. For ensuring security of life and society, the Government encourages the protection of people, particularly, elderly and provides financial support for various funds such as the Fund for the Elderly and the Health Promotion Fund. Moreover, the Government also ensures human security and dignity for everybody through creating livable urban environments through systematic city planning and eradicating human trafficking.

Mr. President,

Excellencies,

Dear Colleagues,

Mr. Secretary General,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today we are facing a wide scope of challenges arising from climate change including natural disasters, energy and food crisis and economic slowdown. The agenda of the 39th General Assembly on alternative energy, global warming, climate change and human resource development,

reflects current global concern. In dealing with these issues, Thailand has rendered every effort to relieve problems. The cooperation in every aspect on disaster management, food security and alternative energy should be promoted.

In addition, human resource development is the key to enhance alternative energy and alleviate global warming and climate change. Thailand is delighted to assist other developing countries through development cooperation. We have been submitted a draft resolution on the integration of energy security, global warming solutions and people participation. We are convinced that this approach can encompass the sustainable development. In addition, nuclear energy could be one of fine renewable energy. The APPU members, successfully developing nuclear energy, Japan particularly, could share their experiences with the others which need to generate benefits from nuclear energy.

Mr. President,

Dear Colleagues,

Mr. Secretary General,

I am convinced that the APPU Extraordinary General Assembly in Tokyo last year is not the end of the discussion for reorganization, but it is the beginning of the revitalization. The reform of the APPU is a continuing process. And I would like to enhance the efforts of the former Parliament of Thailand in making recommendations through the resolutions submitted to the last General Assembly in Palau last year in pursuing more effective organization.

We believe that the APPU is a parliamentary forum which is capable to give a great contribution to the world. To this end, we need to work for enlarging participation in the APPU activities. As we hope for the APPU to become more effective in dealing with the global challenges, more support and resources are needed from all of us. We should realize the importance of enlarging participation in APPU General Assemblies to other countries in the Asia-Pacific and other regions as well.

And a wider range of activities of the APPU should be promoted. In this regard, I would like to invite all members to designate participants to join a program and study visit in Thailand, to be provided by the APPU National Group of Thailand, for parliamentary staff for promoting democratic culture and awareness in natural resources, environment conservation and cooperation on alternative energies for sustainable development in Asia-Pacific. In the program, participants will have an opportunity to exchange information and opinion for promoting democracy and sustainable development, and join study visit to places in Thailand including the Thai Government and Parliament House and a center for alternative energy from bio-fuels initiated by His Majesty the King of Thailand. I hope that you all will support the proposal of Thailand.

Mr. President,

In closing this statement, I would like to reiterate that we have a strong intention to broaden and deepen Thailand's cooperation with you all in the APPU framework and bilateral level to achieve our mutual goals.

Thank you for your kind attention.