

**Intervention by
H.E.Mr.Nitya Pibulsonggram
Head of Delegation of Thailand
at
TICADIII-Plenary Session 4: Expansion of Partnership
(Asia-Africa Cooperation)
30 September 2003, Tokyo**

Mr. Chairman,
Your Majesty,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

First of all, I would like to thank Japan for hosting this TICADIII, and for the warm hospitality and the excellent arrangements made for this meeting. We are pleased to be a participant in this 10th Anniversary of TICAD, mindful of the fact that we have maintained close and cordial relationship with countries in Africa for over four decades now. Our presence here attests to the fact that we stand even more ready today to foster ties and cooperative endeavors between Thailand and African countries, especially in the context of South-South cooperation.

TICAD's "ownership and partnership" approach to development is sound and we fully support it. There are three key areas in which we are willing and able to share our experiences with Africa:

First, Combating HIV-Aids: We have had several programs, already being implemented, which prove to be successful. Reduction of the growth rate of HIV-infected cases, through 100% condom-use program; anti-aids campaign in Muslim communities; reduction of HIV-transmission from mother-to-child; and a program called "we care" –which seeks to create support groups for HIV-infected persons in the various communities. We owe the success of these programs to joint efforts between government agencies and NGOs. In July next year, Thailand will host the 15th International Aids Conference; a second time that such a conference would be held in a developing country.

Second, Agriculture and Rural Development: We face similar burdens and challenges : low productivity and low income, because we are basically producers and exporters of primary agricultural products, with low or no value-added. We need to move into related and value-added agro-businesses. Thailand has already developed local agricultural and food processing industries, including fisheries products. We have employed high tech but at low cost while maintaining laborintensive approach. But, these efforts would fail without availability of capital and market access.

The role of the private sector is crucial in fostering investment, production capability and trade; especially where efficiency is essential. The government has an

important role to play, which is to provide support and to ensure free and fair competition and transparency.

Third: Small and Medium Enterprises: We have found that SMEs have been a great asset in promoting economic recovery and growth in Thailand. We would be supportive of joint-venture between our SMEs and those in Africa. One of our most successful projects involving SMEs is OTOP (one village-one product) that we have adopted from the Japanese Oita Prefecture. In turn, we are willing to share this successful experience that at once draws together issues of rural development and SMEs' promotion.

A major obstacle in development in developing countries has been access to available capital. In Thailand, the government has established "village funds"—a form of micro-credit, made available to the rural poor. To obtain access, the rural poor only had to offer as collateral a project, a viable idea or proposal. No land or property is required as collateral in this bold new scheme being implemented throughout the Kingdom. The program is doing well.

The same problem has beset the Asian region, since the crash of 1997. In an effort to bring together the human and intellectual resources and to be more self-reliant, Thailand has initiated a process called the Asia Cooperation Dialogue. The purpose is to share experiences and to find means to be more self-reliant and to create instruments and finance to accomplish our goals. In only one year, the ACD has made impressive progress and has taken concrete steps to create a more prosperous region and to be in a better position to strengthen our partnership with the other regions of the world. Africa certainly. From the ACD, we have created an Asian Bond Fund, worth 1 billion dollars, for economic development in Asia. I wonder, a similar approach could possibly be conceived within the NEPAD process. This would be in keeping with the principle of "partnership and ownership" among Africans, by Africans, for Africans.

Mr. Chairman,

Thailand reaffirms our commitment to South-South cooperation in partnership with Africans, and through trilateral cooperation with donors.

Let me take this opportunity to reiterate Thailand's firm support for the TICAD process and partnership with Africa. To give a fuller expression to this support, the Thai Prime Minister accompanied by members of the government and, importantly, the private sector, will make a visit to Africa early next year.

I thank you.