

*Statement by H.E. Mr. Vijavat Isarabhakdi,
Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand
at the High-level Segment during the 112th Session of the IOM Council
29 November 2021 (15.00 – 18.00 hrs.) (Pre-recorded VDO)*

Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

1. It is my great honour to be a part of this special occasion to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the IOM and its 5th year of joining the UN system.
2. Human mobility continues to be one of the mega-trends of the 21st century. In the present day, one of every seven people worldwide are living or working somewhere other than their place of birth. A record number of people are uprooted and forced to move, while climate change further threatens 75 million people living just one metre above sea level.
3. Migration management is more important now than ever, particularly the need for governments to recognize the linkages and plan their related policy agendas, such as sustainable development, human rights, climate change, humanitarian efforts, as well as peace and security, in order to promote humane and orderly migration that is beneficial for all. International cooperation and partnership is an essential element. Therefore, Thailand is pleased to join the Global Compact for Migration (GCM) and volunteered to serve as one of the GCM Champion Countries to promote its implementation through exchanges of experiences and best practices.

Chairperson,

4. In early 2020, at the peak of human mobility, when travelling for work and pleasure was growing exponentially, everything suddenly stopped. Since then, the world has been engulfed by the extraordinary situation of the COVID-19 pandemic. Governments around the world had to undertake swift but difficult decisions to close their borders, place restrictions on people's movement and assembly, and suspend or temporarily shut down businesses in various sectors, particularly tourism and services, in order to contain the disease and protect public health. The pandemic has hit migrant communities particularly hard – increasing their poverty and unemployment beyond what they had already suffered.
5. More than 450,000 Thai people overseas, mostly migrant workers, had to return home -- an unprecedented scale of repatriation that the Thai Government has helped to facilitate.

6. At the same time, realizing that no-one is safe until everyone is safe, we attached no less importance to the safety and well-being of more than 3 million migrant workers in our country. Thailand has immediately extended the stay permit for those who wish to remain in the Kingdom, facilitated the repatriation of migrants who wish to return home, and guaranteed their rights to access basic social services, as well as COVID-19 treatments. All migrants, regardless of their status and nationality, are included and entitled to receive COVID vaccines under our National Vaccination Plan.

7. I must note with appreciation here that the IOM has been an important partner in the Government's COVID-19 response, especially in ensuring that migrant workers have access to up-to-date and reliable information on disease prevention and other measures, as well as in the timely provision of basic necessities that has helped the most vulnerable migrants and their families in need.

8. While we continue our efforts to contain the disease, Thailand has started working towards the gradual re-opening of its borders and the resumption of normal economic activities. To supply the new surge in demand for workers, the Government is working closely with our neighbouring countries to revise the MoU for recruitment of workers in order to reactivate the formal channel for migration as soon as next month. The ongoing regularization of migrant workers from neighbouring countries, who are already living and working in Thailand, will enable them to be better protected and have access to benefits, such as social security and health coverage, building on our existing Universal Health Coverage Scheme.

9. In the meantime, the Government continues to maintain its "Zero-tolerance policy" towards trafficking-in-persons, including its efforts to closely monitor the whole supply chain, through intensified labour inspection and proactive partnership with the private sector and civil society.

Chairperson,

10. Human mobility that is well managed can propel economic growth, reduce inequalities, and connect diverse societies for prosperity. Migration management should therefore be a part of our strategy for post-pandemic recovery as it is essential for the attainment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Migrants' potential contribution to our society should not be left to waste. We must continue our work to align migration policies to the needs of the labour market and provide regular migration pathways, while upholding human rights and addressing people's vulnerabilities. In this regard, Thailand is committed to continuing to support the work of the IOM to promote safe, regular and orderly migration.

I thank you.