

JOINT STATEMENT BY
THE MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF
THE KINGDOM OF THAILAND AND THE KINGDOM OF BELGIUM
ON THE OCCASION OF
THE BILATERAL MEETING ON THE SIDELINES
OF THE 59th UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY,
NEW YORK, 2 SEPTEMBER 2004

1. His Excellency Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, and His Excellency Mr. Karel De Gucht, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belgium, held a bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the 59th United Nations General Assembly in New York on 2 September 2004.
2. During the meeting, the two Foreign Ministers reaffirmed the close and cordial relations that have existed between their Kingdoms for 135 years, especially as 2004 marks the centennial of Belgian diplomatic presence in Thailand. The meeting has enhanced the dynamic interaction and forged a forward-looking strategic partnership between Thailand and Belgium. The two Ministers agreed to establish a Joint Plan of Action for Thai-Belgian Cooperation and assigned their Senior Officials to work towards the conclusion of the Plan of Action in the near future.

Bilateral Issues

3. To enhance closer contacts and mutual understanding at all levels, both sides agreed to promote government-to-government contacts by:
 - Exchange of visits of Foreign Ministers or other cabinet members between the two countries, at least once a year; in case such a visit were not possible, the Ministers will take all possible steps to meet each other on the margins of an international or multilateral conference;
 - Exchange of visits of Members of Parliament between the two countries on a regular basis;
 - Holding of consultations between high-ranking officials to discuss matters relating to bilateral relations, as well as on international and regional issues of mutual interest;
 - Exchange of visits among officials, at the working level, to foster closer understanding and cooperation.
4. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to further promote two-way trade and foreign direct investment and intensify business contacts. They welcomed the exchange of the instruments of ratification of the Agreement between the Governments of the Kingdom of Thailand and the Kingdom of Belgium on the Reciprocal Promotion and Protection of Investments between Thailand and Belgo-Luxembourg Economic Union (BLEU) on 20 August 2004.
5. Both sides agreed that cooperation between the two countries in the fields of culture, education, science and technology, space, energy, environment, among others, would help to strengthen bilateral relations in the long term, and agreed that the relevant agencies will be encouraged to explore possibilities and means to realize such cooperation under the Joint Plan of Action for Thai-Belgian Cooperation.

6. The two sides noted with satisfaction the extent of the tourist exchanges which contribute positively to their economic relations and to the people-to-people exchanges. They expressed the wish that a direct flight could be established between the two Kingdoms, which would further enhance these exchanges. They will also encourage their institutions in charge of tourism and tourism training to develop contacts in order to explore the possibilities of cooperation, including at the regional level.
7. The two sides recognized the importance of the judicial and police cooperation, in particular in the domains which are mutually considered as priorities like fight against terrorism, human trafficking, drugs trafficking, money laundering, forged identity documents. This cooperation can be enhanced and strengthened by various means, namely the establishment of appropriate legal instruments, the exchange of information by the relevant channels in the respect of their respective legislation, meetings and visits of experts whenever necessary and the organization of training and information sessions about issues of interest. In this regard, the Belgian authorities would be prepared to provide information about the European police cooperation (Europol), about the Schengen visa procedures and control systems, etc. At the technical level, the two Ministers also noted the excellent cooperation between the relevant Thai authorities and the Embassies in Bangkok, among others through the presence of police liaison officers.
8. The negotiation on the Treaty on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters and the Treaty on the Transfer of Offenders and on Co-operation in the Enforcement of Penal Sentences was a success. The Ministers looked forward to the signing of the Treaties in due course.
9. The two sides also expressed their willingness to review and update the existing Treaty on Extradition which has been concluded in 1937. However, Thailand is in the process of amending its Extradition Act B.E. 2472 (1929), taking into account current developments in international law. Therefore, it would be more preferable to initiate the revision after the amended Act is in force.

European Union and Asian Regional Issues

10. Thailand recognized the ongoing integration in both European domestic and foreign policy making and recognized the major role played by Belgium in European affairs, as a founding member and a dynamic promoter of further integration, as host country of European institutions and as an advocate of initiatives in favour of a close cooperation between the EU and the other members of the international community. Thailand also welcomed the enlargement of the European Union, recognizing both the historic significance and the opportunities of a united Europe. Thailand and Belgium pledged to ensure that the enlargement of the EU be an opportunity for increasing trade and investment, as well as social, people-to-people contact and cultural cooperation between the two regions.
11. Both sides welcomed *Communication from the European Commission: A new partnership with South East Asia* and acknowledged that the political, economic and strategic dynamics between the European Union and ASEAN required that the long-established partnership be reinvigorated. Both sides will work towards the strengthening of inter-regional cooperation in the frameworks of the ASEAN-EU Dialogue and the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM). They agreed to further cooperate to ensure the success of the Fifth Asia-Europe Meeting, to be held in Hanoi in October 2004, under the theme 'Further Revitalizing and Substantiating the Asia-Europe Partnership'.

12. Belgium congratulated Thailand on its active role in regional economic development. In light of the growing opportunities for trade and investment in Southeast Asia, Belgium regarded Thailand as an economic hub of the region and a major gateway for its private sector to build a stronger economic presence in the region.
13. Belgium welcomed Thailand's efforts to foster prosperity through partnership for development in the Greater Mekong Sub-region. Both sides agreed to explore possible technical and financial cooperation in the context of ACMECS (Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy) to help bridge the development gap between new and original members of ASEAN.
14. Belgium welcomed Thailand's efforts (such as the *Bangkok process*) to bring about a democratic transition in Myanmar (Burma) and encouraged Thailand, as a neighbouring country, to continue its efforts in this respect, both on a bilateral basis and through ASEAN, other Asian partners, as well as the United Nations. In this connection, Belgium agreed to extend its fullest cooperation to Thailand both in the context of bilateral relations and within the EU framework, while taking into account the EU common position on this matter.
15. Belgium welcomed the decision of ASEAN to establish the ASEAN Community comprising the ASEAN Security Community, the ASEAN Economic Community, and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community by 2020, which should contribute to enhancing peace, stability and prosperity in the region. Both sides expressed their intention to intensify the European Union's engagement with ASEAN. Belgium welcomed ASEAN's efforts to further strengthen cooperation in supporting the implementation of the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ) and ASEAN's call on the Nuclear Weapon States (NWS) to show maximum flexibility and work together with ASEAN on this matter. Belgium also welcomed the accession of China, India, Japan and Pakistan to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC). Both sides reaffirmed the importance of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) as the primary forum for enhancing political and security cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region as well as the pivot in building peace and stability in the region. They recognized the role of ASEAN as the driving force of the ARF and welcomed the EU's contribution to the ARF. They both supported the further advancement of the ARF process towards preventive diplomacy.
16. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to maintaining the forward momentum of ASEAN-EU relations and stressed their determination to enhance their cooperation towards the deepening of the ASEAN-EU Dialogue as a principal pillar for strategic partnership between the two regions. They expressed satisfaction with the outcome of the 14th ASEAN-EU Ministerial Meeting (AEMM) in Brussels in January 2003, especially the shared commitment towards regional peace and stability, combating terrorism and transnational crimes and strengthening economic linkages between the two regions. They also noted that the Trans-Regional EU-ASEAN Trade Initiative (TREATI) is an essential basis for future development of an inter-regional trade arrangement. In this context, both sides agreed to develop a more comprehensive and balanced agenda in order to contribute towards the sustainability of the ASEAN-EU partnership. Furthermore, both sides welcomed the Regional Indicative Programme (RIP) 2005-2006 aimed at enhancing and strengthening ASEAN-EU cooperation in mutually agreeable areas.
17. Belgium commended Thailand's leading role in promoting Asia-wide cooperation through the Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD), and welcomed the progress made under the ACD to develop an Asian bond market with a view to establishing an

Asian Bond Fund. Both Governments encouraged further efforts to explore possible linkages between the Eurobond and Asian bond markets in the context of ASEM.

Multilateral Issues and Global Affairs

18. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to multilateralism in international affairs. They agreed to work together more closely through the United Nations to tackle transnational crime, international terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, landmines, and other challenges to international security. They also agreed to explore all possibilities to cooperate with the United Nations, international development agencies, and other development partners, under the principle of shared responsibility, towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). They welcomed efforts underway to reform and improve the effectiveness of the United Nations.
19. Both countries commended each other for their significant contribution to international peace and security. Thailand appreciated Belgium's continuing contribution to peacekeeping, within the UN framework as well as in other international operations mandated by the UN Security Council, and Belgium's leading role in promoting initiatives in favour of sustainable development, the promotion of human rights and other humanitarian issues. Belgium expressed its admiration for Thailand's noteworthy achievements in humanitarian mine action, particularly Thailand's role as President of the Fifth Meeting of the States Parties to the Mine Ban Convention and strong commitment in pursuing the universalisation and implementation of the Mine Ban Convention. In addition, Belgium commended Thailand's contribution to peacekeeping, particularly in Timor-Leste and Sierra Leone.
20. Both sides stressed the need for the United Nations to play a central role in the reconstruction and political stabilization of Iraq and welcomed the transfer of power from the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) to the Interim Government on 28 June 2004.
21. Both sides emphasized the importance of free and fair trade at all levels including the multilateral trading system and called for all relevant parties to reconfirm their commitment to a successful and timely conclusion of the Doha Development Agenda.
22. Both sides agreed to explore, where appropriate, trilateral cooperation to provide technical assistance and humanitarian aid to third countries, in accordance with the priorities of both countries in this matter.
23. His Excellency Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand extended an invitation to His Excellency Mr. Karel De Gucht, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belgium to visit Thailand and His Excellency the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belgium also extended an invitation to His Excellency the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand to visit Belgium at mutually convenient dates.

Minister of Foreign Affairs
of the Kingdom of Thailand

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