



# PRESS RELEASE

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### **Thailand Remains Focused on Combating Human Trafficking Despite State Department's 2014 TIP Report**

Washington, D.C. – With release of the U.S. State Department's 2014 Trafficking In Persons (TIP) report, it is critically important to focus on facts and tangible progress made on the ground in order to put into perspective the assessment made on each country in combating the global problem of human trafficking.

"We are obviously disappointed and respectfully disagree with the State Department's decision. In 2013, Thailand made significant advances in prevention and suppression of human trafficking along the same lines as the State Department's standards. While the latest TIP report did not recognize our vigorous, government-wide efforts that yielded unprecedented progress and concrete results, Thailand remains committed to combating human trafficking. It is a national priority. Human trafficking is anathema to our nation's core values. For Thailand, this is not just about the TIP report tiered rankings. It is about protecting people. As our Permanent Secretary for Foreign Affairs made clear in his recent letter to Secretary John Kerry, we have every determination to build upon the progress already achieved, and look forward to continuing our close collaboration with the United States on this shared mission," stated H.E. Mr. Vijavat Isarabhakdi, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Thailand to the United States of America.

2013 Thai law enforcement statistics show significant progress in investigations, prosecutions and convictions of perpetrators, including 674 trafficking investigations by Thai officials in 2013 - more than double from 306 similar investigations in 2012, 483 trafficking defendants prosecuted in the Thai judicial system in 2013 – five times more than 93 similar prosecutions in 2012, and 225 trafficking defendants convicted in the Thai judicial system and punished for their crimes in 2013 – a more than four-fold increase from 49 similar convictions in 2012. Investigation of Thai officials alleged to be complicit in cases related to human trafficking noticeably increased in 2013. At least 33 police and 5 high-ranking police officials were either punished or are now under civil and/or criminal processes.

The Royal Thai Government took legal action against 155 illegal job broker companies. The Royal Thai Police conducted 28,280 inspections in high risk locations in 2013. Another 40,963 inspections were undertaken by Thai government officials of large- and small-scale workplaces in 2013. The Royal Thai Marine Police and Navy conducted routine and un-announced boarding and inspection of fishing vessels 9,590 times in 2013. Increased regulation and oversight of job brokers in Thailand saved nearly 15,000 Thai workers from paying unnecessary job broker fees in 2013.

Bilateral agreements now in place with Thailand's neighboring nations are helping protect Southeast Asian migrant workers from exploitation.

"There is acute awareness throughout Thailand of the need to better identify and help victims of trafficking, and there is strong commitment from the nation's leadership and all Ministries working together as a team. Evidence of that commitment and the undeniable progress on combating trafficking in Thailand was submitted this year to the U. S. State Department," commented Director General Songsak Saichuea, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Thailand attributes its recent anti-trafficking success to a strategic plan centered on the 5P's: Prosecution and Law Enforcement, Protection and Recovery, Prevention, Policy and Mechanisms to drive policy, and Partnerships. This multi-pronged approach attacks the issues that surround human trafficking from a variety of angles. It involves the coordination of numerous government ministries, the Thai law enforcement community, private sector industry leaders, other foreign governments, international organizations and NGO partners. To empower this strategic plan, the Thai government has more than doubled the budget for anti-trafficking efforts, which further highlights the country's commitment moving forward.

"While there is still much work to do—and we will not rest until trafficking is ended—Thailand is on the right track. Thailand has made clear progress in combating human trafficking, and we stand ready to do more, in keeping with our firm belief in humanitarianism and the dignity of every individual," commented Ambassador Isarabhakdi.

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