

**Remarks**  
**by**  
**His Excellency Ambassador Pisan Manawapat,**  
**On the Occasion of the Presentation of the Letter of Credence**  
**To The Honorable Barack H. Obama**  
**President of the United States of America**

Mr. President,

I have the honor to present to you the Letter of Recall of my predecessor, Mr. Vijavat Isarabhakdi, and the Letter of Credence by which His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej has graciously appointed me as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Kingdom of Thailand to the United States of America.

I have further the honor to convey to you the highest esteem and best wishes of His Majesty the King of Thailand for your good health, and for the continued prosperity of the United States and her people.

Mr. President,

182 years is the true testament of the long-standing relations and enduring friendship between Thailand and the United States. As the U.S.'s oldest treaty ally in Asia, our relationship has grown from strength to strength and today encompasses a wide range of areas, including security and defense, trade and investment, science, technology, social and people-to-people connectivity.

Our shared commitment to ideals and values, such as democracy, respect for the rule of law and human rights, humanitarianism, and open economy, has reinforced our partnership and constitutes the solid foundation for our close cooperation. For Thailand, this commitment remains unwavering in spite of challenges we are facing from the unfolding domestic political developments.

We take note of your view that democracy needs to be returned to Thailand quickly. We are proceeding along the path set out in the announced Roadmap and implementing necessary reforms to prevent the country from sliding back to the state of political paralysis, government dysfunction, rampant corruption, and disregard for the rule of law. The process of drafting, conducting consultations and hearings on, and enacting the new Constitution will be completed by September

this year. Subsequently, multi-party elections are expected to be held by early next year.

Our goal is to get Thailand back on a more solid path toward sustainable and functioning democracy, with good governance, transparency and accountability. These steps and goal deserve understanding and support from international friends, especially the United States, because only with a democratic rule without major flaws of the recent past will Thailand be able to emerge stronger and hence an even more able partner to other countries in the region and to the United States.

Mr. President,

As your Strategic Rebalancing policy is moving forward, and with the realization of the ASEAN Economic Community – one of the largest markets in the world – less than a year away, our two countries and peoples, as well as our partners in the region and beyond, are offered with tremendous opportunities where we can work together to harness. Allow me to state certain key areas where our strategic partnership could further serve our mutual interest and that of the region and beyond.

(1) Security

No security issues are more important than human security. No Thai government of the past has put more focus and resources to address the plight of victims of all forms of human trafficking, forced labor, child labor and child sexual exploitation than the current Government whose commitment at the highest level has been noted by the U.S. side. Key pieces of legislation have been or are being amended to tighten up enforcement and enhance protection for witnesses and officials working on human trafficking cases. We are also working hard to reduce risks of workers, particularly in the fishery sector, of falling victims of trafficking and exploitation. More is being done, in particular, on law enforcement and prosecution, including where state officials are corrupt and complicit in the crimes.

Combating other transnational crimes, such as drug trafficking and trafficking in wildlife, money laundering and cyber threats, is also our common priority that requires greater resolves and actions given the growing connectivity, particularly in the region. Realizing the strategic significance of our location as a

linchpin to mainland Southeast Asia connecting to Southern China and Western India, Thailand will continue to work actively and also more strategically with countries in the region and with the United States to tackle these issues.

On combating international terrorism, Thailand will work with countries in the region and others around the world to promote the voices of moderates and advocate interfaith and intercultural dialogue to foster an environment of mutual understanding, tolerance, peace and respect among faiths. We are also working at tackling root causes that make young people susceptible to radical causes through development projects at home and in other developing countries. Besides the excellent intelligence sharing, we can do more to stop the flow of foreign fighters and de-legitimize extremist ideology.

## (2) Global Health Security

With our human resources and health research capacity, Thailand is your natural partner in efforts to address the concerns and challenges to global health security, including under the Global Health Security Agenda (GHS). As a leading country on National Laboratory System and on Workforce Development under the GHS's "Prevent, Detect and Respond" action packages, Thailand will host the Meeting on Global Health Security Agenda: Strengthening Workforce Development and National Laboratory System in the East Asia and Pacific Region in May. We will also play an active role as a contributing country on Antimicrobial Resistance.

At the same time, with expertise in both our civilian and defense authorities, we look forward to further working with the United States to address not only the pressing threat from Ebola at its source but also other pandemics and infectious diseases that are persistently taking tolls on human lives, such as HIV/AIDS and malaria. The U.S. Army/Royal Thai Army Armed Forces Research Institute of Medical Sciences (AFRIMS) is but one concrete example of our close collaboration to advance common public health goals, including vaccine researches.

I personally look forward to working with U.S. agencies including the USAID, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Department of Defense, as we move forward with initiatives such as those to tackle drug-resistant malaria in the Greater Mekong Subregion.

### (3) Climate Change

This government is determined to do its utmost to mitigate the impact of climate change at home, among others, by development and use of clean energy and promoting energy efficiency. We have set the national targets to increase the proportion of renewable and alternative energy mix by 25 percent of the total energy consumption by the year 2021, and to reduce final energy use and energy intensity by 25 percent by the year 2030.

I look forward to connecting Thailand's efforts to the Green Climate Fund, in which – through your recently declared US\$3 billion contribution – the United States has taken the leadership, along with other donors, to support resilient and low-carbon development around the world.

With the impact of climate change contributing to, among other challenges, frequent natural disasters, there is the need to further develop cooperation on humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. As reflected in the just concluded Cobra Gold military exercise, Thailand is a ready partner to work with the United States and others in the region to enhance capability, preparedness and efficiency in this critical area.

Thailand also values our collective goals and efforts within the Lower Mekong Initiative (LMI) to promote sustainable development and address the risk posed by climate change and other challenges to the ecosystem and the livelihood of people in the Mekong River Basin. In this regard, the partnership between our two countries is critical to the success of the LMI.

### (4) Economic Cooperation

Our trade and investment has brought mutual benefit, creating jobs and generating incomes both in Thailand and the United States. The recent visit of more than 70 delegates from member companies of the U.S.-ASEAN Business Council to Thailand in early November 2014 underscored the confidence and interest that the American business community has in Thailand.

The current Thai Government continues to pursue an open economic policy and is now making necessary reforms – including tax, customs and transparency in government procurement – to create a more business-friendly

environment, which will be beneficial to U.S. and other foreign businesses. This includes the ongoing anti-corruption effort, which is a top priority in the Government's reform agenda and is supported by all sectors in the society.

Furthermore, Thailand is the gateway to ASEAN – the center of the world's most dynamic and strongest economic growth area. ASEAN receives almost US\$100 billion of U.S. goods and services exports, which support directly or indirectly more than 560,000 American jobs. ASEAN is also the number one destination for U.S. investment in Asia.

#### (5) Science, Technology and Innovation

Our Bilateral Agreement Related to Scientific and Technical Cooperation signed in August 2013 provides a key framework for agencies on both sides to explore areas of mutual interest – ranging from research collaboration, energy, biodiversity, national laboratories, STEM education, and other exchanges. The recent visit to Thailand by the U.S. Science Envoy Dr. Geraldine Richmond in January 2015 also constituted another step forward – with additional potential areas identified including women in science and health-related researches. The Royal Thai Government looks forward to her next visit in June.

#### (6) Women Empowerment and People-to-People Contact

Thailand looks forward to doing more with the United States especially through such initiatives as the Equal Futures Partnership (EFP), the Women's Entrepreneurial Centers of Resources, Education, Access, and Training for Economic Empowerment (WECREATE) under Lower Mekong Initiative (LMI), as well as the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative (YSEALI), which you launched in 2013. I would like to urge that more efforts be made to get as many Muslim youths especially from southernmost provinces of Thailand to be given opportunity to participate in all these programs.

Mr. President,

It is truly a great honor and privilege for me to return to Washington, D.C., once again and serve as the 44<sup>th</sup> Ambassador of the Kingdom of Thailand to this great nation. Washington was my first diplomatic posting where I had richly gained my most rewarding experience through working as a Congressional fellow

on Capitol Hill of the 99<sup>th</sup> Congress (1986-1987) with a Democratic congressman and the U.S. Senator from Hawaii, the late Senator Daniel Inouye. Watching him chairing the Senate Select Committee that investigated the Iran-Contra affairs left me with a lifelong appreciation of the American values, from “We the People” to “All are equal before the law”.

As the Thai Ambassador, I assure you, Mr. President, of my pledge, energy and readiness to work hard from today till the last day of my tenure to further develop the closer relations and cooperation in the above mentioned areas and more for the mutual benefit of our two countries and peoples.

Every day of my work will be guided by the wisdom of one former American Peace Corps volunteer who was ordained as a Buddhist monk in Thailand nearly half a century ago and has become the most respected U.S.-born monk in Thailand and beyond. In capturing one essence of the Buddha’s teaching, Venerable Sumedho Bhikkhu wrote “The past is a memory, the future is the unknown, now is the knowing”.

You will be happy to note, by the way, that today the Peace Corps is still connecting Thais with Americans with 159 Americans working in more than 40 provinces throughout the country.

Allow me, finally, to express my fervent hope that I will benefit from your goodwill to Thailand and your Administration’s strong support in fulfilling my tasks and duties. I would neither be distracted by the past nor doubt by the unknown future. My everyday work is the knowing with awareness, and when “I” is replaced by “We”, much more becomes possible as we build a better future for our peoples.

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