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Opening Statement

by

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at the 67th Session of the Committee on the Elimination of
Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

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Madame Chairperson,
Distinguished members of the CEDAW Committee,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Royal Thai Government, I have the honor to lead delegation of Thailand to the 67th Session of the Committee today. We wish to express our sincere appreciation for this opportunity to exchange and learn from the distinguished members of the Committee.

Our combined 6th and 7th periodic report is a result of a joint effort among various agencies. Most of them are here, including representatives from the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Labor, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Interior, the Royal Thai Police, and the Southern Border Provinces Administration Center as well as experts from the National Legislative Assembly, the Constitutional Court, and the National Committee on the Policy and Strategy for the Advancement of Women. They will introduce themselves when responding to the Committee's questions.

The Thai Delegation is also pleased to note the presence of our friends and colleagues from the National Human Rights Commission as well as civil society organizations. We appreciate their efforts made in helping us advance women's rights and promote gender equality in Thailand.

Madame Chairperson,

Thailand firmly believes that ensuring the rights of women, who make up more than half of our population, is key to fostering socio-economic growth and promoting sustainable development for the benefit of the Thai society.

Sustainable development is not a new concept in Thailand. To achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), we have been following His Majesty the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej's Sufficiency Economy Philosophy. To realize SDG5, we are developing a national roadmap to further promote gender equality and empower all women and girls.

Madame Chairperson,

I am proud to highlight a number of developments in promoting and protecting the rights of women in Thailand since our last report to the Committee.

In 2012, we withdrew our reservation to Article 16 on Marriage and Family, thus successfully withdrawing six out of seven reservations made at the time of ratification.

The 2017 Constitution, which entered into force on 6 April this year, also gives priority to mainstreaming gender perspectives into policy-making at all levels. The Constitution for the first time provides for gender-responsive budgeting that all government agencies must

adopt. Furthermore, under Section 24, all government agencies must provide equal treatment and protection for women, children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities.

Many other laws have also been introduced to eliminate gender-based discrimination. The Gender Equality Act of 2015 is the first anti-discrimination law in Thailand which protects not only women but also people with sexual expressions that are different from birth from gender-based discrimination. The revision of the Criminal Code to criminalize marital rape in 2007, the enactment of the Name Act in 2005 and the Female Title Act in 2008 allowed women in Thailand to freely choose their title and retain their maiden name after marriage. To address violence against women and other pressing social issues, we enacted the Domestic Violence Victim Protection Act of 2007 and the Prevention and Solution of the Adolescent Pregnancy Problem Act of 2016 as well as amended the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2008.

Only a few weeks ago, Thailand ratified the ILO Convention No. 111 on Discrimination in Employment and Occupation 1958.

Madame Chairperson,

The Royal Thai Government has always considered gender equality a priority issue. The National Committee on the Policy and Strategy for the Advancement of Women chaired by the Prime Minister operates as the main national mechanism in formulating policies and strategies to promote gender equality.

The Committee is tasked with updating the National Women Development Plan under the National Economic and Social Development Plan. The draft 12th Plan currently under consideration by the Cabinet embraces our obligations under CEDAW and the spirit

of the Beijing Declaration as well as the Sustainable Development Goals.

In addition, all of the National Human Rights Plans have identified women as a target group that needs special protection.

The 20-Year National Strategy of Thailand would also come into play to harmonize policy and long-term planning. One of the six strategies is to improve social equality which would provide an umbrella framework for the principle of the equality of men and women, as well as other groups.

On the institutional front, in 2015, we established the Department of Women's Affairs and Family Development under the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security to specifically look after the issues of empowerment of women and gender equality.

Madame Chairperson,

At the regional stage, Thailand has taken various roles to promote women's rights in ASEAN. We were among the key countries that pushed forward for the ASEAN Action Plan on Violence against Women which was adopted in 2015. As Chair of the ASEAN Committee on Women this year, we stand committed to further promote the rights of women in the region and enable them to develop to their fullest potential.

In the international arena, Thailand has also played leading and important roles in the area of gender equality and women's rights. In March 2015, we chaired the 59th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women. In September of the same year, our Prime Minister attended the Global Leader's Meeting on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment at the UN Headquarters in New York, where

he pledged to promote gender-sensitive education, create a system for sex-disaggregated data, and push forward gender-based budgeting.

Madame Chairperson,

Notwithstanding the progress in many fronts, Thailand recognizes that there are still gaps and challenges that need to be addressed, including those related to violence against women, teen pregnancy, protection of migrant women, and existing social stereotypes. We also hope to learn from the Committee on relevant models or best practices in these areas during our discussion today.

Madame Chairperson,

Thailand will continue to work hard to change the perception and value system in our society to truly foster gender equality. Nonetheless, we also realize that success does not depend on the existence of laws and policies, but rather on effective implementation and genuine commitments. To this end, we will work collaboratively with our partners in all sectors, including civil society organizations, to further advance the rights of all women in the country.

Thank you very much.
