

## The inaugural Thailand-UK Strategic Dialogue took place on 20 May in Bangkok

Tuesday 21 May, 2013

The Dialogue was co-chaired by H.E. Mr. Jullapong Nonsrichai, Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs of Thailand, and the Right Honourable Hugo Swire, UK Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. During the Dialogue, the two Ministers agreed a number of areas for future collaboration between our two countries. At the conclusion of the meeting the two sides issued the following Joint Press Statement:

Joint Press Release for the First Session of the Thailand-United Kingdom Strategic Dialogue, 20 May 2013, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bangkok

The first session of the Thailand-United Kingdom Strategic Dialogue was held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bangkok, on 20 May 2013. The session was co-chaired by H.E. Mr. Jullapong Nonsrichai, Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs of Thailand, and the Right Honourable Hugo Swire, Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in the United Kingdom.

The Thailand-United Kingdom Strategic Dialogue constitutes one of the key deliverables of the meeting between Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra and Prime Minister David Cameron during the former's official visit to the United Kingdom in November 2012. The forum was designed to be a high-level and regular consultative mechanism to facilitate closer dialogue between the two countries. As such, the Strategic Dialogue is the first platform of its kind between Thailand and the United Kingdom.

Both sides appreciate Prime Minister Cameron's keen interest to make a return visit to Thailand and encourage the visit to take place at the earliest mutually convenient time.

The two co-chairs took note with satisfaction of the existing bilateral ties and excellent collaboration, which extended over a broad scope of areas, and exchanged views on a number of bilateral issues of common interest, including the promotion of two-way trade and investment, tourism promotion and tourist safety, defence and security cooperation, education and training, and the exchange of knowledge and best practices in areas such as creative economy, as well as science and technology.

On the economic front, the two sides reviewed the growing two-way trade and investment, where the United Kingdom continues to be one of Thailand's largest trading partners in the European Union. Both sides shared the view that the current bilateral trade volume could be increased substantially. The meeting suggested that both Governments look into doubling the current bilateral trade volume by 2018. The two delegations also agreed to further promote investment-friendly conditions, as well as to eliminate trade impediments and ease necessary regulations. They also welcomed the commencement of negotiations on the Thailand-European Union Free Trade Area and the United Kingdom reaffirmed its readiness to support Thailand during this process.

The two co-chairs recognized the important role that the United Kingdom could play in enhancing English language training and teaching in Thailand, in light of Thailand's efforts to strengthen national competitiveness and readiness for the formation of the ASEAN Community in 2015. Thailand expressed its profound appreciation for the United Kingdom's support, through the British Council, on several on-going projects in collaboration with the Ministry of Education of Thailand. The British side also reaffirmed the British Council's commitment to provide assistance in this regard.

Another key deliverable of the meeting is the agreement for further discussion with relevant partners in the UK on the introduction of the "Premier Skills" Project, which was previously proposed by Prime Minister Yingluck to her British counterpart during her official visit to the United Kingdom in November 2012. The project is designed to develop necessary skills, such as leadership and the English language, through football training for Thai youths, particularly in the Southern Border Provinces of Thailand. The two delegations shared experiences in promoting national reconciliation and resolving conflicts.

The two co-chairs also expressed appreciation for the dynamic flow of people-to-people contacts and pledged to promote the safety and security of tourists and residents alike. Visas were seen as one of the key factors in facilitating or impeding the flow of people, and so both sides agreed that immigration regulations should aim to be straightforward and transparent to help genuine tourists, business visitors, students and residents.

The Strategic Dialogue is expected to lead to enhanced bilateral collaboration and more frequent

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high-level contacts between the Thai and British Governments. In this connection, the United Kingdom and Thailand agreed to work together to look at enhancing the visa service between our two countries.

The two delegations also welcomed the signing of the MOU on SME Cooperation between the Office of SME Promotion and United Kingdom Trade and Investment (UKTI), which is aimed at promoting collaboration between Thai and British SMEs, as well as the MOU between the Royal Mint and the Royal Thai Mint to enhance Thailand's capacity in becoming a regional hub for production and distribution of coins.

The two co-chairs also welcomed positive developments in the realm of defence, particularly the re-opening of a fully functional Office of the British Defence Attaché and the re-establishment of a resident British Defence Attaché post in Bangkok. Thailand also welcomed the announcement by the British Royal Navy that HMS Daring, one of the most advanced destroyers in the Royal Navy, is scheduled to visit Thailand in January 2014. The two delegations encouraged the Royal Thai Navy and the British Royal Navy to explore possible joint activities to commemorate the occasion and step up their partnerships.

Furthermore, both delegations agreed to strengthen their partnership in the regional and international arena. To this end, a wide range of international issues were discussed, most notably the latest developments in the ASEAN and EU regions, the situation on the Korean Peninsula and possible triangular cooperation between Thailand, the United Kingdom, and Myanmar/Burma. Both delegations also agreed to enhance cooperation on climate change, counter-terrorism, counter-proliferation, suppression of international crime and development issues.

In the context of cooperation in international fora, the British side noted Thailand's firm commitment and continued contribution to international peace and security through its proposed candidature for a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council for the term 2017-2018.

It was agreed that the United Kingdom will host the Second Session of the Thailand-UK Strategic Dialogue in 2014.

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