**From the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy to Sustainable Development Goals November 30, 2018**

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Good evening to you all.

Not only does December 5th of every year is National Day and National Father’s Day, it is also the Royal Birthday of His Majesty King Rama IX. It is the day the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) declared as “World Soil Day” in commemoration of His Majesty the King Rama IX of Thailand who throughout his reign made countless contributions to his nation and the world. Also in recognition of his capability in soil development, the International Union of Soil Sciences awarded His Majesty King Rama IX the “Humanitarian Soil Scientist” medal.

Therefore, World Soil Day is a reminder of how important soil is to nature. It is an important part of the ecosystem and is very valuable to the survival of human beings.

Most importantly, soil feeds plants, forests, and water sources, and is a natural source for carbon. Soil also serves as a cushion that minimizes biological damage and the impact of climate change.

Furthermore, December 4th of every year marks Thai Environment Day which was declared in honor of His Majesty King Rama IX who was always concerned about the environment in Thailand and around the world. His Majesty talked about climate change and other environmental issues. It is our duties to protect the environment and natural resources.

Out of his concern for the environment, His Majesty King Rama IX once said, “One day Thailand might become too dry and might have to buy water from other countries, thus we need to better manage water resource either for consumption, agriculture, or industrial purposes, both in Thailand and around the globe.”

December 4th is also celebrated as National Village Volunteer Day for Natural Resources and Environment to honor environmentalists and volunteers of local villages across Thailand who have come together to protect natural resources and the environment.

On this occasion, I would like to thank department stores and retailers for not using plastic bags on December 4th as a starting point of minimizing the use of plastic, in response to the good deed campaign. Under this concept we should switch to glass containers, non-plastic bottles, cloth bags, and non-Styrofoam food containers.

The production of cloth bags also uses resources and energy. It is suggested that a cloth bag should be used as many as 130 times before being thrown out. If you have many, please give some to others to discourage them from using plastic bags. Separating waste is also important.

This way, we will have lesser amount of plastic waste to deal with. At present, national parks across the country have issued a policy against single-use plastics, meaning people can no longer bring plastic containers such as plastic bags, plates, utensil, and bottles into national parks. Thank you for your kind cooperation.

My dear citizens, this December 9th, His Majesty the King has graciously initiated the organization of the “Bike Un Ai Rak” cycling event which is part of the “Love and Warmth at Winter's End, the River of Rattanakosin” festival. So far, a total of 640,000 people have signed up for the cycling event.

Those who have signed up will pick up royally-bestowed t-shirts on December 1-2 in Bangkok and other provinces. Rehearsals will be held on December 2. Please use public transport services as opposed to personal vehicles to get to activity venues and please avoid all cycling routes on the rehearsal day and the actual event day.

Please follow all updates in regard to parking spaces for participating cyclists, shuttle bus services, roads and streets that should be avoided during the event, and routes that are suggested for commuters. If possible, let’s make December 9th a car free day.

These important days and occasions, as mentioned earlier, give us opportunities to commemorate and appreciate the benevolence of the Royal Institution as well as show the world community our solidarity as we come together as one. Although we may hold different viewpoints, but as people of Thailand, we will always uphold the nation, religion(s), and the monarchy, which are the three main institutions of Thailand.

December 29, 2018 will be another historic day for Thailand and the world, as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has officially listed Thai Khon dance as an intangible cultural heritage of humanity.

Her Majesty Queen Sirikit of the Ninth Reign has been at the forefront of the efforts to protect and preserve the traditional Khon dance of Thailand in all respects. For instance, Her Majesty has instructed relevant agencies to make new Khon costumes, make the design, makeup, and lighting, staging, sound systems, and theater construction more appealing to viewers, which gave birth to the royally-bestowed Khon which is unique in its own way. Because of Her Majesty, Thai Khon became known to both Thai and foreign spectators. This traditional dance has given Thailand a unique identity in global arenas.

The Government is thus planning to host activities throughout this year and the next to celebrate this success including a special Khon dance called “Phisek Sawamipak,” and traditional Khon dance performances in the capital and other provinces nationwide, in honor of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit of the Ninth Reign.

Also, an animated film about “Ramayana” will be produced and featured in cinemas across Thailand. In addition, the Government will hold activities to educate the public about Khon such as the demonstration of the making of Khon masks, Khon performances, academic seminars about Khon, publications to educate youth about Khon, Khon documentaries, and digital Khon archives.

This includes an organization of activities to uphold those who have contributed to the promotion and preservation of Thai Khon dance. Further details about these events will be announced later.

My fellow citizens, apart from the unity of Thai people that shows the world our strength and stability, oversea missions of the Government also stabilize Thailand’s role in international arenas. Thailand’s increased role will help protect our interests and forge ties with other nations for joint sustainable development.

The oversea missions can also illustrate the friendliness and goodwill of Thailand to the rest of the world. I always keep this in mind every time I visit a foreign country. Thailand is an independent nation with dignity and unique identity.

This past week, I had an opportunity to carry out an overseas mission. This time, I went to Germany. It was my first visit to Germany as a Prime Minister of Thailand. The purpose of my visit was to strengthen relations between the two nations, following the European Union’s resolution to resume (political) ties with Thailand. Another objective was to forge economic cooperation in accordance with the Thailand 4.0 initiative. Germany is a leader in innovation and 4.0 industries, meaning it has expertise in research and development as well as modern technologies and capable human resources.

During my Germany visit, I met with German Chancellor Angela Merkel. Both nations pledged to form a strategic economic partnership, with an objective of increasing the value of two-way trade by 15 billion Euros within 2020. We also agreed to bolster investments between our two countries, as Thailand is keen to apply German practices to the development of the 4.0 approach which is centered around 11 targeted industries. In addition, I asked my Germen counterpart to consider supporting Thailand-EU and ASEAN-EU free trade agreements.

Both countries agreed to push for FTA related cooperation to cope with global challenges, especially during the year Thailand chairs the association of ASEAN.

Moreover, I asked Germany to support the withdrawal of the yellow card by the EU against the Thai fishing industry, and to support Thailand in terms of R&D, technology, skills improvement, and the development of SME and startups, in order to increase competitiveness and move Thailand past the middle-income trap. I also brought out topics of the Thai private sector. On this occasion, I invited Chancellor Angela Merkel to visit Thailand while it sits as ASEAN chairman and invited Germany to take part in the Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy (ACMECS). Another important event is the “Thai-German Business Forum: Asia-Europe Partnership for the Future.” The event was taken part by 180 representatives from the public sector and the private sector of Germany.

I was able to gain trust of German investors and businessmen alike. I invited rail and automobile companies to establish their presence in Thailand’s Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC).

Also, I had an opportunity to observe the operation of the Fraunhofer Institute for Production Systems and Design Technology which specializes in R&D and 4.0 industries. There, I saw new technologies and how government, private firms, and the academic sector were able to synchronize, which led to the success of Germany’s innovative technologies.

The Digital Economy and Society of Thailand signed a memorandum of understanding with Fraunhofer IFF to promote R&D in various aspects including cybersecurity, information technology, e-government, and artificial intelligence.

I would like to thank the Thai community in Germany for their warm welcome extended to me and my delegation. This makes me realize that the hospitable nature of Thai people always remains with all of us wherever we are.

The invitations extended to me from various foreign countries such as the United States, Russia, the UK, France, China, Japan, including Germany, and international summits reflects the acceptance and credibility leading Nations have towards Thailand's potential and its role in the international community.

These affirmations lead to trust and cooperation that will lead us towards our vision of security, prosperity, and sustainability.

My fellow Thai citizens, after following the issue of low rubber prices, I would like to report three areas of progress regarding this issue:

1. Measures to support domestic rubber use such as the 2018 rubber utilization program approved by the Cabinet. Under the plan, all ministries and the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration have to conduct a survey and adjust their plans and projects to increase the utilization of rubber products and materials in projects such as outdoor surfaces, sidewalks, playgrounds, asphaltic concrete roads, and cement mixed with para rubber roads etc.

Proposals shall be sent to the Rubber Authority of Thailand in order to utilize rubber under the price stabilization scheme with an annual budget of 120 million for these projects.

I have received reports that preliminary demand from these agencies consist of 450,000 sets of para rubber bedding which will utilize around 13,000 tons of fresh rubber. For road construction projects, the Rubber Authority of Thailand has compiled the details and rules pertaining to the construction of roads using para rubber such as the formula, specifications, and price of roads containing rubber for future use.

Currently, the Ministry of Agriculture and cooperatives has collaborated with the Ministry of interior to encourage the department of local administration to move forward with constructing para rubber roads in over 75,000 Villages and over 7,200 districts across the country.

Many provinces have already moved forward with their projects such as Nong Bua Lamphu and Uthai Thani. There are an additional 40 provinces that are beginning the process. Furthermore, the Royal Irrigation Department will construct canal roads in 53 provinces.

This will automatically reduce the stockpile of rubber and support the use of para rubber in the government sector by no less than 960,000 tons (1 km of road uses around 12 tons of fresh rubber). Once demand increases, the price of para rubber is expected to increase by 5 baht Per kilogram. The benefits of this are considered worthwhile.

Not only will these measures increase the use of domestic rubber, it will also increase the price according to targets, resulting in increased revenue for farmers. This is not a mechanism that interferes with market mechanisms, nor does it lead to unsustainable price Rises.

With these previous measures, the purchasing of rubber also incurs storage costs. Based on past lessons, we found that our budget was spent on this direction for the past 20 years, from 1999-2018, we have spent around 180 billion baht on non-sustainable solutions.

2. Planting alternative or supplementary crops in order to reduce para rubber output to coincide with domestic and international market demands. Currently, there has been an increase demand in cocoa worldwide.

Thai Farmers have increasingly turned towards planting cocoa as the price is considered high compared to other crops. However they must plan their production according to market demands, which is one of the government's agricultural reform agendas. Project examples include supporting the planting of corn for livestock feed during the rice off-season.

The Government has appointed a committee comprised of relevant agencies to the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives to support the planting of cocoa in replacement of rubber farms that are over 25 years of age or farms that yield a negative return on investment.

Research and development institutions are tasked to conduct studies on market suitability, future demand, environmental conditions, and appropriate regions for planting cocoa.

It is assessing the cost and feasibility in comparison to the economic benefits of planting this crop as well as required cares between crop cycles before establishing a cocoa production plan.

An example of Thailand’s outstanding cocoa quality is its second place award in Florence, Italy, on November 17th.

Earlier, the country also received an award at this year’s International Chocolate Awards in September. However, I don't want people to flock to planting cocoa. Instead, I want this crop to be driven by market demand right from the beginning.

We must utilize our agri map to look for areas of high-potential yield. This includes suitable water and climate conditions. From the beginning, we must make sure that we are not going to oversupply the market as it will lead to price drops in the future.

Secondly, the middle process consists of research for grain development, production of chocolate and beverages, and product design that reflects local and national identity along with geographical indicators supported by the Government.

The end process is marketing. The Government has continuously supported local products such as putting local OTOP products in catalogs and stores such as Thai Airways. We also must not forget that in a free market with high competition, we must have guarantees, awards, and international production standards.

and 3. The Pracharat program to support corn planting after the rice season, starting from November 1st.

Surveys of farmers who wish to plant corn after rice between September and October revealed that over 100,000 members of agricultural cooperatives and BAAC customers, totaling 160,000 farms amounting to over 1 million rai in 300 provinces would like to participate in this program.

On November 22nd, 2018, over 84,000 farmers that had already planted corn for over 15 days had registered up to 130,000 farms or over 700,000 rai, accounting for 71% of planting area.

They received support through the Pracharat program such as 55 animal feed producer companies in need of buying corn at large quantities to produce animal food.

Currently, the country faces a corn shortage and demands up to additional 3 million tons of output. This requires encouraging 3-4 million rai of additional corn farm.

If we can increase our output to 3 million tons annually, it will benefit farmers as they can turn rice farmland to grow plant that is demanded by the market, providing them with fair prices.

At the same time, livestock feed factories will receive sufficient supply in producing feed and will be able to reduce their imports.

The related association has designed clear farm areas and buyers. Interested farmers can apply to this program until January 15th next year. Crop yields under from this program will definitely be purchased.

I urge everyone to be careful of crops smuggled from border areas. Concerned authorities must work hard (to prevent the aforementioned activities). Otherwise these crops will interfere with prices, causing our price to drop.

My fellow Thai citizens, the World Health Organization has designated tomorrow, December 1st each year, to be World AIDS Day. This is an area where we Thais should relish in our progress.

For example, the national health insurance program now covers the treatment and prevention of HIV and has contributed to the increase in the country’s healthcare efficiency. In 2018, the country moved up 14 places, ranking at number 27 out of 56 countries.

In the 2019 fiscal budget, the Government has allocated up to 3 billion baht towards services for HIV and AIDS patients. Recently, the Government Pharmaceutical Organization has announced progress in producing the anti-AIDS medication Efavirenz. The 600-milligram pills has been recognized by the World Health Organization.

This is the first drug in Thailand and ASEAN that has been certified by the WHO Prequalification Program (WHO PQ) Finally, I would like to leave you with a few more things. The first one is knowing your rights and duties when it comes to motorcycle use on pedestrian footpaths. Motorists must not drive on footpaths while officials must enforce these rules. I ask for everyone’s cooperation.

The second issue is waste management. There are many areas where we can improve at the start of the cycle. We should able separate trash and must not dispose of them in public areas.

The third issue is related to illicit drugs. Everyone must be on the lookout and inform the authorities, who will then keep your identities a secret. These challenges will not be tackled if people do not cooperate. Authorities will not be able to work effectively without local intelligence. The problem can be solved with a society that is vigilant against drugs.

The fourth issue is addressing violence in families and society. We can see that this problem persists, as seen in social media and on television. I hope that we are able to solve this issue and help protect the rights of women, children, the elderly, and the disabled so that we can have a more harmonious society. Please work with us in addressing these 4 issues. And for the authorities, please do your best when carrying out your duties.

Finally, many areas are experiencing cooler weather. I urge everyone to take care of their health and stay warm. Drink plenty of water, exercise regularly, and get enough rest in order to have a strong immune system.

Thank you and I wish everyone good health and joy amongst their family members. Sawasdee krub.

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