



# ข่าวสารนิเทศ • Press Release

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## **Press Releases : Meeting between Thai Governmental Agencies and Non-governmental Organisations to Discuss Cooperation to Combat Human Trafficking**

On 1 March 2013 at the Royal Thai Police's Command and Control Operation Centre, Mr. Surapong Tovichakchaikul, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, chaired a meeting between Thai governmental agencies and Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) working in the field of human trafficking. Mr. Phadernchai Sasomsub, Minister of Labour, Mr. Santi Promphat, Minister of Social Development and Human Security and Police General Adul Saengsingkaew, Commissioner-General of the Royal Thai Police, were also present.

In his opening remarks, the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister explained that the objective of the meeting was to enhance cooperation between the relevant governmental agencies and NGOs. In particular, information from NGOs would help the authorities improve their work in the prevention and suppression of human trafficking and prostitution which hopefully would also lead to more prosecution of offenders, including government officials involved in human trafficking.

The Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister also emphasized the importance attached to combatting human trafficking given that he had been assigned by the Prime Minister to follow up on Thailand's progress on the implementation of the Anti-Human Trafficking Plan for 2012 – 2013 that was submitted to the United States last year. He also informed that he would be submitting Thailand's implementation report to Mr. John Kerry, Secretary of State of the United States, through Ms. Kristie Kenny, Ambassador of the United States to Thailand. Given Thailand's progress in the implementation of the Plan of Action, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Surapong expressed his confidence that the United States would give a favorable consideration in upgrading Thailand's status in the State Department's Trafficking in Persons Report (TIP Report) this year.

After a briefing by Commissioner-General Adul Saengsingkaew on the technical capabilities of the Command and Control Operation Centre, NGO representatives were provided with the opportunity to share their concerns and suggestions. The following issues were highlighted: (1) The belief held by some senior officials that forced prostitution no longer exists in Thailand is incorrect and must be put in perspective; (2) Foreign victims of human trafficking experienced communication problems when seeking assistance due to language barrier; (3) On the issue of Rohingyas which are not considered by the Thai authorities to be victims of human trafficking but rather human smuggling cases, it was proposed that a separate meeting between governmental agencies and NGOs should be convened to discuss the issue in detail including the rationale for this classification and measures envisaged by the Thai government to resolve the situation; (4) There was a need for the government to support in-depth research on the root causes of human trafficking problems as such research would enable parties concerned to tackle the present cases and to prevent future problems more effectively; (5) A comprehensive and integrated database on human trafficking that would be accessible by the public should be established; (6) Child beggars illegally trafficked from neighbouring countries is a pressing issue as there are not enough officials to conduct victim identification. Furthermore, these children are also vulnerable to being exploited in the sex industry later on; (7) The Ministry of Social Development and Human Security should continue to provide financial support for NGOs working on educating and raising awareness for Thais seeking work overseas.

The Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister thanked participants for the above information and suggestions. In response, he requested the Police to step up efforts in relation to child beggars while the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security was asked to consider the request to continue providing financial support for the awareness raising campaigns. The two agencies were also asked to look into jointly establishing an information database on human trafficking. He, also, would instruct the Thailand Research Fund to support research on the root causes of human trafficking problems.

On the issue of forced prostitution, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Surapong assured that the government remains committed to tackle this heinous act. At this juncture, he also expressed regret that Thai women travelling abroad are often wrongly accused of being involved in prostitution and therefore he was determined to improve the image of Thai women. Finally, on the issue of Rohingyas, the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister affirmed that they are being treated in accordance with humanitarian principles and that concrete steps are being taken to address the problem, including working closely with countries concerned, particularly ASEAN partners, and international organisations such as the UNHCR. Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Surapong is also scheduled to travel to those countries to discuss ways to handle the situation.