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Statement by

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to the United Nations

to the Fifty-Fourth Session of
the Commission on the Status of Women

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Mr. Chairman,

It is an honour for the Thai delegation to address the 54th Commission on the Status of Women. I will begin my remarks with the statement made by the Group of 77 and China.

Mr. Chairman,

The Thai Government has adopted by its 10th National Development Plan for Action (BDPA), and remains fully committed to promoting women's advancement in 12 critical areas of the BDPA as well as to the 12 targets added at the 23rd special session of the UN. A National Gender Equality Commission incorporated in Thailand's national development plans since the 8th Economic and Social Development Plan (1997-2000) has been implemented and conducted at all levels, closely monitored through the systematic collection of gender-disaggregated data.

Concrete progress in the government's implementation of the 12 targets follows:

In the area of **women and poverty**, the number of poor people in Thailand has continually decreased from 14.93% in 2007 to 8.28% in 2011, as a result of the Thai Government's poverty eradication programmes and various economic stimulus packages. Recognizing that the poorest among the poor are women, the government has launched specific relief assistance for women, namely a short-term plan to promote creation of jobs and income generation for women in the agricultural sector, the promotion of social insurance schemes for the elderly and needy women, and the promotion of 5 years of free education which have altogether increased women's personal capacity and opportunities to find better jobs.

In the area of **education**, the Thai Government has guided education as a crucial tool to empower people, and has aimed to promote and ensure equal access to 15 years of compulsory education for all. As a result, the proportion of girls and boys in compulsory education is 98.9% and 98.9% (2011). Additionally, our national survey (2007-09) found that the literacy rate of women increased from 89.2% in 2000 to 91.4% in 2006.

In the area of **health**, the Thai Government has identified certain health problems that are particular to women, namely cervical cancer and breast cancer, and has specified in the National Health Insurance Act (2002) that women 35-60 years of age are entitled to free smear tests and early detection programmes for cervical cancer as well as means to promote women's reproductive health and early detection of breast cancer. The government has also provided financial support for people living with HIV/AIDS, including a large number of women infected with HIV/AIDS.

In the area of the **employment**, Thai women in the work force currently contribute 45% of the GDP. Combined with their contribution in the household, which is traditionally the realm of women and which can be

Thai women's contribution is approximately half of the GDP. Nevertheless, women working outside the agricultural sector still receive's wage less than men (0.92:1) and have very little chance to be in senior executive positions in business (22%) and on committees in labour unions (32%).

The Thai government has also attached great importance to the area of **power and decision making**. This was detailed in the women's development plan in the 10th National Economic and Social Development Plan, which includes political capacity and knowledge, education, as well as society's recognition of **women's participation in politics** and **administrative**. Gender training has been organized for women who wish to enter political careers. This, although, the number of women in high level administrative levels (22.19%) and in politics (10.14%) are presently still low, the trend reflects a gradual increase.

On **institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women**, the national women's machinery in Thailand consists of a national committee, namely the **National Commission on Women's Advancement**, which is chaired by the Prime Minister of Thailand and comprised of representatives from all ministries and specialists in various fields. Chief Gender Equality Officers (CGEOs) (CGEOs) are also deputy permanent secretaries at the ministerial level and deputy directors-general at the departmental level, with Gender Focal Points (GFPs) at the divisional level, function to draft master plans as well as on the promotion of gender mainstreaming in their programmes, projects and activities.

Another area of the **PRDA** in which Thailand has had considerable progress is **women's human rights**. Thailand acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1985, and has made serious efforts towards implementation since then. A number of laws have been passed and amended, such as the **Person's Name Act (2005)**, which allows women to choose to retain their surname and title after marriage, the **Protection of Victims of Domestic Violence Act (2007)**, and the **Protection and Suppression Human Trafficking Act (1997)**. At present, Thailand has removed its **optional reservations** it made at the time of CEDAW accession, and is now working on the removal of the reservation on article 16 regarding marriage and family relations.

According to the PRDA, the Thai government is a partner in the promotion of women's advancement by means of changing gender stereotypes, the Thai government has been promoting women's active role in the media by providing awards to women in the mass media profession and utilizing mass media in promoting women's advancement and gender equality in the annual celebration of International Women's Day.

The situation of global warming and other natural disasters precipitate the government's prompt action, which has clearly emphasized the role and participation of women in the protection and promotion of a sustainable environment. Annual awards have been given to women with remarkable roles in this respect and units/organizations have mainstreamed gender aspects into their projects or activities on environmental protection.

Last but not least, is the Thai Government's concern for the girl child. The Thai government has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and has promulgated a number of laws and decrees, particularly as concerns the girl child, such as the Child Protection Act (2003), the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act (2008), and the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on the Coordination of Governmental Units Dealing with Human Trafficking in Women and Children (2003). In addition, the government actively promotes knowledge and understanding on gender equality, gender roles, respect for equal human rights, dignity, and the balanced responsibilities and burden sharing between women and men, as well as prompt sexual abuse for children.

To effectively assess the status of women in the country and gender equality in the country, Thailand is the only country in Southeast Asia that created and implemented the Gender-related Development Index Plus (GDI Plus) with the cooperation, guidance and assistance from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The GDI Plus is used for analyzing and identifying the state of women's development, and conditions of gender equality in various local areas and issues of concern. It also reflects on the local situation, and contributes to effective planning in the development and promotion of women's status and potential.

Mr. Chairman,

The significant progress in gender equality and women's human rights has always been among issues of highest priority for Thailand. The Thai Government's commitment is also clearly displayed at the regional and international level through our strong support for the development of a regional mechanism on women's human rights, namely the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC), and our application for membership on the UN Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW) for the years 2012-2013.

On another level, the royal project of HRH Princess Bajrakitiyabha Mahidol, entitled Enhancing Lives of Female Inmates (ELFI), aims to promote gender-sensitivity in the treatment of female inmates as a state practice. One of the main rationales behind this project is the need to implement the 1955 UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, as a response to the distinctive needs of female inmates and their rehabilitation. ELFI envisions the development of a comprehensive strategy and gender-sensitive

guidelines for the treatment of female inmates, which may further serve as a road map and recommendations for the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners (Bangkok Rules).

Mr. Chairman,

In Thailand, the independent National Human Rights Commission was established by the Constitution to promote and protect human rights, including women's rights. The National Human Rights Commission of Thailand (NHRCT) in turn established the Sub-Commission on the Promotion of Equal Opportunity to address women's rights and any issue under the gender-related issues. The NHRCT receives complaints from individuals and has undertaken a number of activities to promote women's rights. They include research on public policies with respect to women's rights and equality, reviewing domestic legislation to ensure that laws adequately address women's rights, sensitizing the judiciary to gender-based discrimination practices against women in the justice system, countering negative myths and stereotypes about women and combating human rights in women. In terms of the interaction with other national authorities for the advancement of women, the NHRCT has promoted the use of the complaint mechanism under the Optional Protocol to CEDAW. In collaboration with the Office of Women's Affairs and Family Development, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, and UNIFEM, the mechanism was introduced to actors and stakeholders working within the field of women's rights through workshops and other forms of mutual learning processes.

Mr. Chairman,

Overall, our success many challenges remain in Thailand and the proportion of women's participation in politics and administration as well as many other critical areas. The women's rights remains low. Furthermore, the increase in numbers of women, including older women, in vulnerable groups such as persons with disability and female migrant workers, needs special attention and consideration.

Thailand recognizes that sustained hard work and dedication is required to overcome existing challenges and we reiterate our firm commitment to continue to work closely with all sectors at the local, national, regional and international levels towards the full implementation of the BDPA, CEDAW and other international agreements on the improvement of the status and quality of life of women in Thailand. On our part, we hope that UNIS will continue a significant contribution to the advancement of women all over the world.