

**Opening Statement**  
by  
**H.E. Mr. Paiboon Wattanasiritham**  
**Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand**  
and  
**Minister of Social Development and Human Security**  
at the  
**The High-level Intergovernmental Meeting on the Midpoint Review of the Asian and Pacific Decade of**  
**Disabled Persons**  
**Wednesday, 19 September 2005**  
**UNCC, Bangkok, Thailand**  
\*\*\*\*\*

**Your Excellencies,  
Distinguished Participants,  
Ladies and Gentleman.**

On behalf of the Royal Thai Government, it is a great honor and pleasure to welcome all the distinguished delegates attending the High-level Intergovernmental Meeting on the Midpoint Review of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons.

Today, we all live in a global community of interdependent nations where the international community's interests on disability and development are intertwined. In order to help one another achieve long and lasting prosperity, our efforts must be based on the determination, willingness and spirit for closer cooperation among members of the whole community.

Last year on December 13, after years of hard work by both government and non-governmental organizations including persons with disabilities, the international community at the United Nations adopted a Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Thailand, together with other countries of the Asian members of the Working Group, was one of the active participants in the draft text preparation process. This marked the beginning of a new era in the global efforts to promote and safeguard civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights of persons with disabilities, and to promote disability-inclusive development and international cooperation.

In adopting the Convention, the General Assembly called upon States to consider signing and ratifying the Convention and the Optional Protocol as a matter of priority. The Convention represents the latest thinking of the Members of the United Nations on this issue. It recognizes that the promotion of the full enjoyment by persons with disabilities of their human rights and fundamental freedoms and of full participation by persons with disabilities will result in their enhanced sense of belonging and in significant advances in the human, social and economic development of society and the eradication of poverty. Building on regional experiences in the formulation and implementation of the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action, members and associate members of the Commission contributed to the global drafting process through a series of efforts that included the submission, in 2003, of proposals and a regional draft entitled the "Bangkok Draft" to the Ad Hoc Committee on a Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities. Both the Convention and the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action pursue the common goal of achieving a barrier-free, inclusive and rights-based society. The effective implementation of the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action will contribute significantly to the implementation of the Convention, and the steps taken by the States that ratify the Convention will contribute to the implementation of the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action by those States.

On this occasion, I would like to share with you our national strategy on disability. Thailand has implemented the National Disability Quality of Life Development Plan B.E. 2545-2549 following the Disabled Persons' Rehabilitation Plan which focuses on social integration to promote achievement, rights, justice, and equity of persons with disabilities in the developmental process. The National Disability Quality of Life Development Plan B.E. 2550-2554 also known as the 3<sup>rd</sup> Plan was then announced as a strategic plan focusing on social integration and coordination within the nation. As

such, the plan intends to empower disabled peoples' organization and their network, to promote non-handicapping environment, and information accessibility. After a long period of time in which regulations were being developed and applied, the government is about to announce the Persons with Disabilities Quality of Life Promotion and Development Act which is in the process of being signed by His Majesty the King before being announced in the Government Gazette. In addition, this issue of promoting and protecting the peoples' rights especially the rights of persons with disabilities from unjust discrimination due to differences of ethnicity, nationality, language, sex, age, disability, physical or health conditions etc. has also been identified as important in the new B.E. 2550 Constitution. Consequently, Thailand has consistently encouraged actions for persons with disabilities and has been working continuously to collaborate with other parties.

I strongly believe that it is not possible for any one country to drive innovations and initiatives for persons with disabilities but that concerted efforts by concerned countries in the Asia-Pacific region that respects the importance of contributions provided by persons with disabilities and believes that all persons with disabilities has the ability to develop can create new space for collective learning and action. Networking among countries in the Asia-Pacific region can lead to development activities that encourage persons with disabilities to move forward while enhancing inter-regional collaboration.

Collaboration for disability is an issue of global concern where different initiatives and experiences are developed. Exchanging and sharing of the regional initiatives in the field of disability, including best practices in the implementation efforts of each region, can enlarge and empower people's experiences and learning. In some situations, it creates greater movement on disability-related activities.

In conclusion, I would like to express my gratitude to the UNESCAP for their collaboration in hosting this meeting.

I wish this meeting all the success in fulfilling its objectives and am looking forward to receiving the report on the outcomes of this meeting. Finally, I have the great pleasure of declaring the Hi-level Intergovernmental Meeting on the Midpoint Review of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 2003-2012, open.

Thank you.