**From the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy to Sustainable Development Goals December 7, 2018**

Good evening to you all.

By nature, Thai people are philanthropic. Apart from religious activities, Thai people always engage in Red Cross fairs and winter festivals. Many of us may not know that winter festivals held in the past and “Un Ai Rak” events are connected.

I would like give you some background information about this. His Majesty King Chulalongkorn or King Rama V had initiated the organization of the first winter festival to raise funds for the construction of Benchamabophit Temple. There were stalls and stores by members of the Royal family, officials, and companies along with traditional performances such as Khon and plays. To fulfil his wishes to allow Thai people to be close to him and members of the Royal family, His Majesty King Chulalongkorn had set up a photo booth where he took pictures of members of the Royal family, civil servants, and foreign visitors, reflecting a bond between Thai people and the monarchy. All these had made the winter festival filled with joy and happiness.

In the reign of His Majesty King Vajiravudh, King Rama VI, the winter festival was continued to raise funds for charity organizations. The festival was held Sanam Suea Pa in Dusit Palace.

Some years, the festival took place at the Chitralada Royal Villa or at Saranrom Park. Despite different venues, the purpose of the festival is always the same.

To continue the tradition, His Majesty the King, in commemoration of His Majesty King Rama V, and for the happiness of the Thai people, had initiated the organization of the winter festival, giving the public the feeling of the winter festival held in the past and reflecting the beautiful culture of Thailand under the name "Un Ai Rak Khlai Khwam Nao" (Love and Warmth at Winter’s End) in February. This year, the same kind of smiles and happiness are on their way.

His Majesty has initiated the organization of the winter festival called “Love and Warmth at Winter’s End, the River of Rattanakosin” to be held between December 9th, 2018 and January 19th, 2019 at the Royal Plaza in Dusit Plaza and Sanam Suea Pa.

The Royal Plaza will be turned into an exhibition and activity zone for everyone to enjoy. The exhibition will illustrate historical moments of the Rattanakosin Kingdom. Visitors will also get to see a wide array of plant species, beautiful art pieces and sculptures, the Aisawan-Dhipaya-Asana Pavilion, royal barges, and houses of the Rattanakosin era.

In addition, visitors will see and shop at royally-initiated stores including the 904 Volunteer shop which offers New Year souvenirs like greeting cards and drawings of His Majesty the King.

This shows that His Majesty the King gives importance in the family institution as well as mental and physical health of the Thai people. His Majesty the King wishes to see Thai people healthy through exercises where family members can do together at home and other places.

In addition, there will be wristbands, t-shirts, and bike water bottles up for grabs. Also, visitors can enjoy a food market, floating market, traditional performances, and buy lucky draw tickets. Proceeds will be donated for charitable purposes.

On this occasion, His Majesty the King will graciously preside over (the Royal Plaza) to open the festival on December 9th, 2018 and will lead the event by cycling on a historic ride that passes several landmarks to Phra Pradaeng District of Samut Prakan province.

Members of the public are invited to the opening ceremony of the “Love and Warmth at Winter’s End, the River of Rattanakosin” and the nationwide “Bike Un Ai Rak” event.

All are invited to dress in traditional dress worn during the reign of King Rama V or other traditional dress known to Thai people. The festival will be full of bliss, entertainment, and enjoyment.

Visitors will get a chance to learn about the history of Thai rivers and a chance to make merit during this royally initiated events.

Fellow citizens, the roots of national development is “community,” which the Government attaches great significance to, especially on the building of stronger local communities through public participation in order to move the country forward under the Thai Niyom Yangyuen initiative which strives to promote cooperation and integration at all levels of management, offering solutions to economic, social, environmental, and security issues.

The focus is on raising public awareness about citizens’ duties and roles in the development of Thailand under a democratic system, in accordance with the 10-point framework comprising building reconciliation through the social contract, never leaving anyone behind, happy communities, self-sufficiency, respect for rights, responsibilities, and law, understanding administrative mechanism, understanding Thai Niyom democracy, technology, and fight against drugs, and most importantly grassroots mobilization.

Success will not be realized should we fail to link state agencies at the central and regional levels. Connectivity needs to be created to mobilize plans and projects at all levels - subdistrict, district, province, provincial group, region, and the nation.

Therefore, the mechanism to mobilize the Thai Niyom Yangyuen campaign requires cooperation at all levels. At community level, there must be teams including social welfare card support team, Pracharat medical team, agricultural team, village committee, and national village and urban community fund committee.

These teams have paid 4 visits to 76 provinces nationwide and the Bangkok Metropolitan or 82,000 villages and communities. As many as 8.7 million people took part in public forums during these visits.

The forums aim to create public understanding and foster participation under the aforesaid framework. Another important element the Government needs from the public is their feedback.

We want to understand people’s needs and problems. And this is why the Cabinet and I are visiting provinces on a regular basis. We are going to visit local communities as much as we can.

In this regard, I have received more than 700,000 requests which can be divided into 6 categories including basic infrastructure which accounts for 52% of all requests, career promotion and life improvement, agriculture, security, natural resources and the environment, and public health.

In response to the 700,000 requests from people across the country, the Government ordered all Ministries to work together on address the issues. They came up with 3 work plans 1. The first plan is to strengthen communities and improve life quality. Our target audience for this plan is 13 million social welfare card holders including persons with disabilities, the elderly, and bedridden patients.

There are 4 operations under this plan including employment promotion, career training, financial assistance, and access to basic necessities. This leads to the measures that I mentioned two weeks ago i.e. the subsidy for water and electricity bills for low-income households, transportation to hospital, health related funds, and financial assistance for rents. These measures are for the elderly who hold the state welfare card. All measures require brainstorming, discussions, revision, and steps taken to ensure that people’s needs are met and that people who benefit are truly those in need.

You might not know that 300-500 baht is actually their food budget for the entire month. This Government has no intentions of leaving anyone behind, because this Government belongs to everyone.

The current administration has been at the forefront of the efforts to eradicate informal debts in order to relieve people’s hardships. Even though, helping borrowers mediate their debts with their creditors might be the work at the end of the line but what we want to focus on is to ensure fairness for all sides by regulating informal financing and bringing all unregistered creditors into the system. This way, we give the low-income earners more options and better access to financial loans while at the same time removing the issue of informal debts from society. As a result, the Ministry of Finance has given green light to a new kind of micro loan business called “Pico Finance” or provincial level loans.

Creditors under the “Pico Finance” program will be able to impose interest rates, penalties, and service fees of no more than 36% a year and will be supervised by the Finance Ministry.

Under the Pico loan program, creditors or lenders must be registered as a legal entity with a registered capital of no less than 5 million baht and must be approved by the Finance Ministry. Creditors will then be able to give loans to borrowers in their respective areas, most of whom are familiar faces.

With acquaintance, creditors will be able to gauge borrowers’ ability to pay back. By being legal, creditors can charge higher interest rates than financial institutions whereas borrowers have more access to formal loans.

Borrowers can seek a loan of no more than 50,000 baht per person. The decision to require collateral from a borrower rests with the creditor. Assurance can also come in the form of a bondsman.

Although the interest rates are higher than financial banks, they will surely be lower than those of informal lenders. Loan application will be simple, and loans are offered only with effective interest rates. This will help reduce the amount of time and money the borrowers would have to pay.

More information can be acquired from the website of the Finance Ministry or call Hotline 1359.

The second plan is to reform the agricultural structure, hoping to improve farmers’ skills and offering alternatives to the producers based on their needs. The initiative has benefited a total of 4.3 million farmers.

Under the initiative, 4 projects are being implemented – water management, land allocation, livestock farming, and agricultural processing. Model projects include bee farming as an alternative at Chalung Community in Satun province, generating 665,000 baht a year.

Six more districts will follow suit. The second project is the production of microbial pesticides at Ban Keng Community in Uttaradit, reducing the production cost of 4,000 to 3,000 baht per rai.

The irrigation project for the repair, maintenance, and preservation of 140 irrigation systems, increasing income for the people by around 16,000 baht per person.

Over 1,300 irrigation projects in both irrigation and outside areas helped farmers earn income from farming in the area by more than 10,000 million baht etc.

3. Economic community development plans, which consist of 3 major projects,

(1) The quality of life improvement project to promote the local economy according to the Thai Niyom Yung Yuen program (providing 200,000 baht per village.) The village council will bring up problems identified at local forums to implement development in the area. In total, there are more than 92,000 projects, 72% of which are utilities projects, followed by occupational and income generating activities at 16%.

(2) The local tourism and OTOP promotion project. In addition to supporting more than 32,000 OTOP products which consist of food items, souvenirs, clothing and accessories, herbs and beverages, the project also develops tourism personnel, improves the landscape and facilities of tourist destinations, links tourist routes, and promotes community markets for tourism.

I have received reports that this project has helped facilitate over 1 million visitors to visit communities, bringing in around 900 million baht.

(3) The sustainable community development project through the King’s Philosophy and the Pracharat mechanism using funds from the National Village and Urban Community Fund Office has increased each fund’s assistance by up to 300,000 baht.

Around 47,000 funds have already been approved, accounting for 71% of all target funds. 37% are for various cultural activities, the rest are for community stores, community drinking water, seed and fertilizer funding, and agricultural drying yards.

I am very hopeful that these projects would not only help improve the quality of people’s lives, but would also help create jobs and income for people who are the foundation of the country so that they can become a powerhouse for the country and not a burden.

However, with large projects scattered across all regions, what we need to be careful about is the issue of corruption that plagues the bureaucracy and national administration. I consider it to be a crime on account of both the giver and the receiver. This Government wishes to empower the justice system so that it can function without interference.

I ask for cooperation in informing evidence through various channels. Farmers must know channels to which they can access to government programs. We need to first help ourselves by staying updated, otherwise we would miss opportunity and access to assistance measures. The Government has implemented many assistance measures. It is up to us to learn about all these assistance measures.

Respected citizens, December 9 each year is International Anti-Corruption Day. Thailand signed the United Nations Convention against Corruption in 2003, acknowledging that corruption is a problem faced by many countries around the world.

In the past year, the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) of 120 out of 180 countries remains under 50 points, prompting member nations to come together to enact more stringent measures.

For Thailand, we have been campaigning and applying measures, starting with educating the youth about consequences and urging them not to tolerate corruption because it will increase inequality and social division.

This includes encouraging government agencies and private entities to take corruption suppression seriously and take a clear stance against corruption.

This year, the Government has worked with the National Anti-Corruption Commission and its network of private sector entities and social groups in organizing Thailand's International Anti-Corruption Day event on December 7th.

Previously, a marathon was organized to support government anti-corruption campaign under the concept “Good Guy Run 2018” by combining health promotion with promoting intolerance towards corruption by endorsing good deeds and honesty.

Everyone must obey the laws so that people around the country would realize that we are capable of resolving corruption starting at ourselves. Over 2,300 people have participated in the event.

Another activity that happened today is the declaration of intention made by the Government, the National Anti-Corruption Commission, the Public Sector Anti-Corruption Commission, the Anti-Corruption Organization of Thailand, and agencies of all sectors to show zero tolerance towards corruption. I attended the event at IMPACT, Muang Thong Thani in hopes that this campaign would empower and motivate Thai people to resist corruption.

These activities serve as a new approach in our effort to fight against corruption. The Government has put this issue as its priority and a national agenda.

This will be a key foundation in resolving the country corruption problems in a sustainable manner. The government has continuously put in place measures that cover prevention, education, resolving (the issue), and punishment on offenders.

We have continuously improved and updated the measures in order to keep up with current situation. Everything must go through the justice system starting from when illegal activity is detected. Investigation must be done in accordance with the law. In many cases, complaints were made via social media. This might not be effective as many people wished it would be since complaints should be launched through the (legal) channel. This is the right channel.

The Cabinet recently acknowledged the implementation of the new Government Procurement and Supplies Management Act.

The Act was written to ensure transparency in government transactions and to boost trust from the private sector when working with the authority.

In the past, regulations have been passed on government procurement process: selection, specific, estimated price, and business registration.

This includes an electronic government procurement (e-GP) system for clarity and practicality.

This can be seen in an increase of government agencies using the e-GP system increasing by 20% from the previous year. In addition, those conducting business with the government that are using the system have increased by 18%. Presently, there are up to 250,000 entities using the system.

The government aims to improve its operations and resolve issues that arise out of the enforcement of this law in order to better mobilize policies and better serve the public in a transparent manner.

In addition to the guidelines of government procurement, the National Anti-Corruption Commission has created anti-corruption guidelines at the policy level for local administrations in four areas, consisting of

1. Legal measures pertaining to the election and establishment of the Department of Local Administration.

2. Management measures.

3. Inspection and oversight measures, including public participation.

4. Measures pertaining to ethics and code of conduct.

The purpose is to address complaints of corruption at the local level, which is an issue that frequently arises.

Relevant agencies are in the process of studying measures and are discussing the details of such policies in order to bring about proper enforcement.

The most important thing in fighting corruption problem in the country, which has been a long-standing issue, is people. All of us is the key in resolving the problem.

In addition to adhering to the principles of honesty, respect, good deeds, and following rules and regulations, we all can help be eyes and ears, helping the Government.

If you find a suspicious activity, regardless of the size or severity, please do not let it go. We must not think that the issue does not concern us, nor should we participate only by complaining about social media.

These seemingly small issues, if kept unchecked or unaddressed through proper legal means, can compile and manifest into major issues that are hard to resolve, as is the case with many issues in the past.

Furthermore, our decision not to do anything when we see it would influence the people around us, especially the next generation who are the future of the country.

Finally, during the New Year, the Government has issued a national shopping promotion measure by introducing tax incentives on purchases of necessities. This policy had been implemented in previous years before. Those who do not qualify or do not have the means need not make large purchases for the sake of tax deductions.

Not only would we assist people in purchasing necessities, but we would also contribute towards economic expansion. Products are grouped into three main categories,

1. Car and motorcycle tires

2. Books and e-books to support reading behavior that would help develop the country's human capital. We must cultivate a love of reading.

I have said that all books contain the spirit of the author. I invite everyone to think about why authors have written their books and ask ourselves how we would write our own messages. This is a way of creating principled reasoning and a sense of vision that aids in people's thinking.

3. OTOP Products which will directly support community economies. Qualifying products are registered with the Department of Community Development and need not be registered for VAT. Therefore, qualifying products are not limited to those sold at department stores but throughout small shops in communities.

If anyone is looking for a New Year's gift, I invite them to consider gifts such as useful books or OTOP products that help support the country's communities.

For those who are traveling during the New Year festivities, I would like to ask those returning to their hometowns or traveling to plan ahead, making sure that both drivers and vehicles are in good condition, familiarize themselves with the routes, get adequate rest before traveling, adhere to traffic laws, and be generous to fellow travelers.

Those traveling through populated areas must be especially careful. Authorities and volunteers must strictly conduct their duties. I thank these people for sacrificing their efforts and family time to help the public. I thank these people, whether they be police, civilians, military personnel, or volunteers.

Thank you, and I wish everyone joy and good health and I hope that all families are full of joy and warmth during their reunions.

Sawasdee Krub.