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Thailand's Implementation of the United Nations Resolution 641134 -, Proclamation of 2010 as the International Year of Youth: Dialogue and Mutual Understanding

Activities in relation to the International Year of Youth in Thailand

The Royal Thai Government organized various activities to promote dialogue and mutual understanding among youth in accordance with the International Year of Youth, both at the national and international levels. These activities were carried out by various state agencies as follows:

The Ministry of Defense organized annual excursion programmes to provide the opportunity for students from Muslims schools in the far South of Thailand making excursions to meet youth in various communities in other parts of the country. These trips aim to enhance intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding, as well as learning and sharing the way of life among youths from different faiths and cultural backgrounds.

The Ministry of Justice in cooperation with a local university in the Southern part of Thailand has occasionally organized a multi-cultural youth camp where Muslim youth from the deep South have joined a camp in a central province. The camp served as a platform for youths from different backgrounds to learn and respect their differences in traditions and religious beliefs in order to build trust and solidarity among youth and to enhance cooperation for peace in the society.

Thailand, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, hosted the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Interfaith Cultural Youth Camp which provided a forum for European and Asian youth to get to know each other through a three-day programme in Thailand. Forty-eight youth representatives from 22 ASEM member countries joined the Camp where the participants had a chance to visit communities of different faiths and religious sites, as well as attend seminars where they had a lively exchange of views and discussions on the interfaith dialogue.

The Thai Government organized a youth programme for a group of Thai youth from both Thai and Muslim communities in the southern provinces to visit Malaysia to learn how peoples of different faiths and cultures live peacefully side-by-side. The Government also sent five youth representatives to participate in the Asia Pacific Inter Faith Youth Camp Project in Indonesia with a view to strengthening interfaith dialogue and cooperation among youth from other countries in the region.

Under the project of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, two young persons have been annually selected to attend the United Nations General Assembly in New York as part of the Thai delegation. This project aims to provide youth with a chance to voice their opinions on issues that could affect their well-being on the global stage and to promote dialogue, cooperation and networking with youth delegates from other countries.

Additional Information about Youth Policy in Thailand

Government's Policy on Youth

National youth policy has been developed within the framework of the Thai Constitution and the Promotion of Child and Youth Development Act, B.E. 2550 (2007). The Constitution emphasizes the duty of the State to promote and protect children and youth, while the Act contributes to the promotion of programmes and activities for children and youth at all levels. The National Youth Policy and the National Child and Youth Development Plan have been developed since 2002. The plan is a long-term one, with the current plan covering the period between 2002 - 2011.

The policy and plan focus on three main strategies as follows:

1. The strategy on the development of the potential of youth in the areas of health, intellect, social responsibility, and community and social participation;
2. The strategy on the family and community development of youth; and
3. The strategy on the administrative system development with focus on legal development and mobilization of resources for youth development.

The National Committee on the Promotion of Child and Youth Development, chaired by the Prime Minister, was established as a mechanism to follow up the implementation of the policy and plan and to initiate new policies on child and youth development on various fronts. Two youths are recurrently members of the National Committee and one youth is a member of the sub-committee on the Rights of the Child.

Implementation of the national policy and plan has also been decentralized to the provincial and district levels. A provincial policy and plan on youth development has been formulated in every province in line with the national policy. As such, not only the Government but also local administrative bodies have important roles to play in youth development and participation in local areas across the country.

Youth Development

The voice of children is very important for their own development, and indeed children's views should be taken into account in all matters affecting them. With this in mind, the Thai Government has established Children and Youth Councils at the national, provincial and district levels. These serve as channels to listen to children's views and ensure their participation in decision making and policy formulation processes.

The National Child and Youth Development Promotion Act of 2007 internalize the principles of the Constitution and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) regarding their right to participation. The establishment of Children and Youth Councils nationwide has been an important mechanism for self-expression, development and knowledge-sharing among the children themselves. Currently, from total 954 councils, 877 are at the district level, 75 at the provincial level, one at the Bangkok

Metropolitan level and one at the national level. The National Children and Youth Council members are selected from the National Youth Assembly. Provincial Children and Youth Councils comprise Youth representatives from educational institutes and the local Children and Youth Council. These councils have conducted a wide range of constructive activities, which help promote the development of children and youth in the communities. The activities include:

- National Youth Day Festival;
- National Assembly for Children and Youth Development;
- Training programmes for Youth Leaders from the Provincial Children and Youth Councils in Potentiality Development;
- Provincial Youth Development Action Plan Workshop;
- Training programmes for TV and Media Rating Management System for Youth;
- National Youth Sport Competition;
- Cultural Performance Exchange Programmes among regional youth leaders; and
- Mr. and Miss National Youth Contest.

Moreover, the councils have conducted a number of campaigns and activities to promote ethical awareness among children and youth as follows:

- National Pure Breath Project ;
- National Virtues Project supported by the National Security Commission and Royal Thai Army;
- Moral Vaccine, under the National Virtues Project;
- Good Man for Councils Project;
- Donation project for school capital and equipment in rural areas and students who are poverty-stricken or lack opportunity; and
- Positive Love Giving Project.

In addition, there have been many youth forums established by both governmental organizations and NGOs to solicit their opinions and make their voices and concerns on specific issues be heard and addressed by relevant state agencies.

Moreover, governmental and non-governmental organizations also encourage young people to form their own interest groups. These include, among others, the Young Farmers Groups and the Village Children and Youth Groups which were established by governmental agencies such as the Department of Agricultural Extension, Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives and the Community Development Department, Ministry of Interior respectively. Smaller children and youth groups in rural areas have also received support from the local NGOs. Urban-based children and youth groups consist of school student groups, university student groups and groups established by governmental organizations. Schools have been encouraged to support the formation of student groups and enable them to manage their own groups and activities so that they can truly participate and develop leadership skills.

National Youth Day

The 20th of September every year has been designated as the National Youth Day in Thailand. In 2010, relevant state agencies and stakeholders, as well as schools across the country organized events on 20 September to commemorate National Youth Day. The event has three main objectives, which are:

- (1) to raise awareness of youth on the importance of self-development as well as development of community and country;
- (2) to raise awareness of people on the importance of youth development so that youth can become good citizens of the country; and
- (3) to promote the implementation of youth development policy in an effective and sustainable manner.

Activities on National Youth Day mainly focus on the role of youth in the social domains such as: environmental development and conservation; cleaning of residences, schools and communities; social services; democracy promotion; and moral development.

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