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Statement by the Delegation of Thailand at the 88th Session of the IOM Council
Agenda Item 6: General Debate

Mr. Chairman,
Mr. Director-General,
Distinguished Delegates,

On behalf of the Thai delegation, I wish to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your election to the Chairmanship of the 88th IOM Council. I also congratulate the Vice Chairs and the Rapporteur. The Thai delegation further welcomes the Common Wealth of the Bahamas, the Republic of Estonia, Federal Republic of Brazil, and the Republic of Turkey as new members of IOM and the new observer.

Mr. Chairman,

Migration has gained significant international attention over the past year. Thailand fully supports the IOM's International Dialogue on Migration. Such discussions contribute to better understanding and more effective migration management in a globalized world. During this IOM Council, we particularly appreciated the insight of the distinguished Special Panel: The Global Commission on International Migration, represented by the Co-Chair and Commissioners of the GCIM, and invited guests. We encourage IOM to continue to play this important role in organizing useful interactions among member states and international bodies.

Thailand wishes to express its appreciation to the IOM for facilitating another important global initiative on migration: the Berne Initiative, particularly the Regional Consultations for Asia in Guilin, China. We were pleased to learn that outcomes of the Berne Initiative will contribute to the work of the GCIM and we look forward to participating in Berne II in the coming weeks. Thailand encourages governments to work towards achieving practical and mutually beneficial outcomes in Berne.

We also applaud IOM's role in supporting the Second Labour Migration Ministerial Consultations for Countries of Origin in Asia which was held in Manila in September 2004. Thailand is already working closely with IOM Bangkok on the follow-up activities.

We further welcome the initiative of the IOM Bangkok to establish the "Migration Management Unit Southeast Asia" within the Regional Mission,

combining expertise in the areas of migration and development, irregular migration, and forced migration, among others. The Unit has just started assisting governments and other partners in developing and implementing comprehensive systems for managing migration in the region.

We are also particularly pleased that the on-going implementation of the Migrant Health Project – Communicable Disease Control, Reproductive Health, and Primary Care for Migrants and Host Communities in Thailand's border provinces - has achieved satisfactory results to date. Working with the Thai Ministry of Public Health, the project has raised awareness in basic health care, and supported delivery of preventative and curative services. The project has also enhanced collaboration with NGO partners in the field of health care for migrants.

Mr. Chairman,

Over the past few years, in order to achieve sustainable solutions to the problems of irregular migration, Thailand has adopted a comprehensive approach and taken a number of initiatives related to migration management ranging from labour migration, counter-trafficking, and resettlement of displaced persons. In order to address labour demand in Thailand, problems of illegal foreign workers, including human trafficking and people smuggling, we have decided to legalize the status of foreign workers and their families and institute legitimate channels for labour migration in Thailand. The Thai government has conducted registration campaigns allowing illegal migrant workers from Myanmar, Laos, and Cambodia and their families to temporarily reside and be employed in Thailand. Over 1.2 million migrant workers and their families have registered.

To link the national efforts with cooperation with neighbouring countries, Thailand signed last year the MOUs with Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar on guidelines and procedures for employment, protection and return of workers to their respective countries of origin. The three countries will soon send their officials to work on the nationality identification and issue travel documents for their workers currently in Thailand. The regularization of labour migration will result in to better protection and benefits for foreign workers and their families and reduce incidences of human trafficking and smuggling.

Thailand and Cambodia have also been implementing the MOU on Bilateral Cooperation for Eliminating Trafficking in Children and Women and Assisting Victims of Trafficking. The two countries have established a Joint Task Force in July 2004 to consider procedures in implementing the MOU. Laos and Thailand are also finalizing a similar MOU; while Vietnam is considering a similar scheme with Thailand.

Complementing the bilateral cooperation in counter-trafficking is the MOU on Cooperation against Trafficking in Persons in the Greater Mekong Sub-Region, which was entered into by six greater Mekong sub-region countries in October 2004 in Yangon, Myanmar. The six parties to the MOU agreed on an action plan, stipulating a series of actions concerning key areas of prevention of trafficking, prosecution of traffickers, and protection of trafficked victims.

Comprehensive and durable solutions have also been pursued in preventing irregular migration, particularly on the issue of displaced persons. We have worked with Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam in promoting sustainable development in areas along the border with Thailand in a framework cooperation called ACMECS or Ayeyawadi-Chao Praya-Mekong Economic Strategy. The scheme is designed, *inter alia*, to stimulate employment in agricultural, industrial, and tourist sectors in the area. The ACMECS will help facilitate the eventual repatriation of some 120,000 displaced persons currently residing in temporary shelters along Thai-Myanmar border.

Another durable solution was achieved in Thailand with regard to the Laotian Hmongs who have been provided safe shelter in Thailand. Since July 2004, Thailand, the U.S., the UNHCR, and the IOM have been resettling 15,550 Laotian Hmongs from Thailand for resettlement in the U.S. and other countries. The programme is expected to complete in April 2005.

Mr. Chairman,

While IOM has done much in assisting its partners, member states should continue to play an active role in supporting IOM in its efforts to optimize the use of available resources. Thailand believes that the effectiveness of the 1035 Facility can be strengthened while its use can retain the needed flexibility for the benefits of the developing member states. Greater flexibility should also apply to the

use of the project-related overhead costs so as to allow for the funds to cover expenditure of administrative nature such as staff and support costs.

The work of IOM can also benefit from greater support from member states. Thailand will take into consideration in consultation with other member states the suggestion of the previous Chairman and the Director-General that member states can enhance the work of the Administration by forming regional groupings.

Mr. Chairman,

Important policy initiatives and measures under way in Thailand indicate our commitment to achieving comprehensive and sustainable solutions to migration challenges. We have worked in close partnerships with IOM, other international organizations, and NGOs as well as pursued bilateral and regional initiatives with our neighbouring countries. However, in order to ensure the sustainability of current programmes and initiatives as well as to address other migration-related concerns, we would appreciate further contributions from interested donors in supporting IOM and its partner organizations in their important work for the benefits of all.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
