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Statement
by
His Excellency Mr. Virasakdi Futrakul
Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand
at the Thirteenth Round Table Meeting (RTM)
16 March 2017, Thimphu, Kingdom of Bhutan

Your Excellency Lyonpo Damcho Dorji (ເລີຍນໂປ ດາມໂຈ ດອຣ໌ຈີ),
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Royal Government of Bhutan,

Your Excellency Mr. Haoliang Xu (ຫາອາລິຍາງ ຊູ), UN Assistant Secretary-General,
UNDP Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific,

Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. It is a great honour for me to be here at the Thirteenth Round Table Meeting today. On behalf of His Excellency the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand and Bhutan's development partners from Thailand, I wish to reaffirm over commitment to development cooperation with Bhutan as you pursue the implementation of Gross National Happiness and SDGs Goals.
2. The Thirteenth Round Table Meeting is organised at the opportune time at the mid-point of Bhutan's Eleventh Five Year Plan (2013-2018) and at a moment when the Twelfth Plan is still under preparation.
3. Bhutan has made remarkable progress in recent years. This Meeting provides an opportunity for all development partners to take stock of their development cooperation with Bhutan and to identify new areas of cooperation.
4. **It is important to ensure that our development partnership operates in synergy towards the realisation of goals in Bhutan's priority areas and the achievement of the Global SDG Goals by 2030 based on the guiding principles of Gross National Happiness (GNH).**

5. Given the theme of this current meeting, GNH for SDG, and the centrality accorded to GNH in the sustainable development of Bhutan, I am pleased to inform that the **GNH Centre Thailand** was established last year in Bangkok, as the first ever GNH knowledge hub outside Bhutan. And at the end of this month, representatives from the GNH Centre Thailand will be sharing the principles of GNH at a seminar organised by Thailand International Cooperation Agency (TICA), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand.

Mr. Co-Chairs,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

6. This meeting has highlighted the great strides made by Bhutan in elevating the standard of living of her people.
7. Accordingly, Thailand is honoured to be Bhutan's development partner for the past 25 years (since 1992).
8. Our multiple-sector development cooperation range from **human resource development through fellowship and scholarship programmes, volunteer programmes, and development cooperation projects under bilateral and trilateral frameworks.**
9. Our bilateral cooperation has been devised to meet the specific needs of Bhutan. And to this end, Thailand International Cooperation Agency (TICA), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, has been working closely with government agencies of Bhutan to strengthen **the capacity of Bhutan's personnel in line with Bhutan's priorities, namely agriculture, healthcare and education professionals.**
10. The Royal Civil Service Commission (RCSC) and the College of Natural Resources (CNR) are among our key partners. Our past three Three-Year HRD Plans from 2007 onwards as well as other frameworks of cooperation have brought 1,300 officials from Bhutan to study and train in Thailand.

11. Thailand remains committed to further capacity building with Bhutan under the framework of the next Three-Year Plan (2017-2019). By the end of this Plan, around 300 officials will have received training in various fields in Thailand.

Ladies and Gentlemen

12. **As Bhutan is building several new hospitals to promote medical services to the people, Thailand is pleased to offer training in health management, health services system and long-term medical specialty and residency training in five areas (Pathology, Anaesthesiology, Radiology, Forensic and Psychiatry).** Thailand is willing to consider proposals for the training of nurses.
13. In addition to the seventy young Thai volunteers who have been working for the past ten years in development areas with their counterparts in Bhutanese government agencies under the **Friends from Thailand programme**, we are considering sending senior volunteers, in particular retired medical doctors, to contribute to the capacity building in the medical field in Bhutan.
14. Our development cooperation also includes economic empowerment of local communities. Currently, Thailand and Bhutan are cooperating on the implementation of **One Gewog One Product (OGOP) Development for Bhutan** as one of our development cooperation projects.
15. The project was initiated in 2013 following interest shown by the Bhutanese side after the visits to projects of One Tambon One Product (OTOP) in Thailand. Through the training of personnel in related fields, such as product design and market linkages, Thailand highly hopes that OGOP will serve as a success model for **community enterprise development** in Bhutan. In addition, this year, the Thai government has invited the Bhutanese government to participate in Thailand's OTOP fairs, which are held twice a year and attended by several hundred thousand people.

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Distinguished delegates,
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16. In light of the active cooperation between various global partners present at this meeting today, it is evident that **the Global Partnership or the Goal 17 of SDGs is more relevant than ever.**
17. I would thus like to end by reaffirming that **Thailand stands ready to expand our collaboration with other development partners including the private sector** for the sustainable development of Bhutan and the happiness and well-being of Bhutanese people.

Tashi Delek (ทาชี ดีเล็ก) and Thank You.

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