

Sufficiency in the Age of Globalization

TRANSLATION of a speech by H.E. Mr. Anand Panyarachun, Chairman of the Council of Trustees of the Thailand Environment Institute, and Chair of the National Economic and Social Advisory Council. The speech was presented in Thai at the seminar "Sufficiency in the Age of Globalization", held at the United Nations Conference Center, Bangkok, November 21, 2001.

Sustainable development has been an item of discussion both in an international and in a national arena for more than a decade. On an international level, one of the basic principles that have emerged, relating to sustainable development, is the beneficial relationship between development and environmental conservation. In other words, the realization that these two issues actually can be achieved simultaneously is replacing the view that they are extreme opposites with development gained at the expense of the environment, or with environmental conservation measures seen as preventing development

Ever since its origin, civilization has seen a continued process of change, adjustment and development. The human brain is able to plan and invent new ways and new technologies to support this continued development. However, it is extremely important that this is done in a responsible manner.

During the past 100 years of intellectual inventions, only very limited attention has been paid to environmental issues. This is due to the fact that all societies are mainly focusing on prosperity through economic growth and increased national revenue. About thirty to forty years ago, a change came about with the initiation of earnest discussions about the continued direct and indirect negative impact on the environment by business and industrial ventures, such as for example oil or petroleum companies.

Currently the problem is becoming increasingly complicated along with increasingly excessive consumption patterns and the competitive environment of today's society. There is competition for development and competition for superior power. The latter kind of competition leads to a struggle for survival, efforts to escape from vulnerable positions away from the pressures of unfair and unethical competition, where advantages are taken by those who possess more power.

This unrestrained society of the world instigates conflicts which destroys the lives of human beings, the ecology, and our cultural heritage, with unprecedented power and speed. If we allow humanity to continue on this path of destruction as at present, it is a waste of time to gather to discuss the issue of "sustainability". The number of Earth Summits

convened, or Agendas adopted, is immaterial. Maybe the world won't last until our tenth conference.

However, I am confident that Thailand can survive the impact of the current globalization surge, by standing firm on the ground and by entering into the process of sustainable development with determination. To succeed, we must act today. Without denying or avoiding the responsibility incumbent upon us as a member of the world's society, we need to step aside from the stream of violence, competitiveness, and the unrestrained society of the world, and search for alliances.

The discipline of the Thai society is not different from that of the rest of the world. This is the nature of people living together at different social levels. Looking into a smaller scale of society, such as a family, it also consists of many differences, but it can still encompass happiness. Therefore, a happy and peaceful society stems from respect for each other and from sufficient development. The sustainable development process in different societies may require different levels of sufficiency, depending on the way of life and the resource integration of each society. This is not only in terms of monetary resources, but also including natural, human, intellectual and cultural resources

In the past we did not assess these resources correctly, and mismanaged vital resources by opting for instant prosperity without considering sustainability aspects. We need now to review lessons learnt and look forward. Globalization, by definition, reduces diversity. Sufficient development, however, is related to the environment, which means both commonness and diversity.

The world's environment is united in dependency as well as in diversity. To improve the national economic growth, for instance, we must pay attention to our social systems, including ecology, culture, and ethics, and maintain an environmental balance. The future of Thailand's development must begin with self-assessment, knowing more about our own resources, and it needs to proceed along an environmental friendly path. We need to switch the development target of Thailand from prosperity to sustainability. To attain economic stability, from a local grassroots level though to a national level, including psychological, cultural, political and ecological stability, this must originate from individuals within our society.

Changes so far have been marginal. There may have been a few central changes as well, but not yet sustainable. Independent actors, such as NGOs, therefore, must operate with determination and collaboration to motivate a change towards sustainable development, as mentioned above, in an environmentally friendly manner.

Finally, we can hardly expect to achieve social stability, happiness, and peace, without paying serious attention to the process of national development and without knowing our responsibilities of social participation as a whole. On the other hand, public authorities must also

listen to the people's opinions to ensure their effective participation in the development process. I invite participation. Working together, we will achieve our goals.