

**Presentation on**  
**the Regional Approach to Promote the Universalization of the Ottawa Convention**  
**by**  
**Mrs. Atchara Suyanan, Director-General, Department of International Organizations,**  
**Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand**  
**to the Standing Committee on the General Status and Operation of the Convention**  
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Thank you.

It is a great pleasure for me to address this Committee and to share information on our experience in the attempt to promote the universalization of the Ottawa Convention on the regional basis.

**The significance of the universalization of the Convention**

As state party to the Ottawa Convention since 1998, Thailand has always attached great importance to the universalization of the Ottawa Convention. We are of the view that the Convention is one of the most effective solutions to the landmine problems which have inflicted grave impacts on the lives of innocent civilians worldwide and on the social and economic development. Therefore, we are at the forefront of regional efforts to tackle the problems within the framework of the mine ban treaty.

**Thailand' s active role in promoting the universalization of the Convention in Southeast Asian Region : Regional Approach**

While universalization process in Latin America and Africa is making progress, records in Asia are still less impressive, in particular, Southeast Asia. There are 4 States Parties and 2 Signatory States in the region, 4 countries remain outside the Convention. This figure gives the grounds for Thailand to enhance more efforts in engaging more participation from the countries in the region to address the long-existing landmine problems. Regional coordination is one of the effective means to help contribute to both short and long-term solutions to the landmine problems.

In this regard, Thailand has always played an active role in promoting the universalization in the region by using the existing regional mechanism and building up informal forum for the exchange of mine-related information.

In July 2001, Thailand raised the issue of universalization of the Ottawa Convention in the ASEAN Senior Official Meeting in Hanoi, the first ever occasion this

issue raised in the ASEAN framework, with an objective to raise awareness among ASEAN members of the existence and hazard of landmine problems in the region and to seek cooperation among ASEAN members to mitigate the existing landmine problems and, in the long term, to eradicate all landmines from the region. Thailand circulated a concept paper on this issue emphasizing the importance of the Ottawa Convention in solving landmine problems in the region and expressed our readiness to share experience and views with ASEAN member countries on problems and obstacles in acceding to the Convention.

In November 2001, Thailand together with Switzerland, Norway, Germany and the Handicap International co-hosted the Regional Seminar on Mine Victim Assistance in Bangkok. The seminar brought together participants from various sectors from mine affected countries in Southeast Asia, comprising of Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam and Thailand. The outcome of the seminar was successful. The network for future cooperation among government agencies and non-governmental organizations in mine victim assistance was established

In March last year, Thailand and the United States of America jointly organised the Regional Workshop on Mine Action Technologies in Bangkok with the aim of providing the participants from Asia-Pacific region the opportunity to share and exchange their experiences on mine action activities. The participants have learned advanced technology in mine action from experts from the field, which broadens their knowledge and contributes to the improvement of the mine operations in their countries.

In May 2002, Thailand together with Australia, Canada and Japan co-hosted the Regional Seminar on Landmines in Southeast Asia in Bangkok bringing governmental officials from 8 countries in ASEAN as well as participants from IOs, NGOs and landmine survivors. The Seminar was aimed to promoting greater mine awareness among those countries and to explore further mine action cooperation. This seminar was the first ever opportunity for government officials from ASEAN countries to meet and exchange their views on landmine issues. The participants also obtained better understanding on the humanitarian, social and economic implications of using landmines. The seminar also provided the participants with in-depth information and humanitarian objectives of the Ottawa Convention

Thailand also joined Australia and Japan as well as some other countries in the Asia-Pacific region in the joint-demarche calling upon non-states parties in the region to accede to the Ottawa Convention as early as possible. This was the reaffirmation of our determination to promote the universalization of the Convention.

### **Suggestions**

While Thailand is concerned about the slow progress on the universalization in Southeast Asia, we appreciate the fact that although some countries in

the region have some domestic difficulties which prevent them from accession to the Mine Ban Convention, they have shown their intention to tackle the landmine problems. Activities related to mine clearance operations, mine victim assistance and mine risk education have been taking place in some non-states parties. These are very encouraging signs and we are of the view that it may assist if these activities be supported by all parties concerned as they are in line with the objectives of the Convention. Therefore, the most practical way to enhance more participation to the Convention should be pursued on the step-by-step approach, for instance, by forging cooperation in mine-related activities among countries in the region as the first step. This could be followed by the exchange of expertise among countries in the region. This approach would help pave the way for their future political commitment. In this regard, Thailand is of the view that the 4 States Parties in the region, Cambodia, Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand should play a leading role in strengthening cooperation in mine-related activities in the region.

I am pleased to take this opportunity to inform the Committee that the "Bangkok Regional Action Group" or "BRAG" was recently established in Geneva as a cooperative network among states parties from Asia-Pacific region. At this stage, the group is comprised of representatives from permanent missions of 9 states parties in the Asia-Pacific region, namely, Australia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Canada, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, and Thailand. The Group meets on a regular basis in Geneva to discuss and explore the possibility on how to further promote the universalization of the Ottawa Convention and raise the momentum towards a comprehensive approach in addressing the humanitarian crisis of landmines.

In conclusion, I would like to reassure that Thailand will continue with our endeavour to enhance regional cooperation with a view to complementing and achieving our ultimate goal, of the world free of landmines.

I thank you of your attention.

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