

Consultative Meeting on Social Protection Floor

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OPENING STATEMENT

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Khun Napa Setthakorn, Deputy Permanent Secretary

Distinguished participants,

On behalf of the United Nations in Thailand, I am honoured to welcome you in the Consultative Meeting on Social Protection Floor. I also wish to express my very sincere gratitude to each and every one of you, distinguished experts from all walks of life, in-line ministries, social security institutions, social partners, civil society organization, United nations agencies, all gathered around a shared concern: how to ensure that every Thai citizen benefit from a minimum of guarantees enabling to make a decent living?

Over the past years, Thailand strongly asserted its commitment to implement an inclusive social protection so as to equitably distribute the benefits of the remarkable economic growth experienced during the past decades. There are plenty of examples of this commitment. Among them are the Universal Coverage Scheme providing health care to all citizens, the Universal tax-financed 500 bath scheme guaranteeing a minimum income to every people over 60 years of age and the 15 year free education for all program.

However, despite this significant move forward, all Thai citizens still do not effectively benefit from basic adequate social protection, while coverage of the informal sector remains low.

The Royal Thai Government asserted its willingness to take up these challenges while identifying social protection as a theme of the 11th five-year National Economic and Social Development Plan. Its effort will concentrate on developing a universal coherent social protection system so as to provide lifetime protection to all and to mitigate social inequalities.

We strongly encourage and support this initiative and acknowledge the invaluable contribution of the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, responsible for coordinating implementation. This consultative meeting, jointly organized by the Ministry of Social Development and Human Resources and the United Nations, reflects this strong commitment.

A tool that has increasingly been recognized as a key development instrument will be used as a framework and a guidance: the Social Protection Floor. It is defined as a set of social security transfers and access to essential services through adoption of a comprehensive, integrated and coordinated approach of social protection policies. In the outcome of the UN Millennium Development Goals Summit in New York last September, the world's leaders recognized that the implementation of Social Protection Floors can make a substantial contribution to consolidating and achieving development gains. Fulfilment of an adequate social protection floor would significantly contribute to poverty alleviation in Thailand. More than a safety net, it is considered as a pillar of a development strategy.

Today, based on an assessment study conducted by the UNCT Joint Team on Social Protection, our objective is to review the existing social protection situation, identify suitable policy and programs that are required for the country in the future, and shape areas of partnership between key stakeholders and UN agencies.

Ladies and Gentlemen, allow me to end by thanking the Ministry of Social Development and Human Resources for co-organising this event with the UN Country Team. I also wish to thank my UN colleagues for their hard work and commitment. I wish you great success in your deliberations today and look forward the key policy recommendations from this workshop that will support Thailand towards the achievement of the expansion of social protection to reach a just society.