

**Statement by Delegation of Thailand**  
**His Excellency Mr. Sek Wannamethee,**  
**Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Thailand**  
**to the United Nations and other International Organizations in Geneva,**  
**at the General Debate, 70<sup>th</sup> Session of the UNHCR Executive Committee,**  
**Wednesday 9 October 2019, Assembly Hall, Palais des Nations**  
**(5 minutes)**

**Mr. Chairman,**  
**High Commissioner,**  
**Distinguished Delegates,**

On behalf of the Thai Delegation, allow me to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your able leadership in steering the Executive Committee over the past year.

I would also like to thank the High Commissioner and his Office for their tireless efforts in the preparation for the High-Level Segment on Statelessness, which has timely kept the momentum of this important issue going and high on the global agenda.

On our part, the Royal Thai Government has continuously taken steps to address statelessness issue in the country, through measures such as amending related legislations and providing nationalization pathways for specific groups of non-Thai citizens. Our efforts result in some 10,000 stateless persons being granted Thai nationality per year. The recent amendment to the Civil Registration Act this April also allows foundling children in the territory to obtain Thai nationality.

In joining the #IBelong Campaign and the international community to provide the stateless persons better protection, the Royal Thai Government has pledged to do our utmost in the following seven areas; **first**, to promote access to education; **second**, to enhance social protection; **third**, to adjust regulations for granting nationality and civil rights to equally and equitably cover target groups; **fourth**, to enhance access to civil registration services and effectiveness of the systems; **fifth**, to expedite process to address statelessness among the elderly; **sixth**, to enhance partnership among all sectors to raise awareness regarding birth and civil registration, especially the hard-to-reach population; and **lastly**, to promote international and regional cooperation in addressing statelessness.

Mr. Chairman,

Our delegation wishes to thank the High Commissioner for highlighting in his statement key trends and challenges that need collective efforts, especially on protection in the context of complex mixed migration flow.

The hard fact is there remain protracted situations around the world that require continued attention and the host countries and the UNHCR cannot handle all of them alone. We must work together to address protection gaps and ensure timely delivery of humanitarian assistance by broadening the base of support from various stakeholders. This year Thailand has welcomed the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific to Bangkok and will give our full support to facilitate the Bureau's work to improve the well-being of refugees and displaced persons in the region.

Mr. Chairman,

On the principle of international burden-sharing, I would like to share with the Committee some of the notable advances on our part.

During the past years, the Governments of Thailand and Myanmar have been working closely through the bilateral mechanisms on the return of Myanmar displaced persons from temporary shelters from Thailand to Myanmar in a safe, voluntary, dignified, and sustainable manner. So far, there has been a total of 1,039 returnees since 2016. This year alone saw two batches of returnees in February and July with the fifth batch expected by the end of this year.

Currently, we are working hard on the development projects in the receiving areas in Myanmar to create incentives for sustainable return and successful reintegration. We are also looking into the possibility of giving those who have returned to Myanmar the opportunity to come back to Thailand for legal employment.

While working on returns, we must not forget those still remaining in the host country. Thailand still counts on the continued support from the UNHCR and donors to ensure both their livelihood in temporary shelters and appropriate preparation for sustainable return such as providing skill sets and vocational trainings.

Mr. Chairman,

On the protection of those in need of international protection, our homegrown screening mechanism to separate them from illegal economic migrants is nearly complete. The final draft regulation on screening mechanism will soon be submitted to the Cabinet. Meanwhile, concrete measures for smooth and

systematic transfer of migrant children and their mothers or guardians from detention centres have been put in place under the MoU framework signed in January this year, together with an SOP for coherent, systematic and effective implementation of the MoU among related government agencies and partners.

We have continued our whole-of-government approach in implementing the GCR affirmed last December through the National Working Group on the implementation of the GCR and GCM. The National Working Group has already discussed the preparation for the upcoming Global Refugee Forum, particularly to finalize Thailand's possible pledges at the Forum.

Mr. Chairman,

Regarding the situation of displaced persons from Rakhine State, Thailand, as a close neighbour and current ASEAN Chair, remains strongly committed to assisting Myanmar in finding a practical and sustainable solution to the situation in Rakhine State. Thailand and ASEAN Member States reaffirmed our support for a more visible and enhanced role of ASEAN to support Myanmar in providing humanitarian assistance, promoting sustainable development, as well as working closely with Myanmar and Bangladesh to facilitate the repatriation process in a voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable manner. ASEAN agreed for the ASEAN Secretary-General to implement the recommendations in the Preliminary Needs Assessment, including those that focus on capacity-building, dissemination of information, and the provision of basic services, as an initial step to facilitate the repatriation and prepare for a Comprehensive Needs Assessment in the near future.

In closing, let me assure you of Thailand's firm commitment to working closely with the UNHCR and the international community for the protection and the pursuit of durable solutions for those in need. We look forward to fruitful discussions at this ExCom and the first Global Refugee Forum later this year.

I thank you.

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(910 words / speaking pace: 182 words/minute)