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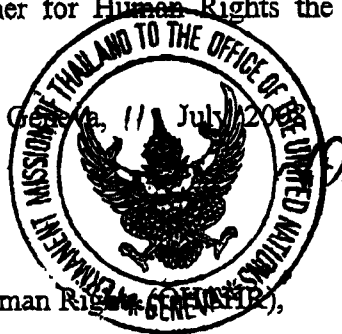
PERMANENT MISSION OF THAILAND  
GENEVA

The Permanent Mission of Thailand to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva presents its compliments to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and, with reference to the latter's Note No. GVA 0539 IW/MK/SW/IS, dated 4 June 2007, requesting Thailand to provide relevant information on the implementation of the Human Rights Council's resolution 7/9 on Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities for the use of the OHCHR's preparation of its study, has the honour to forward herewith some relevant information on Thailand's progress in the implementation of policies towards Persons with Disabilities for the OHCHR's consideration.

In this connection, the Permanent Mission of Thailand has the pleasure to inform the OHCHR that Thailand was among the first countries that signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on the date that the Convention was open for signature, which was on 30 March 2007. Various laws and policies related to the equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities as contained in the attachment have been put in place in compliance with the Convention. On 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008, the Thai Cabinet approved the ratification of the Convention, and the instrument of ratification will be officially submitted to the United Nations no later than this year.

The Permanent Mission of Thailand would highly appreciate it if the OHCHR could kindly make the attached information on Thailand's progress in the implementation of policies towards Persons with Disabilities available on the OHCHR website.

The Permanent Mission of Thailand to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights the assurances of its highest consideration.



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14 JUL. 2008

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## **Thailand's progress in the implementation of policies towards Persons with Disabilities**

### **1. Laws and policies on persons with disabilities**

The Royal Thai Government has consistently developed disability policies aimed at improving the quality of life of persons with disabilities with dignity. According to the 2002 National Statistics Office data, Thailand has 1.1 million persons with disabilities, consisting of about 1.7 % of the entire population (63 million persons).

Between 2007- 2008, Thailand has progressed significantly in enhancing legal standards to ensure the rights of persons with disabilities. Recently, 4 important instruments concerning the rights of persons with disabilities have been adopted which include:

- The Thai Constitution B.E 2550 (2007) contains anti-discrimination provisions and guarantees accessibility to social welfare and services for persons with disabilities;
- The Persons with Disabilities' Quality of Life Promotion Act B.E. 2550 (2007) is a comprehensive rights-based law for persons with disabilities and also contains a strong anti-discrimination section;
- The Persons with Disabilities Education Act B.E. 2551 (2008) is intended for persons with disabilities to be able to access education services and other resources at all levels and to improve the Thai educational system to enhance their quality of life and independent living through empowerment; and
- The National Persons with Disabilities' Quality of Life Developmental Plan (Volume III) B.E. 2550 – 2554 (2007-2011) is an integrated approach and guideline for disability development practice for all authorities concerned.

### **2. Self-help organizations of persons with disabilities**

Thailand has a long experience with self-help organizations of persons with disabilities. Since 1983, these organizations have formed themselves into the Council of Disabled People of Thailand (CDPT). The CDPT consists of the Thailand Association of the Blind, the National Association of the Deaf in Thailand, the Association of the Physically Handicapped of Thailand, the Association of Parents for Thai Persons with Autism and the Association for the Mentally Retarded of Thailand. CDPT is a cross-disability advocator whose activities focus on developing careers and networking with provincial bodies to protect the rights of persons with disabilities at the regional, provincial, district, and community level.

Self-help organizations have not only been academically and financially supported and empowered by the public sector, but were offered the opportunity to participate in the disability-related policy making process. Some members of these self-help organizations are board members of the national and provincial level committees whose role is to promote the rights of persons with disabilities and to mainstream the perspectives of persons with disabilities in related national policies and legislation.

### **3. Women with Disabilities**

The Royal Thai Government encourages women with disabilities to participate on an equal basis to men in education, employment and other social activities. Women with disabilities are encouraged to sit as board members in committees and subcommittees at the national and provincial levels and even become committee leaders or change agents in some self-help organizations. Currently, there are 3-4 organizations formed by women with disabilities in Thailand.

#### **4. Education, training and Early Intervention programs for persons with disabilities**

Persons with disabilities in Thailand have access to education at all levels ranging from Early Intervention programmes and 12 year fundamental education to college level. Currently, there are 22,722 public and private schools open to children with disabilities and 72 college institutions are providing a bachelor to Ph.D. degree for students with disabilities with services related to equipment, assistive devices, sign language interpreters and tutoring. Special vocational education is also provided by 8 public vocational training institutes and also by several private sector institutes. Six hundred persons with disabilities have been trained annually. As a result, the rate of persons with disabilities in Thailand who have access to education and training is as high as 67.82%, and the number continues to increase annually. This figure represents the progress the Royal Thai Government has achieved in ensuring the right to education of persons with disabilities. Moreover, mechanisms and networks of health care centers, schools and special education centers at the provincial and community levels have also been established to promote the rights to access welfare and educational services of persons with disabilities throughout the country.

#### **5. Employment for persons with disabilities**

From the National Statistics Office 2002 Survey, 71.5 % of persons with disabilities over the age of 15 were unemployed and 28.5% were employed. Among the employed persons, 47.5% were self-employed, 29% were in household businesses, and 19.4% were private sector employees. The data also showed that more men with disabilities have jobs than women, numbering 62.7% and 37.5% respectively. To address the issue of unemployment rate of persons with disabilities, the Royal Thai Government has developed measures and mechanisms to enhance job opportunities for persons with disabilities as follows:

5.1 The Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons Act B.E. 2534 (1991) stipulates that employers are required to hire persons with disabilities to any position in a ratio of 1 disabled person to every 200 regular employees. If employers prefer not to employ disabled persons to work by the set ratio, the employers can donate to the Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons Fund. Persons with disabilities can obtain loans from the Fund in order to assist in self-employment or to support their self-help groups/organizations. Statistical data revealed that 400 persons with disabilities have been employed each year. Outstanding firms employing persons with disabilities are awarded annually by the Prime Minister on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. Moreover, private companies which hire persons with disabilities in the ratio of 200: 1 will be tax-exempted.

5.2 The Persons with Disabilities' Quality of Life Promotion Act B.E. 2550 (2007) facilitates on-the-job training and home-based job and provides space for persons with disabilities to do business.

5.3 Persons with disabilities are encouraged to form self-employment groups to do business in the community. The groups are also expected to provide group training and assistance to product development. Currently, 99 groups in 47 provinces have been formed. The Royal Thai Government also provides entrepreneurship loans from the Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons Fund as an investment fund with 5 years repayment term with no interest rate. Between 1995- 2006, about 50,000 disabled persons have been lent more than 1,000 million baht (31 million US dollar) to set up their businesses.

#### **6. Access to public transport and other facilities**

Many public facilities have been developed to accommodate the need of people with disabilities. Recent developments include, for example, the first disabled-friendly sidewalk that was built along a main road of the city of Bangkok. In 2008 the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration plans to improve sidewalks and slopes for wheelchairs on four other main roads in business areas to ensure safer transport of people with disabilities. The National Museum in Bangkok in collaboration with the Thailand Association of the Blind also plans to develop a "touch tour" program in the museum by providing a special corner where the blind can "see" the artifacts on display by touching them. This will help the blind better understand the subject during their field trip education.

Nevertheless, although public facilities have been improved for people with disabilities, they are still not sufficient to cater for their needs compared to the ratio of buildings, transportation, and other public facilities in the society. In addressing this challenge, a new regulation was launched in 2005 requiring new buildings to provide accessible facilities for persons with disabilities. Moreover, the National Persons with Disabilities' Quality of Life Developmental Plan (Volume III) (2007-2011) also contains strategies to promote environment accessibility and facilities. Campaigns and public relations e.g. training, seminars, and media broadcasts have also been implemented to raise public awareness and provide conceptual understanding of accessible facilities for persons with disabilities.

#### **7. Access to information and communications**

The recent Persons with Disabilities' Quality of Life Promotion Act B.E. 2550 (2007) underlines the rights of persons with disabilities to ICT accessibility. Thailand's National Electronics and Computer Technology Center (NECTEC) has been developing ICT accessibility including information and communication technology and assistive devices for all types of disabilities. Such devices include audio travel tools for the blind, portable communication tools for the deaf, computer multimedia dictionary, education media and other related devices which have been distributed to persons with disabilities throughout the country.

#### **8. Poverty alleviation through social security and sustainable livelihood programs**

Since 2007, the Royal Thai Government has been trying to address the poverty of those disabled persons facing economic constraints by providing monthly living pension to 235,980 persons with disabilities. In addition, Independent Living Centers were set up in three provinces as a pilot project to support self-employment of persons with disabilities in their community. The Royal Thai Government is also promoting community-based rehabilitation programs run by social volunteers. Presently, there are 322,467 persons with disabilities in 50 provinces involved in the community-based rehabilitation programs. The community-based rehabilitation programs also aim to change the attitude of people in the community towards persons with disabilities and try to involve their family members in training so that they can better care for disabled persons in their family. One progressive rehabilitation program is the assistance to landmine victims. As Thailand is a party to the Mine Ban Convention, the Royal Thai Government is providing medical assistance, prosthesis, physical rehabilitation and encouraging social and economic reintegration of the victims. The Sub-Committee on assistance to landmine victims comprising various government agencies has been established.

### **9. Thailand's role on a regional level**

The Royal Thai Government is also playing a leading role in enhancing cooperation within the region to uplift the quality of life of persons with disabilities as well as ensuring their rights.

1. The Asia-Pacific Development Center on Disability (APCD), established under the joint collaboration of the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security of Thailand and the Japan International Cooperation Agency, is carrying out collaboration programs with countries in the region, particularly neighboring countries of Thailand, by providing training programs such as capacity building of self-help organizations of people with disabilities, community-based rehabilitation and accessibility to information and communication technologies in order to promote the empowerment of people with disabilities and a barrier-free society in the region.

2. The Royal Thai Government is the main sponsor of the Resolution on "Regional Implementation of the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action and Biwako Plus Five towards an Inclusive, Barrier-free and Rights-based Society for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and Pacific" which was adopted by consensus at the 64th Session of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) on 30 April 2008. The Resolution calls upon member states in the region to mainstream the perspective of persons with disabilities in development initiatives, including in efforts to achieve the MDGs and to work more in conjunction with ESCAP in promoting capacity building to implement the Biwako Framework.

3. Thailand's National Electronics and Computer Technology Center (NECTEC) and the Singapore Therapeutic, Assistive and Rehabilitative Technologies (START) Centre will co-organize the 2nd International Convention on Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology between 13-15 May 2008 in Bangkok. The Convention aims to showcase the latest technologies in assistive device for persons with disabilities.

4. Sport for the development of persons with disabilities is also actively promoted in Thailand. On 20-26 January 2008, the Royal Thai Government hosted the 4th ASEAN PARA Games in Nakon Ratchasima Province, and the Pattaya International Wheelchair Sports co-organized by Pattaya City and the Redemptorist Foundation for People with Disabilities will take place between 20-25 August 2008.

5. The Ministry of Social Development and Human Security of Thailand, the World Health Organization and ESCAP will co-host the 1st Community-based Rehabilitation (CBR) Asia-Pacific Congress between 9-11 December 2008 in Bangkok. The objective of the Congress is to exchange best practices and experiences amongst various sectors such as the public and private sectors as well as civil society organizations in enhancing the quality of life of persons with disabilities at the local community level.

### **Thailand's status with regard to the CRPD and its optional Protocol**

Thailand was among the first countries that signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) on the date that the CRPD was open for signature, which was on 30 March 2007. Various laws and policies related to the equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities (as stated above) have been put in place in compliance with the CRPD. On 1st April 2008, the Thai Cabinet has approved the ratification of the CRPD, and the instrument of ratification will be officially submitted to the UN no later than this year.