Statement of the Kingdom of Thailand
at the 2021 Humanitarian Affairs Segment (HAS)
of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)
held in Geneva and virtually during 23 - 25 June 2021

Theme: “Strengthening humanitarian assistance to face the challenges of 2021
and beyond: mobilizing respect for international humanitarian law,
inclusion, gender, innovation and partnerships”

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Taking note of the Secretary-General’s Report on Strengthening of the Coordination of Emergency Humanitarian Assistance of the United Nations, Thailand joins other Member States in expressing concern about the existing and emerging humanitarian challenges. It is clear that humanitarian emergencies are becoming more complex and severe. And they are being compounded by risks such as the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change. The estimated number of people in need of humanitarian assistance and protection today is alarming, and unless we redouble our efforts in addressing these humanitarian challenges, the numbers will only keep rising.

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to be our biggest emergency in 2021. Not only are the developing and least developed countries more vulnerable to the impacts of COVID-19, but the pandemic is also hampering the delivery of humanitarian assistance in many parts of the world. Universal, equitable, affordable and timely access to medicines and vaccines should remain the priority of the international community. But while we respond to the crisis at hand, we should not lose sight of the many routine immunization and disease prevention programmes that have been interrupted by COVID-19, and this gap can increase the risk of new outbreaks.

To better prepare for and reduce risks of future health emergencies, we should work to further enhance our long-term health resilience. Countries with established Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and strong social protection systems are better positioned to address COVID-19 and other health challenges. The COVID-19 crisis is an opportunity to accelerate achievement of the health-related SDGs, particularly in advancing UHC for all.

In preparing for future health emergencies, we should examine the linkages between health and disaster risk reduction. Thailand believes the Bangkok Principles on the health aspects of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, which was adopted in 2016 and builds on the Sendai Framework, provides useful guidance to help countries strengthen the resilience of their health systems and better manage the risk of health emergencies. Thailand stands ready to work with partners in advancing UHC and the Bangkok Principles.

Thailand calls on Member States to respect international law, especially international humanitarian law. We call for the protection of all health and humanitarian workers, and their facilities and assets. We commend and support the work of humanitarian and development actors, and emphasize the necessity of coordinating their work with the host countries so as to support national priorities.

We also note with concern the disproportionate impacts of humanitarian emergencies on vulnerable groups, including women, children, persons with disabilities and the elderly. Thus, humanitarian assistance and response measures should take into account the different circumstances and needs of each vulnerable group.
Meanwhile, inclusive participation can further enhance the delivery of humanitarian assistance in many aspects. We should reinforce the role and capacities of local and national actors in humanitarian responses. In Thailand, our Village Health Volunteers and Migrant Health Volunteers contributed greatly to our response to COVID-19. These volunteers have been especially effective in reaching out to marginalized and migrant communities to provide knowledge and recommendations on preventive measures which have contributed significantly to containing the outbreak.

Climate change is another major compound risk. It has contributed to more severe natural disasters and extreme weather events, and has affected food security and food production in various regions. Considering that there are approximately 155 million people facing food insecurity, emergencies or famine in 2021, food security should be considered an integral part of humanitarian efforts. Thailand aims to do our part. Currently, Thai peacekeepers are supporting local communities and sharing our best practices on agriculture, water and land management through the Thai Horizontal Military Engineering Company (HMEC) in the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). But much more needs to be done by all of us to address the far-reaching impacts of food insecurity.

With the increase in the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance, more humanitarian funding is required. It is encouraging that the humanitarian funding in 2020 has reached an unprecedented amount of $19.11 billion. At the same time, it is disheartening that the funding gap is at an all time high of 50 per cent. Thailand encourages Member States, especially developed countries, to further contribute to the humanitarian funds. Meanwhile, Thailand reaffirms our continued commitment to contribute to the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), the ESCAP Multi-Donor Trust Fund for Tsunami, Disaster and Climate Preparedness in the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asian Countries, as well as provide other in-kind contributions to disaster-stricken countries, including through the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre) with its satellite warehouse based in Chainat, Thailand.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has stretched the resources of most countries, Thailand believes that innovation and digital technology has the power to leverage available funds and resources for alleviating humanitarian emergencies and providing humanitarian assistance. We need to explore the application of new and emerging technologies that can shift humanitarian action from reaction to proaction and preparedness. In this regard, the exchanges of innovative solutions and best practices, and the transfer of technology is crucial.

Innovation needs not only be through advanced technological development, but can also be the synthesis of local wisdom and locally-driven approaches, as well as nature-based solutions. Through our Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP) and New Theory Agriculture, Thailand is able to improve the livelihoods of small-farm holders and further enhance food security in the country. Many countries in Asia and Africa are already benefitting from Thailand’s homegrown and locally-driven approaches. We stand ready to work with new partners in widening SEP application.

Recognizing that humanitarian assistance is essential in achieving sustainable development and the SDGs in this Decade of Action, Thailand, as a member of the ECOSOC and as a country with continuous contributions in humanitarian assistance, stands ready to join others in responding to humanitarian crises, be it natural or man-made disaster, and in sharing our best practices and experiences in building capacity and long-term resilience.

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