Statement
by
H.E. Ambassador Sihasak PHUANGKETKEOW
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Thailand to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva during the Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar,
at the 7th Session of the Human Rights Council (HRC)
(13 March 2008)

Mr. President,

My delegation would, first of all, like to commend Professor Paulo Sergio Pinheiro, the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar, for all efforts he has undertaken throughout the past seven years to further dialogue and engagement with the Government of Myanmar. In carrying out his mandate, Professor Pinheiro has played both professionalism and commitment, and we thank him for his hard work.

Various serious and genuine concerns have been raised in this Council in previous sessions and today with regard to the situation in Myanmar. We all would like to see further progress achieved, especially Thailand as an immediate neighbour and close friend and partner within ASEAN.

We believe that it is the common desire on the part of all of us to see the on-going process of dialogue and engagement proceed in a substantive and meaningful way, towards real and genuine progress. For engagement to be meaningful, it is really up to the Government of Myanmar to move forward with its commitment to the process of reconciliation and democratization in accordance with the seven-step Roadmap it has announced.

Looking at events over the past few months, we must take cognizance of events and developments that have transpired in Myanmar, particularly the Government's announcement of a specific timeframe to hold a National Referendum in May 2008 and a general election in 2010, as well as the recent visit of the UNSG Special Envoy, Mr. Ibrahim Gambari.

Some of us may have different perceptions of these developments, and some of us would like to see the pace of progress quicken. On the part of Thailand, we do see the timetable that has been announced as a step forward, in the sense of providing clarity to the so-call seven-step Roadmap, and with the expectations raised, there is an ensuring greater degree of accountability on the part of the Myanmar Government to carry out what the Government has committed itself to. We sincerely hope that this window of opportunity for constructive engagement will not be lost and that the Government of Myanmar will build upon this positive development and give it further impetus.

We also hope that the process will be all inclusive, since national reconciliation can only be effective if it embraces and reaches out to all sides. Only in this way can long-term peace and stability be achieved in Myanmar, which Thailand, as a next-door neighbour, hopes to see above all. This is not for the sake of Thailand or the international community, but for the peace and prosperity of the Myanmar people themselves.

In the meantime, apart from the immediate issues, our dialogue should also address some important long-term issues, such as meeting the humanitarian needs of the Myanmar people, which would not only be beneficial to the people themselves, but would also enhance a sense of trust and confidence that is so essential for meaningful engagement to take place.

The Prime Minister of Thailand will be visiting Myanmar this week and it is this same message that he would likely convey to his Myanmar counterparts, namely, that Thailand stands ready to do whatever it can to support the process of national reconciliation in Myanmar. We hope that this Council, and all of us present here, are prepared to do the same for the interests of the Myanmar people as a whole.

Thank you.